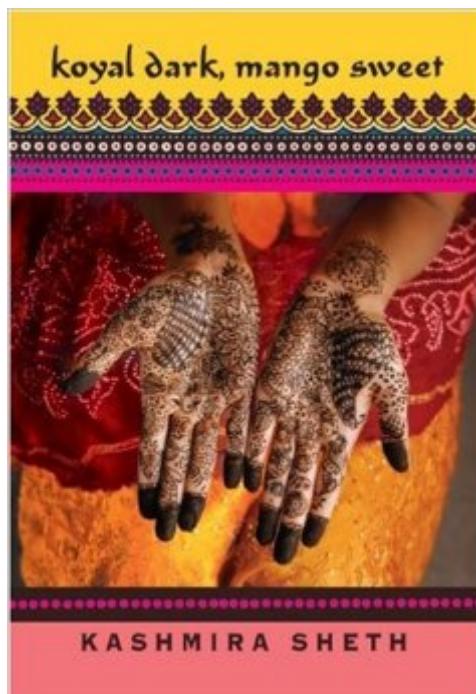


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# Koyal Dark, Mango Sweet



## **Synopsis**

Jeetas family is caught up in the whirlwind of arranging marriages for her two older sisters, but the drama and excitement leave Jeeta cold. She knows that tradition demands the parade of suitors, the marriage negotiations, the elaborate displays, the expensive wedding parties but where is the love and romance that the movies promise? She dreads her turn on the matrimonial circuit, especially since Mummy is always complaining about how difficult it will be to find Jeeta a good husband, with her dark skin and sharp tongue. As Jeeta spends more time with her new friend from school, Sarina, and Sarinas educated, liberal parents, she begins to question her tradition-bound familys expectations. And when she falls in love with Sarinas cousin Neel, Jeeta realizes that she must strike a balance between independence and duty and follow her own path. With its gentle humor and a rich sense of place, Koyal Dark, Mango Sweet is an engaging coming-of-age novel set in contemporary Mumbai, India.

## **Book Information**

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## **Customer Reviews**

Kashmira Sheth has done a masterful job of bringing her readers into the intimacy of the family life of 16-year old Jeeta, a girl from India. Jeeta often feels like the odd one out, as so many 16-year old girls do. Her mother tells Jeeta her tongue is too sharp, and Jeeta feels unattractive. 21-year old Nimita, Jeeta's oldest sister, marries happily during the course of the story, and soon after another wedding takes place for their middle sister, 19-year old Mohini, whose husband takes her to live in

the United States. Jeeta knows she is next in line to marry, but having watched the family go through countless interviews with prospective grooms, doesn't want to have her husband selected for her. There *\*is\** a certain boy who holds her interest, but her friendship with him remains a secret from her family. With the support of her best friend from school, and from her father, Jeeta discovers that there are many more open doors for her than she suspected. This story is fun to read and the character of Jeeta is well-drawn. I especially enjoyed the many details of Indian life Sheth included in her story--these details of dress, custom, ceremony, and food brought the story to life and gave it authenticity.

Jeeta knows she is expected to marry one of the suitors her parents will choose for her, but, watching her sisters marry men they do not love, she is quite sure she does not want to follow this path. After making friends with Sarina, a new girl at school, and witnessing the freedom she receives from her parents, she desires more than ever to choose her own fate. Caught between her parent's expectations and her own wish for love and freedom, Jeeta must balance the weight of tradition with her own desires. I really enjoyed this book. It paints a colorful picture of modern India, and while it occasionally lacked detail, overall it truly brought a city to life. Jeeta is a realistic character with both strengths and weaknesses, and you can emphasize with her internal conflicts. It's a relatively quick read but very entertaining.

I enjoyed reading about the traditions that take place in India, especially that of arranged marriages. It is very interesting to me that the men portrayed in this novel are quite selective when choosing a woman to marry. In an arranged marriage, love is often a secondary matter. I like the plot of the novel, in which Jeeta dreads an arranged marriage, but is also attracted to a boy whom she does not know if her parents will approve.

Jeet's family is busy arranging marriages for her two older sisters, but Jeeta longs for romance rather than elaborate parties, and dreads her own turn. Her new friendship with Sarina and her educated, liberal parents will lead her to further question her traditional family's ways - and when she falls in love with Sarina's cousin, more questions arise. Can she honor her family's traditions while making her own way in life? Fine insights into contemporary Indian life are revealed. Diane C. Donovan California Bookwatch

I really enjoyed this story. Sheth paints a very vivid picture of life in Mumbai, weaving in details

about native plants, customs, and family life. The main character, Jeeta, is well-developed as a strong, independent teenager looking to find her own way of reconciling her dreams and the expectations of her family. I highly recommend this book.

Growing up in a traditional family in Mumbai, India, sixteen-year-old Jeeta was taught that obedience and home-making skills were all that she needed for a happy future. Her 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. Then Jeeta becomes friends with Sarina, whose liberal, educated family and modern ideas open her eyes to other possibilities for her life. Suddenly, she's questioning the expectations of her society and her life becomes even more complicated when she falls in love with a mysterious (and forbidden) boy that she meets. Jeeta must now try to find a way to follow her heart without letting her family down and decide whether to respect or rebel against her traditional culture. Koyal Dark, Mango Sweet gives a fascinating view of Indian culture that is so vivid I could almost taste the spicy sambhar soup and feel the silky cloth of a sari against my skin. I learned a lot about Indian customs, but this book never feels like a textbook. Even though the setting is exotic, Jeeta's problems and emotions are as relatable as your best friend pouring her heart out to you. Her struggle to balance her duties and her dreams is difficult and inspiring. This book does not simply shun traditional ways of Indian culture, but causes the reader to consider both sides of the argument. I definitely recommend this book to everyone!

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