



Asha of the Air

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In the imaginative, fabulistic novel *Asha of the Air*, a woman struggles for freedom and inner peace.

This story, equal parts magical adventure and spiritual inquiry, is narrated by a man in a futuristic society who lives in the air above a ravaged Earth. His story focuses on a kingdom six thousand years in the past. There, Asha inherited Palace Isha and its wondrous forests and rivers, but her loveless marriage to greedy Cabaan resulted in her lands being pillaged for wolfram-wood, a rare, valuable mineral.

Making it through on a haze of drugs, Asha seems resigned to her fate. But when a royal traveling singer, Ilarô, enters her life, her eyes are opened to love and other possibilities. When a tragedy separates the would-be lovers, Asha embarks on a *yaatra*—a journey of the mind and body that takes her through a dangerous wilderness, towards possible salvation at a far-off refuge governed by a wise ruler.

There are Hindu influences to the story, but also an original mythology all its own. People have the ability to float in the skies, and songs can be captured and replayed on magical candles, which “burn off” sound. Lush, descriptive passages dig deep into Asha’s thoughts as she strives to reverse her karma, even as they take in the beauty of her natural surroundings.

While the novel has rousing moments, it’s most focused on contemplation and how the heart and mind can be brought into balance with the universe. Asha’s *yaatra* is intense and heartfelt; she learns how to become a better person and forgive herself and others.

Capped by a cathartic climax and a touching conclusion that reveals the connection between Asha’s story and the narrator’s life, *Asha of the Air*’s inventive mythmaking stands out thanks to its elegant, sophisticated storytelling.

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