


SHANTI'S FRIEND

DEEPA AGARWAL

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- ▶ Born on 23 Dec, 1947
- ▶ Author, poet and translator, Deepa Agarwal writes for both children and adults.
- ▶ was born in Almora, Uttarakhand, a small town in the Himalayan region of India.
- ▶ Deepa spent her childhood in the picturesque Kumaon region which forms the background of many of her books.
- ▶ Childhood escapades have provided material for stories like "Fire", which is about an incident when she and her friend accidentally set the pine forest around her home on fire.
- ▶ Deepa's family history too, has inspired books like 'CARAVAN TO TIBET'.
- ▶ In the mid 80's she took up free-lance writing and eventually made a name in the genre of children's books.
- ▶ Deepa writes poetry and fiction for adults as well and has translated Hindi classics like 'CHANDRAKANTA' into English.
- ▶ At present Deepa lives in Delhi, India.

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- ▶ She received the N.C.E.R.T. National Award for Children's Literature in 1993 for her picture book Ashok's New Friends.
 - ▶ The historical fiction “Caravan to Tibet” featured on the International Board of Books for Young People Honor List of 2008
 - ▶ Imp works: “Blessed”, “Caravan to Tibet”, “The Toy Horse”, Journey to the Forbidden City”, “The Mailbox Ghost and Other Spooky Tales”, “Best Stories from Around the World”, “Shanti’s Friend”.

Analysis

Exploitation by relatives

- ▶ When drought strikes the village an uncle from the city promises to educate Shanti in return for help with the housework.
- ▶ However, there's no school for Shanti, only endless chores and constant fault finding.
- ▶ After a severe scolding, Shanti decides to run away but has no money for her bus ticket.
- ▶ She sits down under a tree to think and the tree speaks to her.

Recognizing a girl's contribution

- ▶ “Don't cry, Shanti! You're a wonderful girl. You're so quick and clever.”
- ▶ “Shanti, if you were not there what would Chachiji do? Who would help her?”
- ▶ In a crisis situation, the tree actually hides Shanti.
- ▶ Deprived of her help and frightened of having to explain to her parents, the relatives realize the value of her contribution.
- ▶ When Shanti returns, they welcome her back and promise to send her to school.

What this book demonstrates

- ▶ Self-assertion (the confident and forceful expression or promotion of oneself, one's views, or one's desires) can sometimes put exploiters in their place
- ▶ No matter how helpless, we all possess untapped inner resources.
- ▶ The fantasy element emphasizes the healing power of nature.
- ▶ The friendly tree is a symbol of Shanti's undiscovered strength that comes to her aid in a moment of crisis.

Eco-Critical Point of View

- ▶ **City-village differences**
- ▶ **The tree becomes her solace and mother.**
- ▶ **How a tree is becoming a mother-figure.**
- ▶ **As it is an Indian write up, people of other cultures could understand more about Indian culture and how nature is depicted in Indian Literature.**
- ▶ **It's not necessary that a friend should be a human entity rather it can be trees, plants or animals. Thus it can increase in children, a sense of affinity towards nature.**