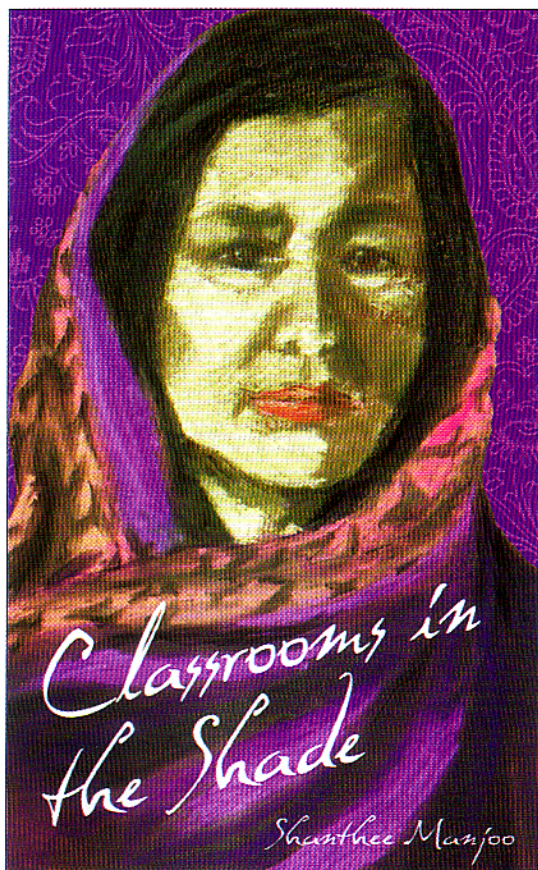


CLASSROOMS IN THE SHADE



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AUTHOR: Shantee Manjoo
PRICE: R145.00
PUBLISHER: STE Publishers
ISBN: 9781 9198 55677

Shantee Manjoo's unique memoir about her life spent in Pietermaritzburg is simultaneously a wonderful historical document and a very personal story of courage in the face of adversity. *Classrooms in the Shade* covers seven decades in the life of this intrepid octogenarian.

The book opens in 1932 when little Shanteedeivi, named after the goddess of

peace, is seven years old and growing up with her devout Hindu father, a widower, and lovely sisters. It ends with her casting her vote in South Africa's first democratic election in 1994, at the age of 69.

Manjoo paints an evocative portrait of Indian cultural life in Natal. She has a gift for describing things in such a way that one can almost smell and taste them. From the local temple peacock that goes AWOL and visits Loop Street (where she still lives today) to the ripe, scented mangoes in the family's rather special garden, all are vividly portrayed in this lively story.

Njabulo Ndebele coined the term, "the rediscovery of the ordinary" to try and encapsulate how ordinary people's everyday stories could help to fight

the dehumanising effects of apartheid. Manjoo's is such a story.

With her feisty nature, tempered by strength and graciousness, Manjoo champions not only her own people but all those who were victimised through apartheid's prejudices.

The insidiousness of the many discriminatory laws she and so many others suffered under for so long, clearly provokes this writer's ire. Yet she is able to show how, like those indomitable Gauls led by Asterix, our country's many citizens of colour fought the system not only through the marches and protests she documents, but also by maintaining their dignity, humanity and optimism.

As an English language and typing teacher, working in and around Pietermaritzburg for six decades, Manjoo tried to instill these values in all her pupils. This book is a testimony to the many lives she touched, as well as to her love of poetry, drama and literature.

As the wife of a Muslim man, Manjoo also challenged the religious prejudices within her own culture, all in the name of love.

Classrooms in the Shade is a dense memoir, full of fascinating anecdotes and quotations. Its detail may not appeal to every reader's taste but for those willing to make the effort, it will greatly enrich their lives and sense of history. **A**

REVIEWED NEXT MONTH

CHEESECUTTERS AND GYMSLIPS

Compiled by Robin Malan

In this collection, 37 eminent southern African writers, including EKM Dido, Ashraf Johardien, Bessie Head, Chris Barnard and Alexandra Fuller, reflect on their experiences of boarding school, ranging from the 1910s to the 1990s. The book includes extracts from autobiographies and specially written pieces.

This one's about midnight feasts, homesickness, sharing a dormitory, making friends (and enemies) and being young.

