



Duty and Desire

Anju Gattani

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HOW CAN HAPPINESS SURVIVE WHEN DUTY CLASHES WITH DESIRE?

Sheetal Prasad has it all: youth, beauty, wealth, and education. But when this modern Indian woman surrenders love for honor and marries into India's most glamorous "royal family," those very advantages turn against her.

Meet the Dhanrajs - a powerful family bound together by a web of lies where infidelity, greed, secrets, and hidden identities lurk beneath the lush tapestry. The Dhanrajs will do whatever is necessary to mask the truth from the world.

As Sheetal peels back the layers of deceit in the glittering world of Indian mega-wealth - and struggles to control her own fate - she is threatened by the rage she harbors and the blazes of passion she ignites.

Duty and Desire Details

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Author : Anju Gattani

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From Reader Review Duty and Desire for online ebook

Tk says

The writing was very well done and the imagery and description were amazing.

My problem was that the book was all over the place IMO. I never knew when the characters were going to behave positively or negatively to each other and I left the book without a clear understanding of what it was the author was trying to accomplish or convey.

Kimberly Comeau says

First, I have to confess that I'm easily distracted by typos, and, sadly, this edition had many. Despite that, I enjoyed the opportunity to learn about Indian traditions and holidays in the course of the story, shared by an author familiar with that culture. The author's knowledge is broad and her details integrated into the stream of the story without jarring. The result is a presentation of a culture that's memorable for its extremes: of poverty and wealth, of modernity and adherence to tradition, of appearances versus reality.

While the ending of the novel is wonderfully told and satisfying on one level, I didn't feel that the events leading up to that ending fully supported the conclusions. If the reader had seen a more definite, more defined evolution in Sheetal's understanding and maturation--where she learned from specific experiences and then applied what she learned to each new challenge--I'd have been more satisfied as a reader. As it was, she seemed to repeat similar mistakes and for similar reasons.

As a reader, I attribute many of the weaknesses in Duty and Desire to a failure of the publisher to adequately support this book and author. While authors are expected to edit their manuscripts to the best of their ability, it's ultimately the publisher's role to catch the mistakes the author did not or could not see. This being Gattani's debut novel, editorial support would have been especially helpful. The number of typos alone indicates that editorial support for the author was lacking. For that reason, I'm interested in following the career of this author. There were enough gems within this novel to suggest a talent that will shine diamond-bright with even a little polishing. Here's hoping that Gattani finds a publisher who has a buff cloth and is willing to use it. I think that small publisher investment will result in very large dividends through the course of this writer's career.

Evie says

This was definitely an interesting read and one I am very glad I took the time and had the opportunity to read this book. It was very eye opening to the culture and customs of India and is incredibly detailed. The author provides intricate details about the character's appearance and surroundings that help create a very vivid image of their world. I enjoyed the book, but I will admit I became rather frustrated with the characters and their actions, Sanjeet in particular.

(I received a copy of this book as part of Goodread's First Reads giveaways.)

Ana♥ says

Being forced into a marriage she doesn't want, Sheetal Prasad abides by her parents' conquest to give her away to a prestigious family. Leaving behind the man she loves, for a man she can barely stand to look at. Forced into life of her duty as the wife of Sanjeet Dhanraj, India's own royal family and her desire to live her life the way she wants, Sheetal goes through a journey in discovering who she is.

We're first introduced to Sheetal who is breaking things off with Arvind, the man she loves. Coming from an Indian background, Sheetal has no choice in the matter of who she marries. Her parents have already found a bachelor suitable to take their daughter's hand and that man just so happens to be Sanjeet Dharaj, of India's prestigious royal family. I understood where Sheetal was coming from when she gave up the man she loved to marry someone her parents set her up for. She was torn between doing what she wants and following her traditions and not disappointing her parents. This book is a roller coaster all its own. At first we have Sheetal despising her husband, and won't give in to him or his family and their "rules" in the slightest bit, and next thing you know she's pining after him. Which was definitely a roller coaster for me. I wanted to scream at her to not take his crap and stand up for herself and stand up to her parents so that she could be happy and not miserable. Which kept me reading, I wanted to know if Sheetal would finally blow up and take advantage of her situation and turn tables.

I liked that even though you're thrown into the modern world of the Indian culture, you're still given the grounding principles of the culture and lifestyle and lead by a rope to try and understand why things happen the way they do. Yeah, it might seem far-fetched to our normal lifestyles and love lives, but you're definitely pulled in and able to differentiate between duty & desire. The characters are definitely their own person, they each stand out and play a role that helps carry the story. What I didn't like about this book, is that I think Sheetal was very weak as a person at points. She kept giving excuses for why people did what they did. But I liked that in the end she got it together and finally came to the point where she matters and that she needs to put herself first and focus on what she wants, her desires and not fall victim to everyone's crap, regardless of traditions.

This book was pretty good, I was a bit iffy about starting it as first, but as I read I became hooked, despite my urge to scream at the main characters. If you're up for an adventure into the lifestyle of the Indian culture & seeing through the eyes of a modern Indian woman and her struggles with duty and desire, then I would definitely recommend this book to you.

Lily at Bookluvrs Haven says

Review originally featured on Bookluvrs Haven

A friend of mine is really into Bollywood movies. She made me sit down for one once, and I was hooked. How can you not be? They are full of happy music, awesome dancing, amazing colorful costumes, and of course, a ridiculously tragic story of forbidden love. So occasionally, I will watch the odd Bollywood movie here and there, with a full bowl of popcorn, and a box of kleenex in near proximity.

I can't say that I have picked up similar novels, but this one sounded very interesting to me. Besides, I love

reading about different times, and different cultures. And this novel did not disappoint at painting a very vivid picture of the culture.

Set in modern India, Sheetal is desperately in love. But when Arvind asks her to marry him, it is the most bittersweet moment of her life. Because Arvind is of poor means, and a match that her father would never approve of. She is initially torn between love and duty, but duty prevails. In an attempt to bring honor to her family and in obedience to her father, she agrees to the arranged marriage to Sanjeet Dhanraj. The Dhanrajs are a most prominent family, and her family is thrilled with the marriage. Not so the case with Sheetal and Sanjeet. Sheetal and Sanjeet reluctantly begin their lives together as man and wife.

The characters in this novel were very complex, and at times... confusing. They all ran hot and cold, from one moment to the other. Sanjeet seemed to be two completely different men - adoring and loving in one moment, trying to win the heart of his bride, and utterly cold and indifferent the next, at times without provocation that I could see.

Sheetal too seemed to have moments of serious indecision, where she would respond to her husband, to other times run from him in anger and despair when he was at his most loving.

Sanjeet's stepmother was a whole other creature. I just couldn't figure this woman out, she was so out there. Yet, I was utterly intrigued with this novel. Was it the constant drama? Oh hell yes! It was like reading about a new show called the Housewives of Bollywood. Constant ridiculous dramatics, love tug of wars, female hysterics, and male indifference? Absolutely! Bring it on!

Even though I am personally not very content with the way it ended, it was definitely an entertaining novel from beginning to end. A worthwhile read.

I received a eBook copy of this book for free to review from the author; this in no way influenced my review, all opinions are 100% honest and my own.

Susan says

I just loved Anju Gattani's stunning debut novel. Set in contemporary India, the book chronicles the family drama between the well-off Prasads and the filthy-rich Dhanrajs. At the center of the story is Sheetal Prasad, a young, independent woman, and Sanjeet Dhanraj, a Harvard-educated bad boy.

The families arrange the marriage of Sheetal and Sanjeet, to both of their dismay.

Sheetal already has a boyfriend and Sanjeet is not interested in settling down. But because they come from traditional families, the two agree to marry.

Once Sheetal is ensconced in the Dhanraj compound, she learns the true nature of her arranged marriage.

The question that looms throughout the story is whether Sheetal and Sanjeet will eventually settle down together, or will their personalities continue to clash. Anju Gattani keeps the reader on edge until the end!

Sanjeet is a complex character, and I find him equally charming and adversarial. Sheetal is lovely and I find myself rooting for her from the beginning. She shines as a painter and plays an important role in the life of

one of her new sisters-in-law.

Besides the spellbinding story, I love the gorgeous descriptions of the clothes and accessories. Think Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous and take it up a few notches.

Duty and Desire is just the first book in a series. I can't wait to read the others!

Holly Full Moon Bites Book Reviews says

First off I have to say this is the first book I have ever read about the modern Indian culture and I was very intrigued by it. Anju Gattani really writes Duty and Desire in a way that immerses you in the characters world and culture.

In Duty and Desire Sheetal is being forced into an arranged marriage by her parents. Of course it is the 21st century and she could just say no but Sheetal's duty to her parents makes her go through with it even though she was in love with someone else and despises the man she is to be married to (Sanjeet Dhanrajs).

Right off I am thinking okay—maybe she won't go through with it, or she will end up falling for her husband anyways.

I was wrong and right, I think.

Sanjeet Dhanrajs was, well, to put lightly he was a jerk; a lying jerk at that. He was constantly lying to Sheetal and all Sheetal wanted was the truth. I couldn't help but like him in a way though. I actually felt sad for him at times. He needs Sheetal and has been alone (emotionally) for so long with his stepmother constantly shoving her opinions down his throat.

However also think that while Sheetal is fighting so much she doesn't realize how much she actually does start to like her husband. Why else would she care so much about what he thinks or if he is with another woman?

Unlike her family and his, Sheetal didn't seem to really care much, if any, about a potential 'scandal'.

Sheetal was so set on hating her husband because she loved another man and her father is forcing her to marry him. Alone I actually think Sheetal would have let herself fall completely in love with Sanjeet—even if he and his family were so...I can't think of a nice word.

For example:

"Then, Sanjeet slid the door shut. Just before the slab of wood met the wall's edge, their eyes locked for a split second and he saw her want him." --pg. 86

Sure it was just want, desire, but it was desire. It is a budding for more stronger emotions. No matter how much Sheetal fights to not like Sanjeet by the end of the book I think deep down she really does love him.

Not that I am condoning half the things that Sanjeet did in the book. At the Dhanrajs home Sheetal is treated really bad, not only by Sanjeet but by his family as well. Sheetal's mother-in-law was the worst though.

Sheetal is a very strong woman but her time since the start of the marriage to the end of the book really takes its toll on her emotionally and physically.

By the end of the book things are pretty bad between Sanjeet and Sheetal but things are out in the open, there is a potential hope for their relationship.

I constantly found myself wanting to yell at everyone in this book, but at the same time I couldn't stop reading. Their story has a way of drawing you in that doesn't let go. I know I am going to read book two. I have to know what happens between them. I really do think that Sanjeet is going to turn over a new leaf.

**I received a hardcover/paperback/eBook copy/ARC of this book for free to review from the author/publisher/tour site; this in no way influenced my review, all opinions are 100% honest and my own.*

Sarah says

25/6 - Ugh! Dreadful book!! Highly not recommended. Only one redeeming character, unfortunately she wasn't the main so we didn't spend nearly enough time with her. Pretty much every other character was reprehensible. There were a few servants who were fine and Arvind, Sheetal's first 'love', who was not fleshed out at all so we don't really know who he is except that he's not 'rich' and Sheetal would have had to live in poverty if she had stayed with him instead of marrying the mega rich Sanjeet. Sheetal's idea of poverty is a living room that is *gasp* only 15 feet/4 metres in width and whose ceilings are *shudder* only 5 feet above their heads.

Sanjeet is physically and emotionally abusive to Sheetal, but she decides to stay because Sanjeet's got a ton of money and she figures that her baby will be happier brought up in a house of violence rather than one where the ceilings aren't twenty feet high and his crib isn't made of 24 carat gold. Sheetal is perhaps the most materialistic, money and possession-obsessed character I've ever read. I think Gattani was attempting to turn her into a princess - showered with only the best in life - but when that princess gets paranoid about being infected by street children's dirt and poverty through their touch or breathing in their air then all that 'princess' lustre is destroyed and she's revealed as the grasping character she really is. I couldn't empathise with any of the main characters, in fact I was hoping to see Sanjeet, Sheetal, and Pushpa get their just desserts through public humiliation (they didn't, I was disappointed).

From about page twenty onward all I kept thinking was "Is this a true representation of Indian people and society?". Except that I would only want to inflict this on an enemy, I wish I knew someone familiar with Indian heritage so that I could coerce them into reading this and get them to give me their opinions on the way India and its society is portrayed.

Would a woman like Pushpa really discard a whole wardrobe full of new and expensive saris just so that she can choose her new daughter-in-law's clothing herself? The extravagance and waste in this book was quite obscene and made mad for most of the book and if I wasn't mad because someone (usually Pushpa or Sheetal) was tossing out perfectly good articles of clothing or furniture, then the constant name dropping was filling in the gap. I really don't care that the Dhanraj's own a white Fulton White sofa, I especially don't care when you repeat the name 10 times over in under 300 pages. Surely Gattani could just have called them 'the sofas'? It's not like there were any other sofas in the whole house mentioned (despite how huge the house is described as being), so we weren't going to get confused with which room she was talking about.

The final death knell and reason for this getting that magical one star rating was the numerous typos and passages of mauve-tinted prose. It really was the final straw and I think I've expended enough effort reading and reviewing it, so if you want examples of the prose and typos check my updates. I received a paperback arc of this book from the author (I am sorry it's taken me five years to finally read this) in return for an honest review, that has not compromised my ability to rate and review this honestly. I no longer consider that I own this (it's come off the relevant shelf and everything) and I truly look forward to donating this to the local charity bookstore tomorrow (along with my last read, which was also a bust), but I do kind of pity whoever is finally lured into buying it (the charity part assuages 99% of my guilt).

Christina Torretta says

Review tomorrow!! :D

Arushi says

I want this book. Like now.

Gaele says

I received an eBook copy of this book from the author for purpose of honest review. I was not compensated for this review, and all conclusions are my own responsibility.

Let me start with saying that I had also purchased this book, prior to it coming up as a potential book for me to review. I have a varied list of purchased books, and Amazon with its recommendations popped this one into my list as I have a few other books by Indian authors that center around women and their relationships.

Part of the joy of reading, for me, is the ability to gain perspective on another's beliefs, traditions and see the differences and commonalities that we all share. In this story, the author has clearly detailed the struggle of a modern woman existing with traditional values that have been in existence for hundreds of years. In addition, her own guilt tends to allow her to behave in less than logical ways: a rather begrudging acceptance of her parent's choice for marriage turned sideways in a rather Stockholm-syndrome like reaction to the man she has married – against her will, and with his disdain for the custom.

The story does jump about quite a bit: rich with imagery and information it takes a bit to fix all of the strangeness to the western reader to complete the picture. And the author has provided a glossary of terms that are frequently used throughout – my suggestion is that you look at those before starting in on the book; it does help to eliminate some of the strangeness. What I found is that the characters of both Sheetal and Sanjeet are developed with care and a completeness that depicts, better than expected, the inherent conflicted feelings they both have with the situation. What I don't have experience with, is the overtly traditional and paternalistic society in which she is expected to live: where some of her reactions feel overblown or excessive to me – they do seem to fit with both the story and her character. So the tug of the modern against the expected and traditional is a core component of her psyche and her actions. Sanjeet, on the other hand, is a spoiled brat of a man child – who will bully, batter and berate to get the submissive and compliant reaction he wishes to have, while all the while wanting a 'western style' woman who flouts the conservative norms of their society. And he can't express love or caring in words – it is done with grand public gestures rather than

softly spoken words. His behaviour and mood swings deepen the conflict within Sheetal: because there is a 'one she left behind' that she sees as the behavioral polar opposite from her husband.

The whole story reads very much like a fly on the wall that is privy to all of the secrets that you don't share outside your own family, and as such tends to jump about a bit. But the overwhelming sense I got from this story is that it felt 'real'. I could easily imagine the conflicts and the struggle that Sheetal experiences in coming to claim her place as the wife, and the constant intrusions of a modern sensibility meeting the traditional expectations. It was not an 'easy breezy' read, at times it was certainly uncomfortable: but still and all quite a good book that left me with a better understanding of the tradition of arranged marriages and the pitfalls that can arrive with them. It's an interesting peek into the world of the privileged and wealthy in Indian society, where everyone seems to have some conflict with traditional expectations and the modern wants. I'd gladly read more from this author, and am happy to recommend this book.

Ty Wilson says

I received this book from a First Reads giveaway as part of my effort to expand the types of books I'm reading. I wasn't sure what to think about it when it arrived. A novel of modern India. I've always enjoyed reading about cultures that are different from my own and this one fit the bill nicely. As I began reading it, I found myself drawn in by the voice of the main character, Sheetal. A modern woman forced into a traditional arranged marriage. The book follows Sheetal's journey to discover who she is and where her place is in the world. She is realistically written as she tries to make the best of the situation she finds herself in. Her new family and the life that is thrust upon her cause her to doubt herself and everyone around her as she struggles to become the woman she knows she should be. I quite enjoyed the book and look forward to future works by the author, Anju Gattani.

Alyson LaBarge says

I have a lot to say here because it was such a fascinating book! While Duty and Desire is a Contemporary Romance, it is not my typical sort of read and not one I would automatically pickup. However, when I was given this opportunity, I could not pass it up. I had the chance to see into a world far different than my own and be immersed in a culture with different values and challenges. It was an intense read, one that I am glad that I picked up!

The Good: This is the story of our heroine Sheetal Prasad's path from maidenhood into marriage. We follow how she adapts to her new family as she is bound by the rigid caste system and traditions of the culture in which she lives. At the time of her marriage, the fact that she loves another, Arvind, is irrelevant to her parents. While as a parent, I know they only want what they perceive as best for their beloved daughter, the pain that Sheetal goes through is difficult to read. My heart bled right along with hers!

The man her parents chose for her is Sanjeet Dharaj, of India's prominent royal family. Charming, handsome, and spoiled, Sanjeet is a very interesting character. Much of his behavior is that of a spoiled brat, however we do find out things that make him likeable eventually. Before that though, he does whatever it takes... bully Sheetal, berate her, mistreat her, even going so far as wanting to beat her... so he can have the 'wife' he desires. What does he desire? A wife who is submissive, docile and manageable, most especially in public.

Does Sheetal submit and give in? Well, now I cannot tell you that. You will have to read it for yourself. Suffice it to say that there are few dull moments in this book...one of the main reasons it is so good!

Oh and the entertaining and awful secondary characters, Sheetal's beyotch of a mother-in-law Pushpa and equally spiteful sisters-in-law? They are mean, evil, and tenacious females, who are all trapped in their own duty and demons.

The Bad: It took me a while to read this book. Not because I did not like it or enjoy it but because the cultural differences were *so* significant and Ms. Gattani had done such a superb job of including important details like what Sheetal was wearing or what custom was being followed. I had to stop and re-read sentences several times so that I made sure I understood and could visualize what was meant. Beyond that, I got so angry at both Sheetal and Sanjeet from time to time. Sheetal because I wanted her to stand up for herself(even though I understood that she was truly between a rock and a hard place) and act like the woman of worth that she is! Sanjeet made me mad when he would literally ignore and downright abuse Sheetal. I do not care what your customs or traditions, abuse is wrong!

The Snuggly: Well now, let me tell you that some of the thoughts that Sheetal entertains about Sanjeet....ooooh mama! Hot and smokin' come to mind! And the romance...let's just say that Sanjeet can be very romantic when he wants to. It was enough to keep me reading, just to see what he would do, or what he *really* would do next.;) This is truly an adult's book.

Final Thoughts: In the end, I saw a woman who pulled herself together and decided that *she* matters, *her needs* matter and that she needs to put her wants and desires supersede duty and traditions. Duty and Desire is the debut novel in Anju Gattani's Winds of Fire series, a novel well worth your time!

*I received a complimentary copy of this book for a book tour. This does not affect my review in any way.

Candice Hughes says

I don't often read this genre, which I would call international women's literature. But, I purchased a copy from the author on her book tour this fall and finally have read it.

I highly recommend reading the book even if, like me, you don't read this genre frequently. Duty and Desire is well written. The characters come alive. The detail is beautiful. I enjoyed being immersed in a world so different from my own, especially one so glamorous and exotic.

I do have to admit that I didn't always like the main characters. Regardless, I felt their pain and the pressures that pushed and pulled them to act the way they did.

This book will compel you to think about many things such as how cultures differ, how women's lives differ or are the same, how social classes differ and much more.

It is hard to find books that are both entertaining and thought-provoking, but this book manages to do both.
