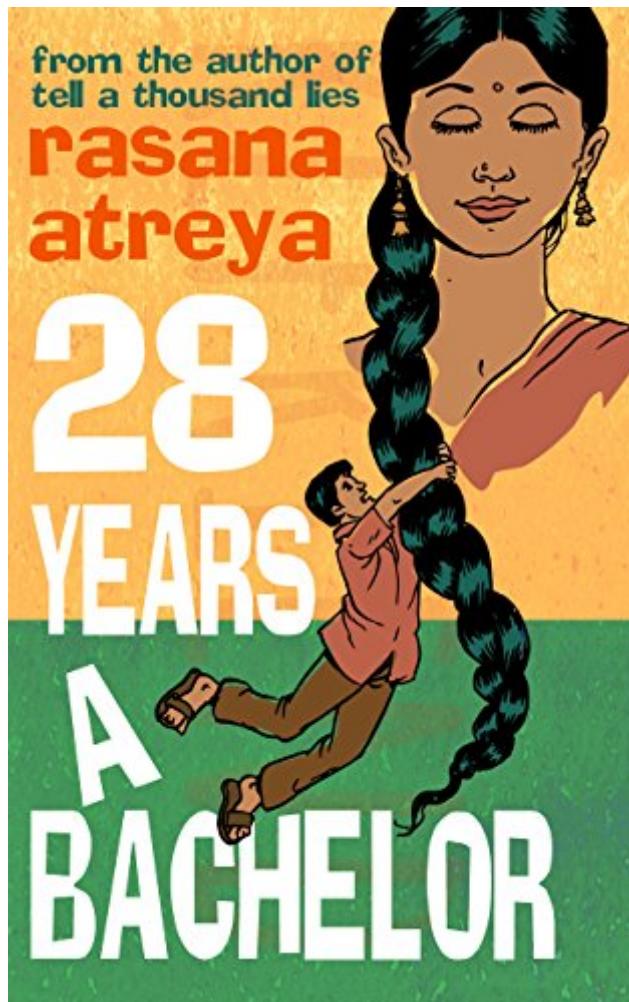


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28 Years A Bachelor: A Novel Set In India



Synopsis

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that an Indian woman in possession of a son with an engineering degree, must be in want of a daughter-in-law with an outsized dowry. Which can be a problem when said son is vehemently opposed to dowry. He is also opposed to city living, to meddlesome neighbours, to wacky grandfathers and to caustic grandmothers. But when he's blessed with all of the above, what's man to do?***From the author of 'Tell A Thousand Lies'. Shortlisted for the '2012 Tibor Jones South Asia prize'. UK's Glam magazine calls this novel one of their 'five favourite tales from India.' Also, author of 'The Temple Is Not My Father.'

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Customer Reviews

I liked this story of marriage and caste and villages in india, a country I've always had a fond spot for. The writer made the customs - wives going to live with their in-laws to take care of them, dowries and their problems, arranged marriages and their pros and cons, very understandable by the way she wove in the people whose lives are dominated by these customs. The writer had a good sense of description, and the book was easy to read. It did seem that there is a vast social pressure to conform to some of these customs, and that women in particular often have a hard time

with them. I can only see this from the outside. The author had several instances of showing how the courage of individuals could make such a huge difference in the fates of those subjected to the limitations by the imperatives of living in a country with such deep traditions. The only thing I really thought wasn't done quite as well as the rest was a sense of hurrying the end so as to close up all the stories far into the future. I think that part might have worked better as an epilogue, as it sped up time when I was getting ready to finish the story of the present, and took consequences out into the future.

Having read an earlier book, "The Temple is not my father" by the same author, Rasana Atreya, I was intrigued when I heard the next book was "28 years a bachelor" (I loved the title). The opening of the book with a brief synopsis reminds one of Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" where, she talks about universally accepted truth! Madhav, the well educated South Indian male, 28 years old is the said bachelor, from the title. Though he loves his parents, his heart pulls him towards his paternal grandparents, Tataiyya and Nainamma living peacefully in a village ancestral home. Then there is Jaya, Madhav's younger sister, Syamala the long haired dusky beauty who is Madhav's sweetheart and other characters like Devika, Murthy garu and others who complete the story. Madhav proves he is not a spineless, city-bred boy, when he stands by his widowed sister or when he follows his heart to marry the girl of his choice, rejecting any dowry, even if it meant making his parents unhappy. The lovely village environment, the "wacky" Tataiyya and the "caustic" Nainamma (referred to by the author herself) are a treat to read. I found myself loving Tataiyya the most. With decent doses of Telugu sprinkled throughout, the story had a native touch. (Telugu being my mother tongue, I enjoyed reading it) The subtle humour made me smile at places. Some of the characters are relatable, like say Madhav's mother, who couldn't forgive her son, even after many years, for having rejected her suggestion to marry a rich girl with a huge dowry. What I like: As I read the earlier book I had a feeling that the story would surely tackle one social issue or the other. Here, the issues turn out to be, child marriages, early widowhood and dowry along with dusky girl misconception. I loved the character of Madhav and I only wish there were more men like him!

I was so very excited to obtain "28 Years A Bachelor", as Rasana Atreya is my favourite Indian author, and I am happy to say she is maintaining her usual standard of excellence. What she continues to do very well is create worthwhile characters that are complex, well developed, and reflective of both modern day and retrospective India. Some characters are comic relief, some are

troubled, or in the case of the male protagonist, Madhav, someone you'd like to know or would be the better for knowing, all set in an interesting village outside Hyderabad, a progressive city. Excellent dialogue, humour, and outlining tradition, aside from great writing, the author tackles filial ingratitude, family dynamics, and the struggles of characters endeavoring to exist in modern times, yet still embracing the traditions that are part of their fabric. I highly recommend this book, I loved it!

Eileen

I'd been meaning to read this for quite some time and only now was able to get around to it. However, I'm certainly glad I did. What a fun read! Such an intimate look into daily Indian life and yet so full of shenanigans that I was constantly laughing. I absolutely adore the character Madhav, from who's viewpoint this book is centered. He's so honorable and fiercely protective of his sister, going out of his way to make sure she isn't treated badly. I see a touch of the feminist in him when many Indian traditions are not, so I admire him for that. I loved the grandparents too. They were so funny and really cared about their family. I would love to read Ms. Atreya's other books as well.

The institution of arranged marriage is based on the sensible idea that a marriage is also a social relationship, not just a personal one. Families are linked when a couple comes to be, and for a happy marriage, the respective families also have to get along. This novel deals with a modern Indian hero who finds he has to take a risk-- he can marry a woman he loves, but it might come at the cost of losing his mother. Set in Hyderabad area, filled with Atreya's trademark grasp of local Indian mores, this simply-told but many-layered tale is a pleasure to read. Strongly recommended.

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