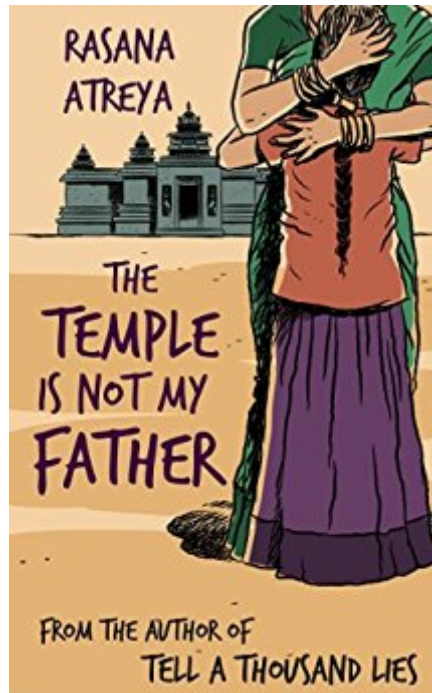


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The Temple Is Not My Father: A Story Set In India



Synopsis

Ensnared by a tradition hundreds of years old, a woman fights for her daughter's happiness. From the author of 'Tell A Thousand Lies,' which was shortlisted for the 2012 Tibor Jones South Asia award. UK's Glam magazine calls 'Tell A Thousand Lies' one of their 'five favourite tales from India.' If you like Rohinton Mistry or Shilpi Somaya Gowda, you might like this short story of 40 pages.

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Customer Reviews

This story is a flowing, easy read and I found myself looking forward to the next section when I had insufficient time to complete it at one sitting. Having finished it I sat momentarily stunned at the final climax. Then I started thinking about what I had read. The MC, Godavari, was young, with very limited experience of the world. She had low self-confidence, low self-esteem. She saw herself as the other villagers saw her, as someone bearing the stigma of being a devadasi. But she also had a secure home and income. She had a mobile phone so she could, if she wished, discuss things with her sister and the NGO women who were offering her help. Why is Godavari's mobile phone mentioned so often yet she never uses it to good purpose? Why does Godavari's mother have

to commit suicide to help her daughter? She had other young children who needed her too so why would she not seek an alternative method? Why did Neeraja and Vanaja promise to see Sreeja every month and pass on news of her to Godavari but never do? Most telling of all, why did Godavari trust the man who had raped her with her beloved daughter's future? The list goes on and on in my mind. Whichever way I turn it over in my mind I'm left with the nagging feeling that the choices the MC (and her mother) made were ones driven by the author's need to create the circumstances for the dramatic finale, rather than choices a woman in that situation would actually have made. Apparently there is a sequel due which addresses the things left unexplained. In my opinion it's too late to do so in a sequel; this novella was written for an international audience unaccustomed, as am I, to Indian cultural mores. I have tried very hard to put myself in the shoes of a young, relatively uneducated Indian woman.

Ever since the days of my youth, when I undertook an extensive 7-week tour of India, I have had an enduring fascination for the "wonder that was (is) India" to use, and paraphrase the title to A.L. Basham's excellent history. I've also been drawn to, and have read a number of Indian writers, including Arudhati Roy, Amit Chaudhuri, Anita Desai and Krushwant Singh. One writer, Ved Mehta, in his impressive Portrait of India has presented an eclectic and broad-spectrum view of the many Indias, both in terms of geography and society. The one area that has been most elusive to me, certainly uncovered in the 1971 trip, but also by my selection of Indian writers, has been the central east coast, specifically Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. Telugu is spoken in much of the latter Indian state, and Hyderabad, where I have been to, is its capital. When I was offered this novella from Rasana Atreya, I realized that I could "fill in some gaps." The practice of "devadasi" is at the heart of this novella. Admittedly, I had never heard of it. Wikipedia provides a somewhat anodyne view of the practice, and if that was the sole source, one might conclude that it is not much different that a woman entering a nunnery in the West, and even mentions the high status the "devadasi" women have in society. It also mentioned that it was outlawed in India in 1988. Why so, one might wonder? Atreya provides the reasons! The two principal characters are a 22-year old woman, Godavari, and her daughter, Sreeja, who is around seven. Men are the bad guys in this novel, no doubt with considerable justification.

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