



THE SHADOW WOMEN AND OTHER STORIES

By

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Very rarely do we meet individuals who combine several roles successfully and Chandana Khan an IAS officer of Andhra Pradesh/Telangana cadre and author of *The Shadow Women and other stories* is one such unique person .An able administrator , an ardent exponent of folk culture and heritage a social activist concerned with safeguarding the rights of women and the girl child she is also an artist ,poet , a home maker and a caring mother who was able to nurture her family despite her hectic work and social life.

Her short stories in the collection *The Shadow Women and other Stories*, originally written in Bengali and published in Bengali magazines have been translated and published in English by Live wires Advertising Hyderabad and thereby made accessible to a larger audience. The twelve stories in the collection reflect, the multifaceted personality of the writer and bring alive the characters and concerns which preoccupied her in her various roles and imbue it with the colours and images of her artistic sensibilities – of a .poet and painter

Though quite a few of the stories originate and recreate the social milieu of the Bengali Bhadrlok of the sixties and seventies –the concerns and emotion expressed are universal .For instance *A Mellow Hour* she delves in the mind of woman in her sixties whose bitter experience in the past have made her apprehensive in forging new ties . *Shadow Woman* which

forms the title of the collection portrays the anguish of a woman betrayed, and the longing of men for women despite the shadow of the dead and absconding lovers in their midst. In a *Cloudy Sky* a traumatised Meghla finds escape from the reality of her miscarriages in hallucinations of a life with the unborn babies. In *Freedom's Window*, the protagonist Sukanta keeps reminiscing on a former flame, but when he meets her years later he is able to close the chapter and move on.

Children of the Century are coming of age story of Anjan and are strongly autobiographical. The Stories *Right of Womb* a narrative of female infanticide and *The Circle of Bangles* which depict the plight of girls from Hyderabad's under privileged sections being married to old Arabs stems from her work experience in the Ministry of Women and Child.

On the whole, the collection of stories, which continue to carry the flavour of the Bengali language and the lyrical quality of her poetry are both edifying and interesting.