



Koyal Dark, Mango Sweet

Kashmira Sheth

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Jeeta's family is caught up in the whirlwind of arranging marriages for her two older sisters, but the drama and excitement leave Jeeta cold. Even though tradition demands the parade of suitors, the marriage negotiations and the elaborate displays, sixteen-year old Jeeta wonders what happened to the love and romance that the movies promise? She dreads her turn on the matrimonial circuit, especially since Mummy is always complaining about how Jeeta's dark skin and smart mouth will turn off potential husbands. But when Jeeta's smart mouth and liberal ideas land her in love with her friend's cousin Neel, she must strike a balance between duty to her tradition-bound parents, and the strength to follow her heart.

Kashmira Sheth was born in Bhavanger, Gujarat, India and immigrated to the United States at the age of 17. Sheth attended Iowa State University where she received her B.S. in Microbiology. She is married to a civil engineer and they have two daughters. Sheth is both a scientist and an author. Sheth has worked for the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection as a microbiologist. In 2012 she will teach at the Solstice Low-Residency MFA in Creative Writing Program at Pine Manor College. In her free time Sheth teaches Indian dance to children.

"Warmly descriptive of life in Mumbai (formerly Bombay), this love story has a rich sense of place. Sixteen-year-old Jeeta's mother is consumed with the problems of arranging marriages for her three daughters and is sure that Jeeta's dark skin and smart mouth will turn off prospective grooms. But the teen's new friend, Sarina, opens her eyes to other possibilities. Discovering the pleasures of learning, Jeeta does well in her last year at school and enters college hoping to study law. Then, a handsome boy whom she meets at the swimming pool turns out to be Sarina's cousin. Because her mother forbids her to socialize with boys, she uses visits to Sarina to provide cover for their developing relationship. Readers may feel let down by the inconclusive ending, expecting at least an engagement, but the family's movement toward more modern ways is realistic. The novel reads like a memoir written by someone who wants to hold on to every detail of a remembered life. The tensions of family life in a small apartment are evident and the conflict between old beliefs and customs and the modern world is clear. Like the matrimonial ad her friend quotes, Jeeta is a girl with strong east-west family values, with all the contradictions that that statement suggests. This first-person narrative is a lush and loving exploration of coming of age." -Kathleen Isaacs, Towson University, MD
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-School Library Journal

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