

RT Book Reviews

MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR



Shobhan Bantwal

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Book Title: [THE DOWRY BRIDE](#)

Genre: General Mainstream Fiction, Mainstream

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Author's Message

SECOND ACT

SOON-TO-BE GRANDMOTHER SHOBHAN BANTWAL DEBUTS WITH A CHILLING TALE

"I'm hoping to be an inspiration to the 50-plus generation," says Shobhan Bantwal, whose first novel, *The Dowry Bride*, releases this month from Kensington. Bantwal, a native of India who's lived all her adult life in New Jersey, started seriously writing in 2002 when she turned 50.

"I call it my 'menopausal epiphany,'" she says. "I firmly believe my yo-yo-ing hormones had something to do with the creative spark." Another cause would be her grown daughter Maya, who grew tired of hearing Bantwal talk about writing and urged her to "just do it," and her engineer husband Prakash's frequent absences during a job assignment in Maryland.

Bantwal, the rebel and tomboy in her conservative Indian family, was always a storyteller. But the family rebel didn't buck tradition when it came to her future: Her marriage to Prakash was arranged. "We only met two days before the wedding," Bantwal recalls, adding that her father-in-law had his family astrologer compare their horoscopes to see if they would be a good match.

The astrologers got it right: The Bantwals will celebrate their 34th anniversary this December. "I am beginning to believe in horoscopes a lot, and I think we are a good match," Bantwal says. "He helps me with my website and he's supportive with marketing and such."

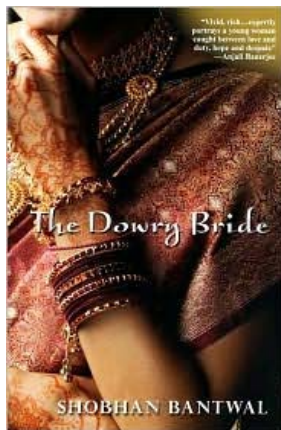
But the heroine of *The Dowry Bride* isn't so fortunate. Megha's in-laws plot to incinerate her for not bringing them the promised dowry. She escapes and hides with her husband's cousin, but their growing attraction is a problem -- as is her vile mother-in-law, who pursues her relentlessly.

Calling dowry demands a "decadent practice," Bantwal aims to expose them in her novel. (Her own nuptials didn't involve a dowry.) "Maybe that way Americans can learn about the horrors of dowry abuse," she says. "Also, dowry was not the central theme in any fiction book that I knew of."

Bantwal, who is due to become a grandmother -- Maya is expecting a girl -- is busy writing another India-set novel for Kensington. She won't divulge too much of the plot -- "I want to be interviewed again by *RT* when it comes out," she jokes -- but there is "a strong romantic element."

Whatever the next book contains, Bantwal vows to give it her all: "If I'm going to do it this late in life, I'm going to do it right." -- *Liz French*

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