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The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel (2012)

Deborah Moggach (Author)

In this novel by Deborah Moggach, Ravi Kapoor is a busy London doctor with little patience for his ill-tempered father-in-law, Norman, who has come to live temporarily with Ravi and his wife, Pauline. He begins to wish he could just send Norman to a retirement home and get his life back. Then his cousin Sonny cooks up a plan to open just such a retirement home in Bangalore, at the location of the Best Exotic Marigold Hotel. Sonny promises that this home will be like a little piece of England in the middle of India, luxurious and affordable. Ravi, Pauline, and Norman visit the hotel, where they and a number of other potential residents learn that the quality of the facility has been exaggerated just a bit. Nonetheless, the residents of the retirement community find that their new lives offer no shortage of interesting and humorous events, and some even realize they may be getting a second chance at love. This book is also a 2012 film of the same name.

MAIN CHARACTERS :

Ravi Kapoor, Cousin (of Sonny), Doctor, Spouse (of Pauline),
 Pauline Kapoor, Daughter (of Norman), Spouse (of Ravi),
 Travel Agent, Sonny, Businessman (owner of Best Exotic
 Marigold Hotel), Cousin (of Ravi), Norman, Father (of Pauline),
 Retiree, Muriel Donnelly, Retiree

SUB GENRE :

Contemporary, Literary

SETTING(S) :

Bangalore, Karnataka, India, London, England

SUBJECT :

Indians (Asian people), Retirement, Physicians, Humor,
 Family, Love, Father-daughter relations

TIME PERIOD :

21st century AD

RECOMMENDED SIMILAR TITLES

A Conspiracy of Friends - Alexander McCall Smith

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John Harding - Review of These Foolish Things

The Daily Mail February 6 2004

A generation ago, the average life expectancy after retirement for a man was just two years. Old people didn't linger long enough to become a burden to the State or discover the ingratitude of their children.

Today, thanks to improved living standards and health care, the elderly don't so much die as fade away over decades of decrepitude. At the same time, their offspring work such long hours there's no slack for an Aged P.

Who, then, is supposed to care for the elderly? Where are they to go? The ingenious answer in Deborah Moggach's 15th novel, *These Foolish Things*, is not simply to pack them off to a retirement home but to pack the home itself off to the other side of the world. India. Out of sight, out of mind and out of Sunday lunch range as well. Thanks to globalisation, we've relocated our call centres to Bangalore; why not ship our seniors out there, too?

The idea is cooked up by overworked London NHS doctor Ravi and Sonny, his wheeler-dealer cousin from India. It offers double relief for Ravi from the dispiriting daily trauma of A&E and the presence in his house of father-in-law Norman, a sex-obsessed septuagenarian fugitive from the care home gulag, who is lured on to the scheme by the Eastern promise of Asian Babes who know the 'Kama Sutra' backwards and probably every other way too, expertise he needs after his prostate op.

The advantage of India is it's cheap, and Norman's fellow guests at Dunroamin, a former Raj official's bungalow-now-private-hotel in Bangalore, are economic migrants hoping to eke out their remaining years in a gentility no longer possible in the UK. All have their own reasons for joining a group Moggach sweetly describes as 'predominantly beige'. Muriel has fled Peckham after being mugged, burgled and abandoned for days on a hospital trolley. Evelyn's children are too busy for her in their antithetical quests for material wealth (son) and spiritual fulfilment (daughter). Madge is a merry widow after a final fling. The only couple, the Ainslies, can no longer afford at home the life of travelling and sight-seeing that has enabled them to get through life without talking to one another.

Dunroamin recreates middle-class England as it used to be: servants, no crime, no money worries, no rush. Cultural differences appear limited to the absence of cheese and having to watch *EastEnders* in the wrong order on videos from home. But India is not so easily shut out, and what develops is a hilarious comedy of manners as the old people venture out into their adopted country and are changed by the experience, finding a confirmation in the country's spirituality of what their own long lives have hinted at. How can the local people accept such overwhelming poverty other than through their indifference to materialism?

In a telling scene, a man gives the shoes he bought when he first met his wife working in a shoe shop and has kept for years for sentimental reasons to a legless beggar. It's things that are the problem; the foolish things we cling to that impoverish our lives and never quite fill the void left by an absence of love and affection. That's why we abandon our old folk.

That said, it would be wrong to reduce the complexities of this fine, funny novel to a single statement. As we have come to expect, Moggach again demonstrates that she has no contemporary equal in marshalling a large cast of characters and a raft of ideas to produce a pacy, engrossing narrative that lingers long after the last page has been, regrettably, turned.

Highly recommended.

Waiting for the end

M. John Harrison - Review of These Foolish Things

TLS February 6 2004

"Old age is not for cissies", Evelyn Greenslade's husband tells her, then dies and leaves her to it. Some years later, puzzled, tremulous and unable to afford England any more, she finds herself living in the Dunroamin Retirement Hotel, Bangalore.

We have to think of somewhere to put the old people. Pension funds collapse, investments are mismanaged, sectors public and private fail to meet demand, New Labour backs anxiously away looking for somewhere to wash its hands: it is a pensions time bomb. Inevitable, then, that the retirement industry, like all the others, should offshore itself to the warmer economic climate of

the East. This idea, beginning like many business notions as a piece of cheap rhetoric, is the brainchild of an overworked London doctor, Ravi Kapoor, and his rapacious Indian cousin, Sonny Rahim. Sonny is in it for the money; Ravi is in it to get rid of his live-in father-in-law, a classically dirty old man called Norman who has just set fire to the kitchen while boiling some dirty handkerchiefs. "Big bucks all round", Sonny promises. It is the "old people Business". It is a once-in-a-lifetime idea. Besides, they'll be doing the retired themselves a favour. Who wants to moulder away in Worthing (more trouble to reach by Connex South East than the Indian subcontinent by 747) when they could be tanning their wrinkles under a palm tree? Everyone is so much more mobile now.

To his exploitative haven – "twenty rooms with flowered bedspreads", their mismatched furniture "shoved there on a temporary basis until somewhere better could be found" – are drawn, among others, Muriel Donnelly from Peckham who, despite her dislike of darkies, rapidly succumbs to magical thinking in a country where even a film poster can be holy; the gross Norman, driven by his quest for "coitus", the only thing that reminds a chap he's still alive; Dorothy Miller, who has given her life to current affairs at the BBC ("Dorothy knew, in her heart, that she came first with nobody"); and, of course, Evelyn Greenslade herself, a little sentimental, a little dependent, wondering if she will have the courage to "make the strange into the familiar". They are all scared, and who wouldn't be? Britain lies behind them, the place where they lost their confidence, clung to their spouses until death divorced them, then watched their children mutate into strangers; where things have gone so wrong that the birds sing at night like canaries detecting some imminent disaster. Before they left they caught a glimpse of the alternative to Bangalore. It was an empty lounge in a public home, the chairs "arranged around the walls...as if waiting for a significant event".

Ironically, their new world is not dissimilar to the one they have been forced to give up, "an England of Catherine Cookson paperbacks and clicking knitting needles, of Kraft Dairy Lea portions and a certain Proustian recall". They eat Cooper's coarse Cut Oxford Marmalade. They would sit on the veranda and do the Daily Telegraph crossword puzzle, if only Norman didn't keep the paper to himself. At night, they sing old songs, with words that list the things they miss. Outside Dunroamin it is a different story: enfeebling heat, limbless beggars, dogs nosing through heaps of rubbish. Bangalore, despite its rocketing property prices and high-tech business revolution, remains part of the old India. "Even the holy cows, wandering between the cars, were cruelly thin." A young man with no legs watches Evelyn through the shifting haze of exhaust smoke. These Foolish Things has a big cast of characters: soon the reader sees the subcontinent itself is one of them, a demiurge as invasive as surgery, already busybodying about inside these old folk, giving and taking away. Some get ill, some get insights. Some get their sensuality or their sexuality or their original personality restored to them. One at least discovers she has come home. What they don't recognize is that their lives could always have been this interesting if they had not been so determined to be safe.

Half the problem is that they are all, as Dorothy puts it, struggling against a sense of their own irrelevance. Deborah Moggach's skill is to show just how relevant their irrelevance is. It is another of her neat, withering reversals, a technique which progressively ups the ante of the novel. The publishers describe These Foolish Things as "poignant and hilarious". That is often true, although "savage and hilarious" might be truer. The lightness of surface, the quick little point-of-view shifts, the fluid misappropriation of sitcom-style dialogue, the jokes themselves, fail everywhere to disguise the author's intelligence; while the original assumption breaks up as it expands, generating notion after notion like reflections on rippled water.

When Evelyn Greenslade first sees Dunroamin it is "bathed in a golden light, the light of long afternoons in her childhood garden, now tarmacked over to become the freight terminal at Gatwick". It is a Kiplingesque light, the afterglow of the departed Raj now illuminating a site of bathetic reversal. Funny as this is, it isn't quite enough for Moggach: the ironies of offshoring can be mined further. Just across the road from Dunroamin lies an enterprise run by one of Sonny Rahim's business chums, a call centre from which young Indian men and women sell life insurance, cheque recovery schemes and, who knows, perhaps private pensions, to businesses in the London area. When Evelyn blunders in under the impression that there will be a telephone she can use, Sonny sees a new possibility. The old folk have nothing to do. They need to give and receive kindnesses. They need, above all, to feel useful. Soon, the telesales force are sitting respectfully in Dunroamin's shabby common room, calling everyone "aunty" and sharpening their knowledge of English vernacular the better to sell financial product. "Mrs Greenslade, you are a genius", Sonny congratulates Evelyn. "Please permit me to kiss your feet."

If there is a problem with the novel's constantly self-catalysing ironies, it is that after a while they become tiring. There are almost too many clever takes on things; too many conceptual dances with the situation; too many cheerfully cruel developments. But it seems churlish to complain that a novel – especially a comedy – is over-inventive. And you sense too that Moggach's inventions are almost a by-product of her exuberance, her political impatience, her appetite for involvement, her sheer liveliness. In the end, underneath the ironies, These Foolish Things is a book about remembering – too late, or not too late – how to be alive.

The jealousies and quarrels of the old folk, their fears of abandonment, their drive to find common ground with people they don't really like, their sense of being flung together by circumstance, are reminiscent of Olivia Manning. But Moggach, though she might like us to believe otherwise, is everywhere kinder than Manning, and more optimistic. Life generates the turmoil of places like Bangalore – the poverty, the pollution and the beggars with their soft voices and absent limbs: but it is a generator of possibilities too. Not to say a constant reminder that eventually all possibilities run out. Images of Evelyn's fate abound. "Only yesterday she had opened a biography of Dr. Crippen, one of the books that had been left behind by other visitors, and found its pages crumbled to sawdust." Old age, Deborah Moggach reminds us matter-of-factly, is a country from which nobody returns

from pg 176 of
The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel

Thali

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Thali (Hindi: थाली [t̪ʰaːli], meaning "plate") is an Indian meal made up of a selection of various dishes. Thali dishes vary from region to region in India and are usually served in small bowls on a round tray. Sometimes a steel tray made with multiple compartments is used. In North America, people sometimes use plastic thalis because they are disposable. Typical dishes include rice, dal, vegetables, roti, papad, curd (yoghurt), small amounts of chutney or pickle, and a sweet dish to top it off.^[1]

Restaurants typically offer a choice of vegetarian or meat-based thalis.

Depending on the restaurant or the region, the thali consists of delicacies native to that region. Thali starts out with puris, chapatis (rotis), and different vegetarian specialities (curries).

In some restaurants, a thali may include "bottomless" refills on all components of food; the idea is that one eats until fully satisfied. Such thalis are referred to as "unlimited" thalis. In some places the term means that everything in the plate except a few items, like the sweet dish or dahi vada, is open to unlimited helpings.

Thalis are sometimes referred to by the regional characteristic of the dishes they contain. For example one may encounter Rajasthani thali, Gujarati thali and Maharashtrian thali . In many parts of India, the bread and the rice portions are not served together in the thali. Typically, the Indian bread is offered first with rice being served afterwards, often in a separate bowl or dish.



North Indian cuisine
vegetarian thali served in a
restaurant in Tokyo, Japan

Question: What happens when you reach retirement age? Do you think you get to that stage in life and are forced to take a hard look at your past? Maybe then you acknowledge or comprehend some of your life's choices might have been the wrong ones because you've gained enough wisdom only to realize the years you have left are far less than the ones you already lived. What do you do then? Ah, I can't give you the answers but sometimes witnessing other people's anguish over their mistakes may help you avoid some of your own. At least, that is what I took from [*The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*](#). And what a wonderful lesson I learned from this film.

The film follows a group of British people who have reached their twilight years and have gone to India in search of those answers I mentioned above.

Rarely do I quote a movie in my reviews, but I shared this already and just have to share it again because this movie (and quote) provided me with a recipe to figure out some questions I've had come across my lap lately.

"Everything will be all right in the end... if it's not all right then it's not the end."

This saying is stated throughout the film like a constant reminder or a call to arms, of sorts. But it wasn't until I got to the very end of the film did I fully understand and appreciate its meaning. It's not like I was ignoring the aphorism. Actually there were many wonderful, inspirational quotes that I paid close attention to in [*The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*](#), but I have tendency to place myself in many movies' plot lines to see where I may fit in so I can figure out how to deal with my own life and problems. Probably not the smartest thing one could do; but with all art forms I feel they are all teaching tools, modes of motivation and means of inspiration. So, I was a little preoccupied being totally captivated by the movie to allow that quote's meaning to fully register until I reached the conclusion of what the movie was trying to convey.

I may be 25+ years away from retirement age but [*The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*](#) opened my eyes to a world I will encounter soon enough. And if you are like me and try seeing yourself in films in an attempt to obtain answers to life's riddles when you encounter the varying characters and dilemmas in this story, I believe you will enjoy the film. And perhaps learn a lesson or two.

This film discusses an era that many in Hollywood ignore – life after 60 – and it honors those years and the people of a certain generation. It's a celebration that life is spectacular no matter what your age, station or when you are forced to move into the latter part of your life. Retirement age is not a death sentence but a chance to live your life the way it should be lived, with gusto. You've earned this time to do what you want to do, so embrace the change and the knowledge you've obtained while living on this planet for 60+ years. Rejoice!

[*The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*](#) stars some of my favorite British actors. All of them have been on the stage and screen for many decades: Dame Judi Dench, Tom Wilkinson, Bill Nighy, Celia Imrie and Dame Maggie Smith. The actors represented the different aspects of what happens when people reach that turning point when final decisions are made on how one wants to happily live out the rest of one's life – with no more regrets. Each actor did an exemplary job portraying the multi-faceted levels of the circle of life. And, I have to mention Dev Patel. He was fantastic as the one younger generational character that was fighting to make sure he had no regrets later in life.

[*The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*](#) is a wonderful film that all generations should witness. Based on the novel, "These Foolish Things" by [Deborah Moggach](#).

My favorite part: That the movie gave me some hints to help me with some of my life's questions. Plus, I adore the line said by Tom Wilkinson's character, "This is the day!" Once you see the film, you will know what I meant by including this. Everyone should get to the point in their life where they can finally say those four words!

My least favorite part: I am not going to share on this one.

Directed by [John Madden](#), [Participant Media](#) distributed by [Fox Searchlight Pictures](#), 2011 (UK).

Starring: [Judi Dench](#), [Bill Nighy](#), [Tom Wilkinson](#), [Penelope Wilton](#), [Ronald Pickup](#), [Celia Imrie](#), [Dev Patel](#), [Tena Desae](#) and [Maggie Smith](#),

SUMMER 2012

Thrillingly, "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel" continues to break records, playing in cinemas all over the world – proving, if proof were needed, that you don't have to be twenty-five to go to the movies. We could have told them that, couldn't we? A story about the over-sixties is bound to find an audience. People of my vintage are terrific film-buffs, it's in our blood, and what's more we visit mid-week and even in the afternoons, so cinemas love us. The problem has been a lack of movies that reflect our experience. This is due to Hollywood's shameless sucking-up to the young, of course, but this movie's success has given the studios a jolt, and about time too.

Another reason for its success is its stars. More and more I realize how great movie actors are worth every cent, and then some. They understand sub-text; they can invest even a banal line with nuance; the changing weather on their face reflects their inner life. Their timing is pitch-perfect; watching Bill Nighy shake a dead telephone is bliss. And somehow, in that indefinable way, they have a presence on the screen. One feels in good hands.

Needless to say, all this has been great for the book. I've had many, many emails from people who've seen the film, often several times, and then gone on to read the novel. One or two, to their irritation, have discovered that they've already read the book when it was called "These Foolish Things" – to them I can only apologize for Amazon's misleading marketing, nothing to do with me (anyway you should have gone to a bookshop!). Apart from that hiccup it's been hugely pleasurable to see a film giving such joy and then to see how many people are reading the book which, as you might have discovered, is very different to the film. In a way this is a bonus – one doesn't confuse the two, or resent the fact that an actor has taken over a favourite character and made it their own, because the characters in the film are unrecognizably different anyway.

The weird thing is that my next novel is also set in a hotel – ("Heartbreak Hotel", due out in February). This wasn't intentional. I guess the thought of throwing strangers together in an alien environment is simply too tempting to resist – a place where they can shed their responsibilities, where they can become anyone, do anything, and surprise both themselves and us, the readers. There's something about hotels that loosens the inhibitions, which is always fun.

The main character has already had a life in an earlier novel, "The Ex-Wives" but he reappears here ten years later, having been left a ramshackle B&B in an old lover's will. The problem is, because the B&B's in Wales it's always raining, so after breakfast none of his guests leave. Being a hospitable chap, he cracks open a bottle a bang go his profits. So he decides to convert the place into a hotel and run Courses for Divorces. Nothing works out as planned, surprise surprise, as the wrong people fall in love and subject themselves to the usual indignities. Some of them are well past middle-age but, as we know, it's never too late to make a romantic fool of oneself. I'm going to link it to some short films which I shall put on the internet, which may work or may be a disaster – who knows?

Apart from that I'm developing a couple of TV series which may or may not happen. One is an update of a Zola novel, set in Cameron's Britain, and the other is a story about Soho prostitutes set in the 1950s, an era which is both lost in the mists of time and yet dimly recognizable.

Meanwhile I'd love to hear from you, email me at info@deborahmoggach.com and meanwhile have a great summer.

Best Exotic Marigold Hotel

Now a major motion picture starring Judi Dench, Maggie Smith, Tom Wilkinson, Billy Nighy, and Dev Patel

When Ravi Kapoor, an overworked London doctor, reaches the breaking point with his difficult father-in-law, he asks his wife: "Can't we just send him away somewhere? Somewhere far, far away." His prayer is seemingly answered when Ravi's entrepreneurial cousin sets up a retirement home in India, hoping to re-create in Bangalore an elegant lost corner of England. Several retirees are enticed by the promise of indulgent living at a bargain price, but upon arriving, they are dismayed to find that restoration of the once sophisticated hotel has stalled, and that such amenities as water and electricity are . . . infrequent. But what their new life lacks in luxury, they come to find, it's plentiful in adventure, stunning beauty, and unexpected love.

Editorial Reviews

Review

"[Deborah] Moggach has served us a treat with this novel. Moving, sincere, funny."—*Independent on Sunday*

"Underneath the ironies, [*The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*] is a book about remembering—too late, or not too late—how to be alive."—*The Times Literary Supplement*

"Classic Moggach: funny, touching, and . . . full of colours and visual details."—*The Daily Telegraph*

From the Inside Flap

A thoroughly enjoyable black comedy from the author of **Tulip Fever**.

Dr. Ravi Kapoor has reached the end of his tether. He is over-worked and exhausted; his South London hospital is out of funds; and reporters are hounding him about the death of a pensioner, who, for three days lay on a trolley untended, the blood stiffening on her clothes. Even home life has become impossible as his father-in-law, a disgusting and difficult old man, has been kicked out of his nursing home and has moved into Ravi's spare bedroom. But then that 'tip top man,' his cousin, Sonny, has a brainwave, his 'great eureka.'

Dunroamin is a converted guesthouse in Bangalore, where Sonny starts a home for old people. Travel and set-up are inexpensive, staff willing and plentiful -- and the British pensioners can enjoy the hot weather and take mango-juice with their gin.

Skillfully inter-weaving the stories of the inhabitants of Dunroamin, their characters and their families, Deborah Moggach has created a world in which hilarity is matched with the poignancy of getting old, and comedy with the darker issues of care in the community. --
*This text refers to the **Hardcover** edition*

These Foolish Things

From every angle you discuss the matter, old age is a very un-sexy issue. Surprisingly, as you move along in your reading of "These Foolish things" sex is in fact quite a subject.

The book starts with a story that sounds familiar - wasn't it just last winter when I read this tale in the newspapers - an old lady lying in a hospital corridor does not get treated by the medical staff and the newspapers are out, once again, to blame the system ...

Ravi Kapoor, the over-worked Indian doctor in charge of the elderly woman gets a lot of bad publicity. He himself knows the truth, Muriel Donnelly, the old lady, did not want to get treatment from "those darkies". This whole affair comes at a very bad time for Ravi. His father-in-law, a typical "dirty old man" is staying at his house, after being thrown, again, from another retirement home. Here however comes the unexpected twist. Ravi's cousin comes out with a genius idea: move a group of British senior citizens, just like Ravi's father-in-law to India where labor is cheap and elders are treated with respect, and create a Little England in India. The old folks will never know the difference. The cousin is very convincing, he knows just the right place and the right people to manage the establishment...he is a man who dwells on "arranging". What if the ends are not loosely tied...Ravi is captured in his enthusiasm.

This is a story about old age but also about personal revelation and self discovery that sometimes need the mediation of a different place. This is what India manages to do in this book and its influences on the group of elderly people and one doctor is the essence of this lovely story.

Deborah Moggach is funny and gives you a very detailed and understandable description. You feel you have met, at least once in your life, most of the characters she talks about, although they are not stereotypes. Moggach presents a host of characters that is about to occupy the Indian retirement home and brings each personal story - then we read about them in their new home, far far away...or maybe not?

I give the story 4 out of 5 points as the story is interesting, even educational, and very entertaining. It does tend however to slip towards some very easy soap opera solutions. I have to say that the story is comforting in the sense it is filled with a lot of vivacity and life force and there is (almost) nothing of the despair of old age. On the other hand, this is also the reason why the story is not totally convincing. Nevertheless, quite lovely.

2 Comments |

Was this review helpful to you?

Yes

No

79 of 82 people found the following review helpful

4.0 out of 5 stars **An affectionate view of the elderly** April 19, 2005

By Ralph Blumenau **TOP 500 REVIEWER**

Format:Paperback

There have been other novels set in old age homes - Muriel Spark's Memento Mori, Alan Isler's The Hamlet of Fifth Avenue - and there is a certain formula about them. But Deborah Moggach's is the most kindly of these novels and, unusually, envisages the possibility that the elderly might actually get a new lease of life under such circumstances. Not possible, it is suggested, in cash-strapped Britain; but why not outsource the care for the elderly to Bangalore in India, where a little money goes a long way, where the climate is better, and where, above all, a former British hotel converted into a somewhat run-down retirement home (called Dunroamin) can create a little island of Old England in the midst of a throbbing

Indian city. One has to suspend one's disbelief that elderly folk would really be happy in such a setting, but, it is suggested, there is something about the atmosphere of India which makes possible some kind of renewal of the spirit which gives new insights and meaning to what had been lonely lives in England. For much of the book the stories of each of these elderly folk seems episodic and disconnected, and there seems to be no particular plot; but in due course a plot does emerge in which coincidences - somewhat forced in my view - connect many of these lives together in unexpected ways. It is a kindly book, both about the elderly and about India and Indians, and that makes it an attractive book.

Comment |

Was this review helpful to you?

Yes

No

93 of 98 people found the following review helpful

3.0 out of 5 stars **Not as good as the movie.** April 24, 2012

By John Thompson

Format:Kindle Edition|Amazon Verified Purchase

I purchased this book after reading that it was the basis for the movie "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel". Having loved the movie I thought I would also enjoy a more in-depth exploration of the characters and the background. However, I was sadly disappointed as the book is really nothing like the movie. Some of the character's names are the same, but that is where any similarity with the movie begins and ends. It is actually quite a depressing story of the suffering and neglect of the elderly in modern-day Britain, which forces the characters to seek a better life in India, in much the same way that the health care system for the elderly in the UK has been out-sourced to India. Don't read this book if you're looking for more of the sparkling wit of Maggie Smith, the stoicism of the magnificent Judy Dench and the dry humour of Bill Nighy.

Deborah Moggach

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Books

In the Dark
These Foolish Things
Final Demand
Tulip Fever
Close Relations
Seesaw
Changing Babies
Smile
The Ex-Wives
The Stand-In
Stolen
Driving In The Dark
To Have And To Hold
Porky
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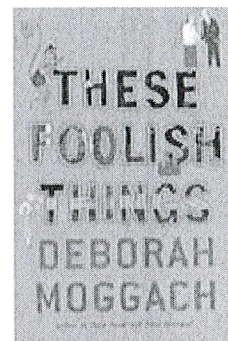
THESE FOOLISH THINGS (Chatto and Windus £12.99)

This is my latest novel. It came about because I'd been thinking a lot about growing older, about what is going to happen to us all. The population is ageing – for the first time the over 50s outnumber the rest of us – and it's getting older. Where are we all going to live? Care homes are closing, pensions are dwindling, and life expectancy is rising. Then I had a brainwave. We live in a global age – the internet, cheap travel, satellite TV...when it comes to goods and services it hardly matters where we live.

"Geography is history." Our healthcare is sourced from the developing countries; how about turning the tables and outsourcing the elderly? How about setting up retirement homes in developing countries where it's sunny and labour is cheap? So I created an Indian whizz-kid called Sonny who sets up a retirement home in Bangalore and fills it with Brits.

I wanted to explore questions of race and mortality, but I also wanted it to be funny. I wanted to write a comedy of manners between east and west, and chose Bangalore because it's both an old Raj cantonment town and Silicon City, home to gleaming skyscrapers and high-tech offices. And call centres. In the novel Evelyn, one of my characters, wanders into a call centre because she thinks she can phone from there. And ends up befriending a young operative who has to pretend she comes from England. ("What's Enfield like, aunty?") Evelyn's Enfield is a place of tea dances, a place that no longer exists – except in India. For in many ways India resembles the Britain of fifty years ago, the Britain of my characters' youth, where children were polite and Morris Oxfords pattered along the streets. Or so it seems. But that, too, can be an illusion.

There are many characters in the book, each with a reason for going to India: escape, revenge, spiritual enlightenment, marriage to a rich maharaja. And India changes them profoundly, in ways they would never have expected. [CLICK HERE](#) for an extract. Norman is a frightful old lech; Minoo and Mrs Cowasjee are the Parsi couple who run the hotel – a shabby, former guest house. Mrs Cowasjee is the resident nurse, though in truth she has only worked, a long time ago, as a chiropdist's assistant. Evelyn is a gentle soul from Sussex. Muriel is a working class Londoner who has come out to India because she's been mugged and robbed, back in Peckham.



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Read an extract from 'These Foolish Things'

256 pages (5 February, 2004)

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Reviews



“I’ve become obsessed by hotels” – Deborah Moggach

POSTED ON FEBRUARY 20, 2013 BY GUEST CONTRIBUTOR



Deborah Moggach, author of *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* explains what it is that compels her to use these homes away from home as settings in her novels – most recently *Heartbr Hotel*...

I've become obsessed by hotels. My novel *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, was set in one, in India. My novel *In The Dark* was set in a boarding house during the First World War. And my latest novel, *Heartbr Hotel* takes place in a ramshackle hotel in a small town in Wales. What interests me is how, in a hotel, we are free to become anyone we choose – or, indeed, to become *more ourselves*. We exist in limbo-land where we can play out our fantasies, where there's no responsibility and only the bill to settle. They're a home-from home and yet, thrillingly, not home at all. Somebody else does all the work; domesticity – the enemy of romance – is lifted off us. Even those little soap packets feel deliciously illicit.

Rainy Wales is a long way from the sunshine of the Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, but both books are triggered by a cunning business plan. The Indian novel was about how to cash in on an ageing population. *Heartbr Hotel* is about how to cash in on break-ups. Buffy, the proprietor, is a veteran of many marriages. He has realized that in any relationship there's a division of labour – one person does the cooking, the other the finance and the DIY, and so on. When the couple splits it can become horribly disempowering to discover you don't know how to change a plug or sort out your tax. So Buffy sets up "Courses for Divorces", where people come to his hotel to learn the skill the other person had in the relationship. This enables them to put themselves up, dust themselves down and start all over again.

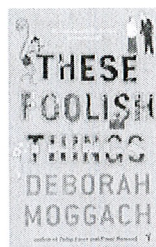
In addition to this, they're all on the rebound so of course they cop off with each other. Even better than that during the courses they make themselves extremely useful to their host: they service Buffy's car (Basic Car Maintenance), weed his garden (Gardening for Beginners) and renovate his hotel (DIY) – and *pay him for privilege*. It's a good wheeze; somebody should really take it up. In fact I've realized that novelists and entrepreneurs have something in common; we both have lateral minds. Instead of moving in a linear way we jump sideways for inspiration. The difference being that novelists are useless at making money.

I did, however, have an awful lot of fun writing this book. I sat at my laptop laughing at my own jokes – we can't, who can? And because I'm now in my sixties, most of the characters have been around the block a few times. I'm writing for veterans of the sexual merry-go-round and there are a lot of us out there, still making the same mistakes, still behaving like teenagers despite our wrinkles. Nowadays we have to put on our spectacles to inspect our texts to see how many xxxs there are, but our foolish old hearts are still pounding. So this novel is for everyone out there who hasn't given up yet – and there are more of us than people think.

Deborah Moggach, for Waterstones.com/blog

These Foolish Things
by Deborah Moggach

Vintage Modern fiction



ABOUT THE BOOK

Ravi Kapoor, an over-worked Londoner is thoroughly jaded with life. His job as a Doctor involves the dispiriting daily trauma of A & E, and his home life becomes equally traumatic when his wayward, sex-obsessed father-in-law takes up residence with Ravi and his wife.

A solution presents itself when his entrepreneurial cousin Sonny, dreams up the idea of setting up a retirement home in Bangalore. India is cheap and offers the pensioners the promise of a higher standard of living than they could ever have afforded in England, as well as a get-rich scheme for Sonny and a fast and effective way to get-rid of Ravi's dissolute father-in-law.

But when the pensioners hit Bangalore, the exotic climate causes temperatures to soar as they each start to rediscover their forgotten youth. As we meet the colourful cast of characters in the book, we see that each has his or her own reason for going to India to escape their life in England. But the past has a habit of catching up with us and this alien land brings out feelings and actions that would perhaps have forever remained repressed had they stayed in Britain.

These Foolish Things is a brilliant comedy of manners between east and west, where humour is tempered with the poignancy of getting old, and the comedy of the pensioner's adventures simultaneously brings to light the more serious questions of care in the community for an ageing population. A wonderful, stylish and touching bittersweet story, it stays with you long after you have turned the last page.

'These Foolish Things is classic Moggach:
funny, touching and so full of colours

and visual details that you feel, after finishing it,
as if you've already seen the movie'

Daily Telegraph

'It is characterization at which Moggach excels. Her gift is to
perceive and describe
our confusions about life...and to write with feeling about the
continual quest for
love and happiness that is part of the human condition'

Sunday Times

'*These Foolish Things* is a kind of less savage version
of Kingsley Amis's unbearably funny novel *Ending Up*.

Moggach's prose is markedly more graceful
than Agatha Christie's, her moral world is not dissimilar'

The Times

'Lingers long after the last page has been, regrettably, turned.
Highly recommended.'

Daily Mail

'Moggach has served us a treat with this novel.

Moving, sincere, funny, terrifying in places,
it is a truthful view of old age and what it brings'

Independent on Sunday

'Underneath the ironies, *These Foolish Things* is a book about
remembering

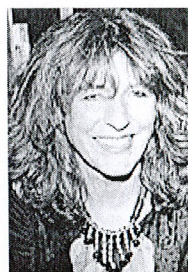
- to late, or not to late - how to be alive'

Times Literary Supplement

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Deborah Moggach is the prize-winning author of
numerous works including *Stolen*, *Seesaw*, *Hot
Water Man*, and *Final Demand* (which was
televised on BBC1 starring Tamsin Outhwaite).

Her many novels include the bestselling *Tulip
Fever* and *Porky*. The latest book in this line-up is the widely
critically acclaimed *These Foolish Things*, first published by
Chatto & Windus in 2004. Now available as a Vintage
paperback, it was selected by the Daily Mail as one of their
Book Club selections. Deborah Moggach is a Fellow of the
Royal Society of Literature. She lives in North London.



AUTHOR INTERVIEW

Author Interview from www.deborahmoggach.com

Her childhood

Both my parents were writers - my father wrote naval history, biographies and children's books; my mother wrote and illustrated children's books. I had three sisters, and we grew up to the sound of typewriters tapping in the veranda, where our parents sat side-by-side, working. I wasn't a particularly writerly child, however. I preferred playing with cars and animals. I didn't like girly things and my hero was William Brown.

Her Early Writing Career

I went to Bristol University, got married and, in the mid-1970s went to live in Pakistan for two years. After an English upbringing this was incredibly liberating and it was here that I started writing - both articles for Pakistani newspapers and my first novel, *You Must be Sisters*. This was a coming-of-age, autobiographical novel as was my next, *Close to Home*, which was the story of a young mother with small children (by this time I had returned to London and had a son and daughter).

Her work

I then left my own life behind and started creating people in my head. Some of my novels started out as my own TV scripts. I began writing screenplays in the mid-eighties and like moving back and forth between the interior world of the novel and the action-driven life of drama. I wrote a thriller about the movie business called *The Stand-In* which I'm scripting as a Hollywood movie and have just finished adapting *Pride and Prejudice* as a film for Working Title. I've also adapted Nancy Mitford's *Love in a Cold Climate* for the BBC and won a Writers Guild Award for my adaptation of Anne Fine's *Goggle-Eyes*. The most recent novel I've written and adapted is *Final Demand*, a story of cheque fraud, retribution, and reptile breeding.

Deborah on her bestselling novel, Tulip Fever

Art, illusion, doomed love and a tulip bulb are the themes of my only historical novel, *Tulip Fever*. This was inspired by my love of 17th century Dutch painting - in particular, a painting I bought at an auction, a sub-Vermeer interior of a woman getting ready to go out, her servants poised with necklace and glass of wine. I love the stilled drama of paintings by TerBorch and De

wine. I love the surreal drama of paintings by Vermeer and De Hooch, and wanted to step into those rooms. This novel was an extraordinary adventure to write and was bought by Dreamworks.

On her latest Novel, *These Foolish Things*

These Foolish Things came about because I'd been thinking a lot about growing older, about what is going to happen to us all. The population is ageing - for the first time the over 50s outnumber the rest of us - and it's getting older. Where are we all going to live? Care homes are closing, pensions are dwindling, and life expectancy is rising. Then I had a brainwave. We live in a global age - the internet, cheap travel, satellite TV...when it comes to good and services it hardly matters where we live. "Geography is history." Our healthcare is sourced from the developing countries; how about turning the tables and outsourcing the elderly? How about setting up retirement homes in developing countries where it's sunny and labour is cheap? So I created an Indian whiz-kid called Sonny who sets up a retirement home in Bangalore and fills it with Brits.

Interests

My children have long since grown up and I live near Hampstead Heath, where I swim in the ponds. I also love biking around London, looking through people's windows and imagining all the other lives I could have led.

STARTING POINTS FOR YOUR DISCUSSION

1. '*She had come to India to be made whole*' (p.183, Theresa)
Discuss the effect that India has on each of the characters personalities and lives. How and why does it change them?
2. '*The population is ageing - for the first time the over 50s outnumber the rest of us - and it's getting older.*' (Deborah Moggach in a discussion of *These Foolish Things*)
What are the views put forward in the novel about the current and future crisis of an ageing population and the need for care in the community? You may also wish to look at how the pensioners are treated by their children.
3. East meets west head-on in *These Foolish Things*. Explore the different views presented of England and India with regards to society, culture and religion

regards to society, culture and religion.

4. *These Foolish Things* has a wonderful balance of the hilarious and poignant. Examine the narrative methods that Deborah Moggach utilizes in order to create these tensions. You may also wish to explore the epigraph at the start of each chapter to help you with your analysis of the novel.
5. *These Foolish Things* is a book about rediscovering the true self. Discuss.
6. Parent-child relationships within the novel are somewhat complicated. Examine these relationships from both angles. Do they represent a true picture of real relationships between the generations?