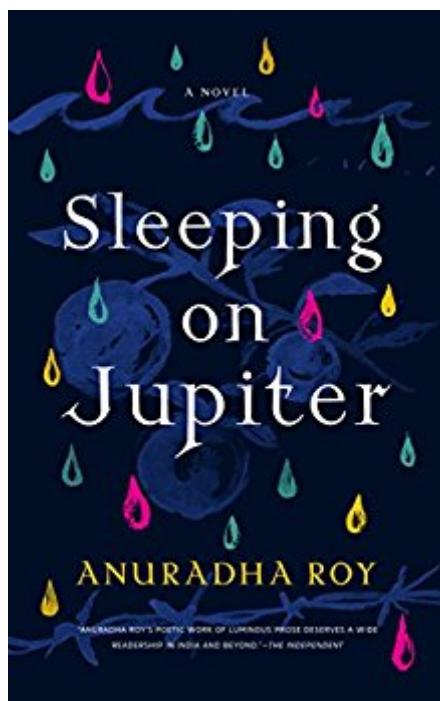


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Sleeping On Jupiter: A Novel



Synopsis

Long-listed for the Man Booker Prize, a novel about violence, love, and religion in modern India. On a train bound for the seaside town of Jarmuli, known for its temples, three elderly women meet a young documentary filmmaker named Nomi, whose braided hair, tattoos, and foreign air set her apart. At a brief stop en route, the women witness a sudden assault on Nomi that leaves her stranded as the train pulls away. Later in Jarmuli, among pilgrims, priests, and ashrams, the women disembark only to find that Nomi has managed to arrive on her own. What is someone like her, clearly not a worshipper, doing in this remote place? Over the next five days, the women live out their long-planned dream of a holiday together; their temple guide pursues a forbidden love; and Nomi is joined by a photographer to scout locations for a documentary. As their lives overlap and collide, Nomi's past comes into focus, and the serene surface of the town is punctured by violence and abuse as Jarmuli is revealed as a place with a long, dark history that transforms all who encounter it. A haunting, vibrant novel that was long-listed for the Man Booker Prize and the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature and short-listed for the Hindu Literary Prize, Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter* is a brilliantly told story of contemporary India from an internationally acclaimed writer.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When I first finished “Sleeping on Jupiter” by Anuradha Roy, I was left with too many unanswered questions. I’d enjoyed it quite a lot, but I decided I needed to go back and reread it here and there, to try to resolve what bewildered me about the characters and some holes in the action. But once I started reading it again, the book sucked me in and held me spellbound much more so than the first time! I read it more carefully and slowly the second time, marking the book in the margins whenever I found key elements that I knew might better inform the meaning of the whole. I felt like I was on a literary mystery quest, looking for the slightest clues and I found them everywhere! In fact, I discovered almost a whole new book hidden in the details. So what is this book about and how can I help you understand it better on a first reading? First, virtually all the action in this novel takes place in the fictional city of Jarmuli, India. This is a religious Hindu pilgrimage town located on the Bay of Bengal more or less a full day’s train ride south of Kolkata. The story consists of many interwoven personal stories about people who have lived in, are currently living in, or are visiting Jarmuli. The lives of these people intersect. It is for you, the reader, to find out how they intersect and why this is important to the novel as a whole. The book focuses on the lives of eleven people: one is a main character (Naomi), three are very major secondary characters (Suraj, Badal, and Jugnu/Johnny Toppo), and the rest are significant minor characters who are necessary to flesh out the plot and give it interest and tension (Guruji, Raghu, Piku, Champa, Vidya, Gouri and Latika). And don’t overlook the albino monk!

How do you reconcile a country known for spirituality with daily violence against women? What is it about a society that goes back millennia that makes men, and women, believe that the ill treatment of women and children is justifiable? How can you have a culture that has daily life wrapped up in the worship of a Greater Being and casual violence at the same time? Anuradha Roy has done something very brave in trying to explore those questions in this novel and I would not be surprised if there is a certain amount of backlash to this book. The story may seem very simple at first. A young girl of Indian origin but raised in the western world returns to India to film a documentary. A reader may think that we will see Indian culture through her eyes. After all, stepping out of a group and then returning to it makes abhorrent behavior obvious. However, there is so much more to this novel than that. We have multiple narrators whose way of thinking expose the inner workings of Indian society. The three older women travelling to visit a holy temple are as varied as can be - the traditional, religious widow who is slowly going senile, the woman still clinging to her youth and the mother whose children have no interest in her at all. In their interactions we see the contempt with

which their own sons treat them and how easily accepting they are of this treatment. When faced with an empowered young girl their reactions are judgmental although they disguise them as concern. As the story unfolds we meet our other characters - a temple guide with an attraction for young boys, an owner of a tea stall with secrets to hide and the son of one of our three older women.

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