

## WHAT WORKS

The primary theme (a spiritual quest) carries mass appeal and if done well, this work is likely to resonate with the target audience, i.e. readers who enjoy spiritual parables or related genres.

What holds potential is the quest for a life that means more than work and money. Is that something a modern reader can relate with? I am sure you hear a resounding yes.

## WHAT DOESN'T WORK

The most worrying aspect is that the quest remains invisible and is not felt. I noticed that throughout the first chapter, which is roughly 4,500 words, there was no inkling of who Adnan is. A young man in a park facing a deadly animal is not enough to make the reader care about the protagonist. Instead, it makes the reader wonder so what, a question one should avoid eliciting from the reader. What could make the reader care?

What if the young man was escaping something or was on his way to make the biggest decision of his life and now he had to first make sure he was alive! To make the reader cares about what happens to Adnan, it is crucial to ensure characterization is strong.

**Characterization:** A deeper delve into the characterization, especially of Adnan is likely to help resolve issues that are interrelated: plot, conflict and themes. Here the biggest issue I found was who is Adnan. This is not merely a question of what he did, where he lived but who Adnan is as a person. What does he want (or not), his fears, state of mind is crucial. Since it was not clear right from the beginning who Adnan is, anything else that happened, be it the bull threatening his life or him falling into the river did not make much of a difference and impact.

The manuscript should give an idea about these but did not:

- Adnan's inner goal
- Adnan's outer goal
- Adnan's fears
- Stakes involved

**Theme:** As I mentioned, the spiritual quest (primary theme) is not visible and felt. Notice you mention in the synopsis that he was disenchanted with the rat race and that this is a journey he will take to discover the truth about himself. However, it is not clear what was he dealing with in general and on that day specifically. That he was sick of his life and was fed up could be used as background to make the reader know Adnan as a character. It felt too absurd that all he had to do was escape a bull. In fact, it was not clear why he was in the park at all. Notice that apart from the physical danger, there were no **stakes** involved when he escaping the bull.

One way to address this is to think about the stakes involved. You could show him dealing with something really grave and on top of that, he has to face a huge animal.

**Manuscript length:** Notice that the total word count of the manuscript is around 1lakh words, which is twice the average length of most paperbacks. Most trade publishers prefer manuscripts (fiction) from 50 to 60k. Hence, I would suggest cutting this at least by 40 per cent. This is from the perspective of a publisher and also agent.

**Information v story:** I noticed that often there was too much information and that the story was getting submerged due to the excessive information.

**Point of view:** This is related very closely to characterization and hence, a strong story. Since the manuscript is written mostly in third person, I felt there is scope to show Adnan's perspective but unfortunately was not explored at all. This is critical if the reader is to know and empathize with the protagonist.

**Sentence construction:** I noticed that there were too many short sentences. There were other smaller issues, which are not so worrisome at this stage. These include delayed information, factual clarity, repetitiveness etc.

ENDS