

Title: *American Betiya*
Author: Anuradha Rajurkar
Genre: YA Fiction

Reviewer Name and Grade: Ethan D., 9th Grade

Date Reviewed May 31, 2022

The book I will be reviewing is *American Betiya*. *American Betiya* is written by Anuradha Rajurkar. The genre of the book is young adult fiction.

Rani, a teen at a split in the path, is the protagonist of *American Betiya*. She adores her culture and has a strong attachment to it, yet she is conflicted because her mother exploits her heritage to maintain control over her. School, scholarships, and no males have been her upbringing. While Rani is aware that her parents just want the best for her, she feels restrained since she believes she is unable to fully explore the world around her. When Rani meets Oliver, an artsy kid, she is instantly smitten. Despite the fact that they come from two different backgrounds, they have a strong bond. This is also a coming-of-age story with a strong sense of culture and heritage. Rani's interracial engagement sparks numerous debates regarding cultural differences and socioeconomic status. Rani is figuring out what college to attend, how to move away from her family, and how to get through high school. Meeting Oliver opens her world and exposes her to new ideas while he learns about her culture. Though things with Oliver appear to be going well at first, they are not. This novel's exploration of culture and legacy was fascinating to me. It raises issues such as cultural clashes, respect for others' cultures, and traditions vs. the modern world. It's thought-provoking, and it sparks a major debate about racism, ethnicity, and having mixed feelings about your upbringing. While Rani has a loving and supportive family, she believes they overstep their bounds. Which is something that every adolescent has gone through. It's a narrative about forks in the road, growing up, and the implications of our choices, summed up in this exchange between Rani and her grandmother: "The best masalas use spices slow-roasted over the flame," she says, "browned, even a little burned. We are like that only— we burn a little to attain the complex flavor."

Did the plot (for fiction) or presentation of information (for nonfiction) keep you interested?

The plot of this book was very good and it kept me interested.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?

The pace of the book was just right.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?

I think this book is appropriate for grades 9 and up.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book to a reader who likes young adult fiction.

Rating:

I rate this book 3 stars because This was supposed to be a charming contemporary novel, but it wasn't as engaging as I had thought. All of the characters I liked were Rani, her family, and her best friend, Kate. Cultural differences were well-represented. It also shed light on racism, which I liked.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Zahra V., 8th Grade

Date Reviewed: June 2, 2022

American Betiya is the debut fiction novel of Anuradha D. Rajurkar. It follows an Indian-American girl named Rani Kelkar who lives in Evanston, Illinois. Throughout Rani's entire life she has been the perfect Indian daughter to her parents. Ignoring her love for photography, Rani decides to become a pediatrician to please her parents. One day, Rani visits a gallery and notices someone eye-catching from the rest. She meets a white boy named Oliver Jensen. Despite his tattoos and multiple piercings, the intensity of his look does not startle Rani. As they get to know each other and create a friendship, Rani's feelings begin to amplify from "like" to "love". The feelings were mutual, and as Rani spent more time with Oliver, her heart and thoughts were consumed by him all day. Kate, Rani's best friend, pushes her to start a relationship with Oliver, though reminds her not to fall head over heels too quickly. Despite these warnings and the danger of her parents finding out, Rani can't resist spending more time with Oliver and finds a way to sneak out of her house to meet him. Sneaking out, however, is not as easy as it sounds. Although Rani is 18 and a full grown adult, she was not allowed to date or see any boys, especially those who were not Indian. Nevermind adding "unstable home life" to the picture, which was a big part of Oliver's life. Rani was doing the complete opposite of her parents' wishes and rules. Yet, as their relationship starts to become more serious, so do the problems, causing Rani to feel as if things are getting out of hand. With Oliver's mother being an alcoholic and his sister having trouble keeping relationships, he turns to Rani for support. But, as time goes on, Oliver demands more than Rani can give or even manage. Quickly it becomes transparent that Rani must make a choice: Oliver or herself.

Questions:

Did the plot (for fiction) or presentation of information (for nonfiction) keep you interested?

I enjoyed the plot of this story because it kept me on the edge of my seat throughout the entire novel. I liked how the author showed us as time went on Rani's character developed, from being naive to being able to do what was best for her and not having to worry about others before herself.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?

I feel as though the pace of the book was just right. Throughout the book I was able to understand the characters' emotions and the different situations, without having to stop and re-read, or skip through because the pace was slow.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?

I believe this book is appropriate for readers in 8th grade and up. While the story plot is not too complicated to read, there is teen romance and racism, which might be advanced for younger grade levels.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book to someone who is interested in teen romance and fascinated in the cross-culture aspect of the story.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?

I think it would be helpful for teens to understand that Rani is not fully sure of who she is herself, and when she comes to trying to help her boyfriend it becomes challenging trying to balance two lives at once. Also, I think it would be helpful for teens to understand that in the story, Rani's boyfriend is uncultured and comes across as racist, though that may not be his intention. This brings realizations to how people should be more sensitive when speaking about other cultures and ethnicities.

Rating:

5 stars: I'm really glad I read this book; it was awesome!

Overall, I would rate this book 5 stars. I loved how thrilling it was to see what choices Rani would make in the story. I also appreciated how it brought up the issue of racism and toxic

relationships. I enjoyed how both Rani and Oliver developed throughout the story, and how Rani came to the realization that she should spend more time on her needs and figuring out who she is, before trying to help others in that aspect.