



Chocolate Cherry Chai

Taslim Burkowicz

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Young, free-spirited Maya Mubeen leaves behind the pressures of family, marriage and tradition for a life of experience and adventure -- proving to herself, and her mother, that she is anything but a typical Indian girl. After diving with sharks in the Philippines and a sordid breakup amidst the bustling nightlife of Tokyo, Maya's sense of who she is -- and where home is -- starts to falter.

An ancient chai-making ritual holds the key to Maya's past and present, unlocking the secret lives of her mother, Nina, who lived through Idi Amin's rule in Uganda, her grandmother, Nargis, forced into marriage at thirteen, her great-grandmother, Sukaina, an underground radical socialist who fled an abusive husband, and lastly, her great-great grandmother, Zainab, who left behind a luxurious life in India.

Traversing the globe and historical eras, Taslim Burkowicz's debut Chocolate Cherry Chai binds together themes of familial pressures, the immigrant experience, motherhood, love and loss into a poetic narrative.

Chocolate Cherry Chai Details

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Author : Taslim Burkowicz

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From Reader Review Chocolate Cherry Chai for online ebook

D. A. says

I absolutely loved this book! It is not often that I come across a book that I cannot put down, but this story that spans generations and continents, definitely fits that category. The author is very good at drawing the reader in and keeping them engaged from beginning to end. The layout of the story lets the reader jump back and forth between different time periods to highlight the challenges women faced during those times. I would recommend this book to anyone who is interested in culture and travel.

James Fisher says

Disclaimer* the following comments are based on an Advance Reading Copy (ARC) of the book, which is slated to be released in September 2017.

About 80% into this book and I just lost interest. It's difficult to pinpoint exactly *why* I lost interest, but two things stand out: 1) I was not interested in Maya's character. Yes, she was trying to 'discover' herself, but how did she pay for all that globetrotting she did and designer clothes she wore? Now, her grandmother Nargis is far more interesting and had the story been told exclusively by her, it may have worked for me. 2) The story board is all over the place and it's difficult to follow at times. Sometimes the narrator and the time period changes within the same chapter. It would have been easier for the reader to have more chapters (with dates, locales, etc.) to help orient the reader.

The stories of Nargis' three other senior's centre friends are well done, but they detract from the storyline as well. **Chocolate Cherry Chai** does not suffer from poor writing, I want to make that much clear. It's not a poor story either; in fact, I was quite enjoying it at first. It is the "flow" of the novel that is off-putting and while I don't like to give two stars or less to any book, I feel that two stars here, saying it was "OK" is more than sufficient, even if I had finished it.

Marni says

A wonderful piece of storytelling. The book is as delicious as its title promises it will be. Spanning generations and continents, the author weaves a glorious web with her characters' life stories in this debut novel. Definitely in my top 10 favourites.

MJ says

Do yourself a favour: DO NOT READ THIS BOOK.

It is confusing, unsatisfying, and I am so annoyed right now that I need to vent before I can finish the last pages.

Ms. Burkowicz can write, but I'm not sure that this mess can be called a novel. It's like she had a whole pile of ideas for characters in her head, and didn't know how to fit them into one cohesive story. So she created a

multiple character, multiple timeline monstrosity, and someone let her publish it. Word.

So there's this current time character who is anxious that she's not ever going to find the love of her life, and (big surprise) she's feeling pressure from the family blah blah blah to get married. And she has this annoying habit of pointing out brand names. Like *so this chihuahua was wearing Armani* or whatever (insert eye roll here).

THEN there's this other timeline of people from the old countries and their miserable marriages. And another group of older women in current times who hang out at the senior centre (but then they disappear. Readers are left to muddle over many, many loose ends. What was the point of having these ladies in the book at all?). I WAS 20 PAGES FROM THE END OF THE BOOK WHEN I FINALLY REALIZED THAT THE CHARACTERS IN THIS TIMELINE WERE THE MATRILINEAL LINE GOING BACKWARDS IN TIME AND WE ONLY GOT ENOUGH OF THEIR STORY TO LEARN THAT THEIR MARRIAGES WERE MISERABLE.

Like other reviewers have said, dates and names at the start of each section would have helped so much. I'm not going to read the book again so I maybe I can make sense of it all. Don't get me wrong: I usually love multi character, multi timeline stories, but Burkowicz does not know how to write one. The best part of this book was its title. It's why I chose to read it.

The funny thing is that in the last ten pages I realized this book was just about a bunch of women and their miserable marriages, and then A PAGE LATER the current time character says to the guy she's probably going to happily marry (and thus break the miserable cycle) that *perhaps our ancestors had failed love stories, and somehow we remember them.*

(And then there's this one chapter that is some bizarre version of what the author imagines is the experience of someone with dementia.)

The sad part is that I really appreciated the parts where the story took place in India and Uganda. I know so little about those places and their cultures. The book is filled with beautiful descriptions - and that's why I'm giving 2 stars. Beautiful writing, but the story's execution is terrible.

Megan says

I don't even know what to say. It's clear that the author has the ability to write, but this book was a hot mess. The story jumps all over the place...both in narrators and time periods. A lot of times this happened in the same chapter with no warning. Proper headings with names/dates/places would have gone a long way. It also seemed like there were too many styles trying to compete. There was the main character, all of her female relatives and the ladies at the senior home with their stories. It was all jumbled up and convoluted. I wish her editor had been stronger.

Samantha says

I didn't know at first if I'd like this book that much. The goodreads reviews were a bit hit or miss, and at the start the introduction of Maya didn't make her overwhelmingly likeable and I was more interested in the

stories of her relatives. As it progressed, I grew more and more invested in every character and I ended up loving the book! Some parts are a bit clunky but overall I found it very relatable and enjoyable. I plan on buying a copy!

Rosemary Winks says

Loved the book, Taslim excels at weaving beautiful imagery into her stories and I enjoyed all of the different generations of women and their story lines. Thank you for sharing this lovely story with us.
