



For Matrimonial Purposes

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Anju wants a husband. Equally important, her entire family wants Anju to have a husband. Her life in Bombay, where a marriage can be arranged in a matter of hours, is almost solely devoted to this quest, with her anxious mother hauling her from holy site to holy site in order to consult and entreat swamis and astrologers. As Anju's twenties slip away, she's fast becoming a spinster by her culture's standards, so she moves to New York City to work in fashion. **For Matrimonial Purposes** is the hilarious story of Anju's journey, her quest for love, and the choices that she must make while trying to remain true to herself and satisfy her family and tradition.

For Matrimonial Purposes Details

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Author : Kavita Daswani

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Saajid Hosein says

yawn

Sasha Strader says

Daswani does not disappoint: the first book I read from her was Village Bride of Beverly Hills and it got me interested in what all else she had done.

While it starts off short of fluff-brained and (as the back cover stated) "Like Sex and the City with saris and mimosas", it quickly evolved into some serious self-examination and exploration of just what cultural values are and how they should affect your life. There were some moments where I wanted to smack the heroine, but-objectively, at least- I know that her actions were motivated by a different cultural upbringing than my own.

The overall take-away is that this is a completely worthwhile book that I would recommend to almost anyone.

Tea Jovanovi? says

Zabavna knjiga... indijske autorke... chick-lit...

Robbin Melton says

Very quick, easy-read, but the main character, Anju, got on my last nerves. Approaching 40, Anju flits back and forth between "Umrica" and her parents in India, looking for the perfect mate. The potential suitors found by her family aren't up to her standards, but she's not having much luck on her own, either. First and foremost, he has to be Indian.

Toward the end of the book, Anju finally gets her man, but is disappointed that he wants to get to know her and fall in love before marriage. She simply wants to get married.

To me, Anju sends mixed signals and is not sure why she wants to get married other than to appease her parents. But, when opportunity presents itself, she turns it down. For me, Anju is one of the most annoying characters I've ever read and she's told old not to know what she wants and how to obtain it.

Author is too quick to wrap up the end and readers have no idea how the wedding, honeymoon or marriage turn out. In fact, very little details are given at all about Anju's prince charming.

Sweetdhee says

Setelah begitu rumitnya perjalanan mencari suami (bukan cinta ya), setelah beberapa pria yang singgah, setelah beratnya beban menjadi perempuan di pertengahan tiga puluhan yang belum menikah, bagaimana akhir kisah Anju?

Chicklit banget.

Tapi worth to read.

Sebenarnya 3.5 bintang, tapi saya bulatkan ke bawah karena banyak bagian yang saya *skip*.

Tapi perjalanan Anju membuat saya berpikir.

Bahwa kebahagiaan itu bukanlah ketika kita mendapatkan yang kita inginkan atau kita impikan.

Tapi ketika kita menerima apa yang sudah ditakdirkan dalam hidup.

Semakin bersyukur, semakin banyak berkah...

Begitulah.

Tumben nulis review. Mungkin karena kekenyangan sarapan nasi uduk

#selalutentangmakanan

Rosemean Hussain says

I haven't read more superficial book than this one in ages! The feminist in me was cringing while reading this book. It was a quick read but I kept waiting and hoping she will do something with her life that will make her not obsess over getting married but ugh! Also, I absolutely hated the way she put muslim countries down in this book. Saying stuff about Pakistan and other muslim countries like India is any better I literally rolled my eyes when she mentioned in passing how her parents were not barbaric. Seriously keep your political agenda to yourself when writing a novel.

Moshe Mikanovsky says

Unlike the promises on the back, I didn't laugh out loud when reading this book. Maybe one small smile, but that was it. Easy read though not much of a plot. Always interesting to read about Indian culture, and in this one, the marriage institution, not as in what happens after the wedding but as in what happened before and during the wedding.

eilasoles says

I knew right away that if I liked the book, it wouldn't be for the brilliance of the writing. Consider this gem on p. 14: "And with her soft, fair, plump complexion, she was every Indian male's dream-wife." Wait, did I just read *plump* complexion? What does that mean? And I also knew right away that it wouldn't be for the political views endorsed by the author. The heroine, Anju, belongs to a wealthy Sindhi family in Bombay and apparently sees nothing problematic about caste endogamy and class prejudice. I'm not saying the book has to be about exposing casteism, but surely a book about the institution of arranged marriages should have more than a casual mention of why the heroine is okay with sticking to the Sindhi-caste-only requirement for

her husband. (One of the more wonderfully subtle examples of casteism is contained in this exchange, when Anju calls her mother to tell she's found the One: "Indian, he's Indian no, beti? Please say he is!" "Yes, Ma, Indian. *Like us*. Everything is like us." (p. 272, italics mine).

And our "liberal," "independent" New-Yorker heroine's attitudes to her parents' domestic help in Bombay are mildly jarring. Consider this on p. 212: "The jamandhar was cleaning the bathroom floors with a hard-bristled brush and limewater ... scrubbing, scrubbing. She probably had a husband, I thought. She, with three missing teeth and callused hands and dark, worn skin." Yes, clearly, the domestic worker's biggest problem in life would be to not have a husband (and nothing to do with the fact that she's compelled to clean Anju's toilets) and it's a shocking injustice that she has a husband - ugly as she is - and Anju doesn't. (Hello hello - what happened to intersectionality and feminist commitment to not hegemonically representing patriarchy exclusively as the kind that is suffered by elite women?). Equally jarring are Anju's casual expectations to be served chai and food and khichdi by her parents' domestic workers. I wonder, what does she do in the New York apartment that she is so attached to? Surely she wouldn't want to leave that wonderful independence back at JFK and actually start cleaning up after herself at home in Bombay?

I know that Anju is entitled to her voice or her story. Her voice makes it very difficult to not be reminded of the wealthy, upper-caste Indians who go to the US and loudly proclaim their allegiance to the ideals of liberalism and equality and modernity while retaining all their religious prejudice, their casteism and their classism. The problem comes when the latter are represented as being part of the exotic Indian package. Anju isn't just "Indian" - she's about as representative of Indian women as Paris Hilton is of an American woman - and it's rather irritating to have reviewers call the book "Bridget Jones's diary with a distinct *Indian* flavor" (Library journal, emphasis mine) or "matchmaking Indian-style collides with love American style" (Publishers weekly). It's grossly simplistic and reductive (and not to mention, offensive) to have this seen as representative of "Indian" marriages, a view that Daswani herself is clearly deluded enough to believe.

Petra CigareX says

An Indian girl from a very wealthy family inherits a curse and no one wants to marry her. The story is about how the very rich spend money on impressing other people with clothes, jewellery and parties, and the importance of a good (meaning expensive) astrologer in getting an arranged marriage.

But when you are cursed, it doesn't matter how much money your family has and how desperate they are to marry you off, no one presentable will present themselves. The mothers (for it is they who decide who shall marry whom) can get all the material goods and a pretty face elsewhere, minus the curse. So the girl leaves India to strike out on her own and goes to New York where she ends up in a glittering job as a fashion publicist (Paris, Concorde, Blahnik) as everyone does in a chicklit novel, and eventually finds a man to marry.

The author attempts, not very successfully, to give the book depth by turning it into a moral story - the heroine must find herself before she can find a husband. She needn't have bothered, it was a fairly enjoyable piece of fluff anyway.

Jennifer says

Is this considered YA fiction? It should be. It reads easier than the latest issue of Cosmo. There isn't much to recommend this simple and rather boring story about a young woman who is pitied by seemingly everyone in her native India for not being married at a ripe and tender age. She feels pressure to follow the Indian customs regarding marriage, but doesn't actually want to do things as they have traditionally been done. The book spans many years in her life without showing much personal growth, but rather a continuation of the same attitudes from one chapter to the next.

I didn't hate it. I probably would have if I didn't get the distinct feeling that the author herself is terribly sweet. I didn't hate the characters; I just couldn't care less about them.

There is a passage that I found poignant in a very HBO show kind of way: "There were no words about being moved in deeper ways, except for those occasions when I might have attended a meditation class and returned home vowing to change my life, become connected with the greater universe, find inner peace. But then *The West Wing* came on, and all was forgotten. Mine had become a life lived on the outside. And if I tried to probe to see what was beneath it, there would only be concealed neuroses and petty jealousies and more dysfunction than I could deal with. So instead, I'd have a Cosmopolitan, buy a pair of shoes, whatever. It was, essentially, a biodegradable life, one that, if I let it slip from my grip, would merge with the dirt and disappear, leaving nothing behind."

Marcia says

Lots of great visuals in this one, as if it were written for a future Single Girl Comedy, but the storytelling is much more telling than showing: This happened, and then this happened, and then this happened.

Trupti Dorge says

really cannot describe the story or plot of this book. There really isn't any. So here's the blurb from behind the book.

Anju wants a husband. Equally important, her entire family wants Anju to have a husband. Her life in Bombay, where a marriage can be arranged in a matter of hours, is almost solely devoted to this quest, with her anxious mother hauling her from holy site to holy site in order to consult and entreat swamis and astrologers. As Anju's twenties slip away, she's fast becoming a spinster by her culture's standards.

Only then is she able to persuade her parents to allow her to move to New York, where, she hopes, she will not be viewed as a failure. Making a new life, alone, will be hard, but if the stars align, she may even find love-on her own terms.

Anju is born in a family in Bombay-India, where girls are supposed to get married the moment they cross their teens. Or at least the search for a prospective bridegroom should begin. She is hauled to many get-togethers, be it a marriage, a sangeet, a post-marriage party or an engagement, for this is where Indian girls and their parents supposedly HUNT for grooms.

The perfect boy is the one who has a good job, good family, does not have any bad habits, is rich and yes, is obviously an Indian. All the girls want to marry her handsome brothers because they are rich and good

looking. It's basically an endless parade of arranged marriage meetings for Anju and her family.

As Anju turns 26 and is still un-unmarried, she decides to go to New York to study. And she stays on after studies to work and finally becomes a fashion publicist. But still behind all that success is her failure of finding a suitable boy and fulfilling her parent's wishes. She tries all sorts of things, putting herself out there, trying on-line sites and so on without any positive outcome.

Okay, I guess my tone is a little sarcastic here, that's not because I did not like the book. I did. In fact I think Kavita Daswani is a good writer with a good sense of humour. The endless efforts that her parents make to get her married are hilarious. And her mother's worries about her growing age are equally funny. In fact, I liked the sense of humour in the book quite a bit.

'But beti, look at your age! You're not twenty-two anymore. You're not going to get proposals like Nina and Namrata. There aren't so many boys still unmarried who are older than you. Maybe he's not perfect, but atleast he's like you. Elderly type.'

What I didn't like about the book? It was the carpet statements that suggested that all Indian girls get married when they turn 20. All Indian girls look for rich and handsome husbands. Nobody marries out of love. All the married Indian girls do not work and the only worry they have is from where to hire the third maid. That all Indian husbands do not passionately love their wives. And so on.

I mean hello? What century were you living in? I actually checked back to see what year this book was written in. 2003. That's not quite old is it? And for God's sake she lived in Mumbai. If it was a story set in a village I wouldn't have disagreed. But this was a little too over the top.

I am not denying that arranged marriages are still prevalent in India. I am just denying the fact that all marriages are arranged. Not that there is anything wrong in an arranged marriage. I know perfectly and totally happy couples whose marriages are arranged.

She doesn't say all these things directly, but the way she has described all the people in the book certainly suggests that. I wouldn't have been so irritated if she would have kept this specifically related to her circle of friends. But statements that start with 'All Indian girls...' made me cringe.

That I have to say spoiled most of the book for me. BUT...it's a good book. People who know nothing about Indian culture or who don't care what image she has created will like the book. It's hilarious with fun adventures of her arranged marriage efforts. And yes, also how in the end she manages to kind of live in the moment and finally finds happiness in a man and a marriage...apparently on her own terms.

Amanda says

Entering her mid-thirties, Anju has proven to be a failure as a daughter. Sure, she's well-educated. Sure, she has a successful career as a fashion publicist. Sure, she has remained a "good girl" despite living by herself in that den of iniquity known as New York City. But she's failed to do the one thing that would define her worth and ease the anxiety she's causing her ultra-conservative, ultra-orthodox parents: she still hasn't married.

And it's not Anju's fault. She's fasted, she's prayed, she's presented herself as meek and submissive. She's allowed her mother to drag her to every swami, fortune teller, and holy man she can find. She's had her birth chart read, her destiny foretold. She's tried to lighten her too-dark complexion. She's attended parties and reunions and the weddings of others, in the hopes of making a match--all to no avail. She's even tried online matchmaking for Indian couples only. What will it take for Anju to meet the man that others assure her has been born for her and, in the meantime, how can she balance her traditional Indian life with her increasingly independent American one?

Other reviews have listed two primary problems with this book: the lack of a clearly defined personality in the protagonist, Anju, and the perception of the novel as a piece of fluff with little to say. And, yes, this certainly isn't the type of novel that is going to deeply move you or offer profound insight into Indian culture. It also has an ending that is predictable and wrapped up a little too quickly and neatly. However, the aforementioned criticisms are a little harsh.

First, the issue of Anju's personality, which to me is not a misstep on the part of the author, although it could seem that way to an American audience who would prefer a headstrong and fiercely independent protagonist eager to break the shackles enslaving her to a patriarchal society. But Anju is not American. While she has been raised in a family that loves her, she has also been raised to believe that who she is will always be defined by the man who protects her: first her father and later her husband. She has not been encouraged to become a fully realized person and therefore is waiting for her other half, who will define her existence by setting the boundaries of what her life will be. It should not be surprising that this protagonist hesitates to break with her religion and her heritage, despite sensing something is amiss with the expectations placed upon her. That she is uncertain, cautious, and hesitant makes her seem more real.

Second is the classification of the novel as mindless chick lit. Okay, I can't defend the chick lit part. And there are moments in the narrative when I became a little impatient with Anju's focus on designer shoes and the world of high fashion. But it could be argued that not accustomed to having a voice (or at least not confident enough to always use it), Anju is using fashion to communicate her values and her inner life to others. At home in Bombay, Anju tries to look the part of the fashionable and worldly expatriate, eager to show that she has become more independent, less constrained by social mores. Yet, while attending fashion shows in the U.S. and Europe, she opts out of the haute couture chic for traditional saris, demonstrating to Westerners her pride in herself as an Indian woman. Anju uses fashion in an attempt to attain balance and define herself: she does not want to lose that intrinsically Indian part of herself in America, but she does not want her desires and dreams to be subjugated to the search for a husband in her homeland.

And the novel, while perhaps simplistic in its presentation, is not mindless. Anju knows she is not just a disappointment because of her inability to marry; she knows it goes back to the day she was born: "And then I slid out, with a minuscule slit instead of the wormlike appendage [my mother] had been looking forward to seeing. Oh, God, she had delivered a *daughter* as a first-born. The unthinkable had happened" (102). Despite being a disappointment, Anju is not unloved and does not want to alienate her family by cutting all ties with her heritage and her customs. Her loneliness and alienation is real and will only worsen if she marries a white man, effectively becoming estranged from her family, or if she marries an Indian man whom she cannot love nor respect. And it's very easy for Americans (as just about every American character in the book does) to think that a family that would expect you to enter into an arranged marriage or to define yourself by who you marry doesn't really love you. But that's a bit hypocritical, no?

For all of our supposed independence, isn't our culture just as marriage happy, just as eager to be one half of a whole? Think we're not as guilty? *Say Yes to the Dress*, *The Bachelor*, at least a dozen Disney princess movies, and a wedding industry that sells fairy tales for a price that could put your first born through college

suggest otherwise. I knew and know plenty of women who can't wait to get married because that's what they're supposed to do. They believe that's when they'll become who they were always meant to be--wives and mothers. The "arranged" bit isn't necessarily there, but a woman in her twenties is perpetually asked questions about her relationship status: Seeing anyone serious?

And this connection is what Daswani makes work for her in *For Matrimonial Purposes*. By presenting us with a protagonist with one foot in New York and the other in Bombay, we may see a bit more of ourselves in Anju's experience than we're comfortable with. All of the American superiority begins to deflate as we begin to realize much of Anju's plight may also be our own.

Cross posted at This Insignificant Cinder

Mathis Bailey says

A very enjoyable read. It is fast paced, light, and entertaining. If you are into Indian-American literature, you will certainly like this one.

Kris - My Novelesque Life says

4 STARS

"Anju wants a husband. Equally important, her entire family wants Anju to have a husband. Her life in Bombay, where a marriage can be arranged in a matter of hours, is almost solely devoted to this quest, with her anxious mother hauling her from holy site to holy site in order to consult and entreat swamis and astrologers. As Anju's twenties slip away, she's fast becoming a spinster by her culture's standards, so she moves to New York City to work in fashion." (From Amazon)

I loved this novel. I have recommended this novel to many of my girl cousins and even had my mom read it. It is romantic comedy looking at arranged marriages in the present.
