



Monsoon Memories

Renita D'Silva

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“English rain smelt and tasted of nothing at all. It had none of the fury, the passion of the monsoons. Instead, it was weak; half-hearted.”

Exiled from her family in India for more than a decade, Shirin and her husband lead a comfortable but empty life in London.

Memories of her childhood – exotic fragrances, colours, stifling heat and tropical storms – fill Shirin with a familiar and growing ache for the land and the people that she loves.

With the recollections though, come dark clouds of scandal and secrets. Secrets that forced her to flee her old life and keep her from ever returning.

Thousands of miles away, in Bangalore, the daughter of Shirin's brother discovers a lost, forgotten photograph. One that has escaped the flames.

Determined to solve the mystery of an aunt she never knew, Reena's efforts will set in place a chain of events that expose the painful trauma of the past and irrevocably change the path of the future.

An unforgettable journey through a mesmerizing, passionate land of contrasts – and a family whose story will touch your heart.

Monsoon Memories Details

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Author : Renita D'Silva

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From Reader Review Monsoon Memories for online ebook

Olia says

I really enjoyed this book - a moving, well paced read. I thought way the secrets in the story were gradually uncovered from two main characters pov's was a nice touch, and overall feel was very dreamy. I guessed the BIG SECRET reasonably early on, but it did not spoil the enjoyment of reading the rest of the book - in fact, I felt the references of unspoken of but implied events in the past were quite a draw. 4 stars and not 5 because for me there were too many unexplained Indian references - while it definitely gives the book authenticity and adds character, a few times I was not sure what is being referred to. All in all - great read, give it a try.

Caroline Mitchell says

Monsoon Memories is a beautiful uplifting story of a family torn apart. Family relationships feature as the heart of this engaging story and the characters are fully fleshed and brought to life. Exiled from her family in India for more than a decade, Shirin and her husband lead a comfortable but empty life in London. Thousands of miles away, in Bangalore, the daughter of Shirin's brother discovers a lost, forgotten photograph. One that has escaped the flames.

Determined to solve the mystery of an aunt she never knew, Reena's efforts sets in place a chain of events that expose the painful trauma of the past. I loved Madhau, Aunt Anita and Reenu. This story leads you to far away lands, bringing it alive with each turn of the page. I felt as if I was there, and could smell, taste, and sense the surroundings. This unique, captivating book is a wonderful read and I recommend it to everyone. A perfect summer read, or for any time of the year.

Jenny Hale says

Monsoon Memories by Renita D'Silva is a book for anyone who enjoys meandering through unfamiliar landscapes and discovering hidden secrets within them. The book effortlessly transports readers between England and India, painting each world with words and pulling us in with all of our senses. I found myself longing to be where "the coconut trees stood out in relief against the blanket of rain which muddied the courtyard that Madhu had diligently swept and tidied just that morning."

Against these two very different settings, secrets are hidden deep within a family, and I spent much time curled up in the solitude of late night, devouring the pages to reach the explanation of them. The story started with a photo that Reena, a young girl had found. "Unlike the other pictures she had spent the afternoon flicking through, this one was creased and worn, as though someone had run their fingers across it many times and then folded it and tucked it away." As I began to intimately know the characters and become comfortably calm in the story, another intriguing revelation would send me spiraling forward. D'Silva tells this story with elegance and skillfulness. I highly recommend it.

Tanya (mom's small victories) says

Story and Characters

A wonderfully dramatic and poignant debut novel from Renita D'Silva. I was captivated by the characters and their plight. I was intrigued by what deep secret could have torn the family apart. What caused Shirin so much grief that she was haunted by the Eyes that would follow her during her daydreams and nightmares? My heart broke for Shirin, she exiled herself to the UK but longed for her family in India but wondered if they could ever forgive her. I could empathize with young Reena, an only child in India, who stumbled on a photograph of this forgotten woman and was determined to find out more about her. I simply could not put this book down and although I figured out the secret about half way through, I had to know what would happen and if the family could resolve their issues.

I enjoyed how the author switched from Shirin's to Reena's perspective as they both inched their way closer to the truth. I was so enthralled with the book that it did not feel like a 400 page book (which I only realized when writing the review). I look forward to future novels by this promising author.

Setting

Ahhh, India, the country of my ancestry with vibrant colors, sweet tropical fruits and fragrant, melt in your mouth curries. I have only been once that I can remember, but the country, its sights, delicious food and loving, welcoming family has stayed with me. I have family from Bangalore, where Reena's story in India takes place.

Ms. D'Silva brought back delicious childhood memories of food my mom makes. I was drooling over just the mere thought of the wonderful aromas that Indian cooking produces. As diverse as India is with different regions speaking different languages and eating different foods, I was surprised to find some of our family's favorites described, idli with sambar (fat little white pancakes with lentil curry), masala dosa (Indian crepes stuffed with pan fried potato), bhel puri (crispy rice with a mint and sweet tamarind chutney, boiled potatoes, cilantro and tomatoes), and gulab jahmun (crispy, sugary doughnut holes floating in a sweet syrup). I have not learned to make these Indian favorites yet, looks like I will be hunting for some recipes and hounding my mom for hers.

Ms. D'Silva brought to light the struggle characters face upholding their culture's strong values or going with their heart. She demonstrated the emotional impact of characters who are torn between following through with an arranged marriage or falling in love with someone of their choosing (even if he was of a different religion or station in life). The story shows the political unrest between Catholic, Hindu and Muslim Indians and the social disparity between the poorest servants who, when lucky, become part of the well-to-do family for whom they care. Ms. D'Silva transported me back to India and I was sad to leave India, Shirin, Reena and their families when the book was over.

Cleo Bannister says

I was intrigued by the blurb when contacted by the publisher to see if I would be interested in reading this book. What follows is an unbiased review but I am really glad I was chosen to read this one as it has that unique something that makes it immensely readable.

Monsoon Memories is an evocative book describing the life of Reenu, an eleven year old girl. Reenu visits

her Grandmother in Taipur and finds a picture of a girl hidden in the family photo album. Having decided to be a sleuth like her heroine Nancy Drew she is determined to find out who the girl is and why she has been erased from history. Far away in England working as a programmer is Shirin, a woman haunted by the past and torn between enjoying the happy memories of her life as a child in India and being afraid of acknowledging the events that led her to leave. Between them Shirin and Reenu tell us a painful story of a family torn apart.

The heart of this story is family relationships including all the variations. The characters are brilliant; I loved Aunt Anita, Madhau the servant and the spirited Reenu. The heat of India, the monsoons and the casual poverty that surrounds the family is well described, as is the food. In fact food seemed to be mentioned continually; illustrating how important it was to the structure of the day, I found this occasionally intrusive (possibly as I haven't eaten many of the Indian dishes described in loving detail.)

The structure of the story is measured and steady; at no point did I feel it was drawn out unnecessarily. The reader has different parts of the tale told from both Shirin's and Reenu's viewpoint which drew me in so that I was rooting for a happy ending for all the lovely characters, both minor and major bought to life in this book.

Sherry says

I loved this book. It tells the tale of two Indian women. Shirin lives in London with her husband and has a disturbing past that she can't bear to remember. Reena is a young girl of 11 who lives in India. Reena, who fancies herself a Nancy Drew detective discovers a photograph of Shirin as a child nestled between her father and his sister. She wants to know who is this missing sister, and why she's never mentioned. The story goes between London and India, as the two stories merge. There are some surprising twists and turns, and the author does a beautiful job weaving the two stories together. I learned a lot about the life of contemporary Indian women.

Lilisa says

Alternating between the U.K. and India, the story revolves around Shirin who physically lives in London but is mentally and emotionally forever tied to her childhood and home country of India. Struggling with demons that never leave her, she is held hostage to and is held captive to secrets that haunt and threaten to consume her completely. Only the love and patience of her husband Vinod help ease her memories. In India, Shirin's young niece Reena is leading a carefree life until she discovers an old photo tucked away in a photo album. Fancying herself a detective and young sleuth in the form of a Nancy Drew, she begins to unearth the hidden secrets of her family that will bring with it consequences she could never have imagined. A novel that depicts on many levels how society fails to deal with social issues and untenable acts because of protecting a family's social standing or "face" in the community. While the story engaged and the theme was powerful, the writing didn't captivate my imagination nor beguile me, hence the three-star rating.

Adite says

Renita D'Silva makes a stunning debut with a book that has loss, longing and bittersweet memories at the

heart of its story.

Shirin lives in London with her husband Vinod and yearns to go back home to India. However, she dreads being shunned by her family that cast her out after one tragic incident. Back in India, 11 year old Reena comes across an old photograph of her dad Deepak, aunt Anita and an unknown relative (who could only be an aunt) as she bears a striking resemblance to her. Reena is intrigued by the conspiracy of silence that surrounds this unknown aunt. And being an avid Nancy Drew fan, she sets about trying to discover her story. What unfolds is a family saga that is relatable and moving-- told from two points of view, Shirin's and Reena's.

Renita's storytelling is stunningly evocative and every scene is drenched with the sights, sounds, smells, tastes of India. While reading it, I was instantly transported into the Konkani culture and landscape. And yet, Renita tells a universal story about women and the crosses they bear, their unique strengths and flaws, their resilience and their ability to overcome humungous personal challenges. It's a heartbreakingly moving story and yet a heartwarming one.

I would recommend it to those who know little about India and to those who live and breathe Indian essence. For both sets of readers, *Monsoon Memories* would be a wonderful journey of discoveries!

Em Finnis says

I love this book..

I'm really enjoying reading this beautifully written book that has the ability to transport you to being there watching the story unfold in front of your eyes.

The secret is there and clear for all who read the book from an early stage but the wanting to know how it plays out in the end will keep you reading, it's makes you want to read more each day.

The two main characters individual stories are both heart warming and heart wrenching at times. I find myself hoping that Shirin get to go home and that Reena can handle the truth.

Ken says

Beautiful writing and storytelling that captures the sights, smells, and sounds of life in rural India and contrasts it with a more mundane existence in England. The two main characters, Shirin and Reena, are drawn with careful attention to detail. I particularly liked Reena's "detective casebook" narrative. As these two separate lives intertwine and the story unfolds, D'Silva does an excellent job with pacing that kept me engaged throughout the book. Along the way, I enjoyed a sensory feast, reliving the aromas of spices frying in the kitchen and the unmistakable, unique scent of damp earth just before the monsoon rains arrive. I highly recommend *Monsoon Memories* for anyone who appreciates Indian fiction.

Joseph - Relax And Read Reviews says

Oh I've just finished reading this book and I'm struggling to find the right words to express how much I enjoyed reading it. This book is just amazing! I've read other books by the brilliant Renita D'Silva - all fabulous reads - but I hadn't yet read this book, her debut novel. Now after reading it, I can't actually believe

this was her first book!!!

Through her beautiful exotic prose, this author has once again taken me on an emotional ride spanning continents. This is the story of a family divided in the name of values and honour. It is set in the UK and India - two countries that couldn't be more different.

"Her guilty secret. Her biggest regret."

Having practically escaped from her mother country, India, Shirin is now living in the UK with her husband Vinod. She has spent the last years struggling to cope with her sense of guilt and the repetitive nightmares and dreams of her past life. Overwhelmed by memories, she now longs to go back home and confront her demons. But sully your family name is unforgivable. For her family, she's dead. What had she done to deserve this sort of punishment, to be banished away from home? Can Shirin ever be forgiven and accepted back in a family where religious and cultural values have strong roots?

"Every family has secrets... and they're there for a reason."

Back in India, we meet Reena, a young girl who finds an old photograph of a mysterious girl. Who is this girl? Why doesn't she show up in any of the other pictures? Why was the photo hidden? And why is everyone reluctant to talk about her? She's determined to find out who this girl was and so puts into practice her sharp detection skills to find this girl's identity. But Reena doesn't know that some truths are best kept hidden, buried.

The story goes back and forth in time as together with Shirin, we relive her memories. We are slowly led to one faithful night when Shirin's and all her family's lives have been turned upside down by tragedy.

All characters in the book are very realistic and I felt as if I've known them all my life. I felt sorry for Shirin, for what she has gone through. I wished I could alleviate her heartache somehow. I admired Vinod for his courage, love and determination. And I just loved little sweet Reena.

Since I was a kid, I have always dreamed of visiting India, and thanks to Ms D'Silva's vivid colourful descriptions, whenever I read one of her books, it's as though my dream comes true again and again. This author brings India's tradition, culture, sceneries, its colours, sounds, smells and even its tastes to life. Everything expertly weaved within the main plot of a poignant, heartwarming story.

I could clearly imagine the coconut trees swaying in the wind by the river, the markets bustling with life, people selling and buying fresh exotic fruits and vegetables and aromatic spices. Bright coloured-sari-clad women looking for a good bargain. Stray cows milling around in the streets blocking traffic and a thousand other things. Not mentioning the mouth-watering food and recipes the author likes to add to practically every chapter... just to make me feel hungry. I actually googled some of the food mentioned and will make it a point to try some of it next time I visit my favourite Indian restaurant.

I so loved reading this book that when I turned the last page, after going through a beautiful, beautiful tear-jerking, satisfying ending, I ended up sad. I felt so part of Shirin's family that it was as though I was going away from my family home, leaving all my loved ones behind me in India.

This book is just fabulous and I highly recommend it!

Thebooktrail says

2000s: A life long ago in India – awoken with a lost forgotten photograph.

Visit the locations here - Booktrail of Monsoon memories

The contrast of countries, times and settings make for a poignant tale of homesickness and secrets. Shirin leads a rather empty life in London that she always compares to the colour and vibrancy of life in Bangalore. Even the rain is different:

“English rain smelt and tasted of nothing at all. It had none of the fury, the passion of the monsoons. Instead, it was weak; half-hearted.”

The secrets are wrapped up in the evocative and spectacular scenery and vibrancy of India. A faded photo is discovered by Reena who because of her love of Nancy Drew, is quick on the case of the mystery behind it.

And the story of Reena, the photo and Shirin’s past come to light slowly like layers of a sari, each fluttering in the warm Indian breeze. For Shirin India represents colour, exotic fragrances and warm fond memories. Oh the fabrics, the dusty streets, the children running along the dirt tracks, the humidity, and best of all the food. Food forms so many memories and home cooking in India is set out here as if you could just scratch the pages and breathe it in.

London in comparison is black and white and devoid of the heat and passion in the India scenes. As Shirin’s story of how she became an outcast come out, the lack of colours are even more pronounced. The cultural issues and traditions which are portrayed in the book are sensitively dealt with

As an overall look at India and its culture, family issues and the relationships between women, this is a table spread with delicacies of every kind.

Winter Sophia Rose says

Heartwarming, Unforgettable, Intriguing & Endearing! A Wonderful Read! I Loved It!

Kristen says

A great read! Told by two different characters (one woman and one 11 year old girl) in two different countries, it tells the story of an Indian family and how each of their lives were changed by one fateful day. The pacing of the story started a little slow for me, but definitely kept me intrigued once more of the plot surfaced. I had a little difficulty with all of the references to Indian food, but the descriptions of the different towns and people in India were well-done and helped me really visualize where the story was taking place. A great pick for anyone who enjoys stories of family bonds, secrets, Indian culture, and forgiveness.

Puja says

Every once in a while, comes along a newbie author who takes you by absolute surprise and transports you to a place where you stop thinking that you are reading a debut work. Monsoon Memories by Renita D'Silva was one such read for me - it mesmerised me with its poignant narration and heart-warming story and kept me hooked to the book till the last page. The story keeps oscillating between the frosty winters of London and tropical monsoons of India, between the past and the present and is yet seamlessly interwoven by the author.

The plot revolves around Shirin & Reena – Shirin, who is living a life that has crumpled and fallen apart in pieces by demons of her past and Reena, a 11-year old girl, an aspiring detective who idolises Nancy Drew. As the plot moves on we come to know that Shirin has been exiled from her family in India, literally cut out like a vestigial organ forcing her to shift to London with her husband. However, the ghosts of her past follow her around everywhere like a nightmare and her life becomes a mere shadow of her dark past. Meanwhile in Mangalore, Reena who is Shirin's niece, discovers an old, ancient even, hidden family photo at her grandmother's house, with a mystery girl whom Reena has never seen before. Inspired by Nancy Drew, Reena embarks on a detective hunt to find out who this woman is but instead unknowingly ends up opening Pandora's Box.

Read complete review at: <http://poojareviewer.blogspot.in/2013...>
