

Books & Authors

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About the Author

Full text biography:

Thrity Umrigar

Birth Date : 1961

Known As : Umrigar, Thrity N.

Place of Birth : India.Bombay

Nationality: American

Occupation : Novelist

Table of Contents:

Awards

Personal Information

Career

Writings

Sidelights

Related Information



about this author

Awards:

Nieman fellowship, Harvard University. 1999; 25th Lambda Literary Awards Lesbian General Fiction Prize. 2013; awards from Society of Professional Journalists and Press Club of Cleveland

Personal Information:

Born 1961, in Bombay (now Mumbai), India; immigrated to the United States. 1982: naturalized U.S. citizen.

Education: Ohio State University, M.A., 1983; Kent State University, Ph.D., 1997. **Addresses:** Home: Cleveland Heights, OH. Office: Guilford Hall, Case Western University, Cleveland, OH 44106. Agent: Marly Rusoff and Associates, Inc., P.O. Box 524, Bronxville, NY 10708. **E-mail:** tnu@case.edu.

Career Information:

Journalist, author, critic, and educator. *Lorain Journal*, Lorain, OH, journalist, 1985-87; *Akron Beacon*, Akron, OH, journalist, 1987-2002; Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH, 2002--, became assistant professor of English, 2003.

Writings:

- *First Darling of the Morning: Selected Memories of an Indian Childhood*. HarperCollins Publishers (New Delhi, India), 2004.

NOVELS

- *Bombay Time*. Picador (New York, NY), 2001.
- *The Space between Us*. William Morrow (New York, NY), 2005.
- *If Today Be Sweet*. William Morrow (New York, NY), 2007.
- *The Weight of Heaven*. Harper (New York, NY), 2009.
- *The World We Found*. Harper (New York, NY), 2012.

Contributor to periodicals, including *Washington Post*, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, and *Boston Globe*

Sidelights:

Thrity Umrigar was born in India, and moved to the United States at the age of twenty-one to study journalism at Ohio State University. She then worked as a journalist in Ohio for seventeen years before joining the staff of the English department at Case Western Reserve University. Umrigar was an only child, but she grew up in a large extended family with several aunts and an uncle, in addition to her parents. In an interview on her home page that was originally conducted by Sonia Faleiro for *Mumbai Tehelka*, she stated: "I never felt I belonged only to my parents but to this larger group of people." The experience, she said, taught her to get along with many different kinds of people, and it also gave her an expanded definition of family. "So," she said, "I keep 'adopting' new family members along the way."

Umrigar noted in the online interview that she came to the United States because she realized that if she remained in India, "I would never be totally independent and would never discover who exactly I was as a person. I wanted to live in a place where I would rise or fall based on my own efforts and talents." Her father encouraged her to follow her dream. She chose Ohio State University because, as she explained it: "I was sitting in my living room in Bombay, checking off a list of American universities that offered an M.A. in journalism when my eyes fell on 'Ohio State University.' There was a Joan Baez record playing ... her song, 'Banks of the Ohio' ... I looked up and thought, 'It's a sign,' and decided to apply there."

Though Umrigar had written fiction during her teens in India, she did not begin to devote herself seriously to the craft until she finished her doctorate in journalism. After completing her dissertation, she won a Nieman fellowship to study for a year at Harvard University. This gave Umrigar the opportunity to resume work on a novel that she had begun a few years earlier. During a visit to Bombay during the Christmas holiday, "the novel really took off," she remarked in her home page interview. "I remember lying on the couch in my father's apartment one afternoon and vowing to finish the novel. I felt a desperate, burning urge to tell the story of the people I'd grown up around." The book, *Bombay Time*, depicts the lives of people in the closely knit Parsi community of Wadia Baug. The Parsis, a minority in India, are the descendants of people who fled Persia a thousand years ago. Set at a wedding, the book allows the reader to observe each of the guests arriving and hear their various stories of love, loss, and betrayal. "Against the backdrop of a wedding reception, I tell the life stories of the individual residents--who they were in their youth, what has made them who they are today--and ask the question of how does one live a middle-class existence in a city of so much poverty?" Umrigar explained in the interview. "Growing up in India exposed me to many stories of startling pathos and tragedy," she continued. "Yet I watched these people live their lives with a typically Bombay brand of humor, with bravado and courage. I wanted to commemorate their lives. ... I also am fascinated by the insider-outsider status of the Parsis of India. I wanted to examine their love-hate relationship with Bombay."

The book was well received by several reviewers. In the *Washington Post Book World*, Helen C. Wan wrote: "Umrigar is at her best when imagining each character's colorful history and circumstances, and vividly portraying jealousies, passion and unfulfilled ambitions," adding that the author "displays an impressive talent for conceiving multidimensional, sympathetic characters with life-like emotional quandaries and psychological stumbling blocks." A *Publishers Weekly* reviewer called the book "an impressive debut offering a glimpse into a cultural world ... that most Westerners know only in its barest outlines." In *Booklist*, Bonnie Johnston described the book as "sweet, frightening, poignant, and chaotic." *Library Journal* reviewer Michelle Reale wrote that the novel "poignantly explicates" the Parsi community in a "startling contemporary portrait."

Umrigar once told *CA*: "Indian-American writers have a wonderful canvas to draw on. A larger-than-life city like Bombay is a fiction writer's dream come true because the city throbs with drama and pathos and humanity and passion and tragedy and comedy. There are stories around every corner in a place like that. And we are lucky enough to live in an age where at last there is an interest in hearing the stories of people living on the other side of the globe. My purpose in writing *Bombay Time* was to make sense of the lives of the people I grew up with because, like the main character Rusi, many of them believe that their lives have ended in failure. And I refuse to believe that. So I saw the book as the act of gathering in all their stories like flowers, and turning them into art, into a bouquet, if you will, and handing it back to them."

Umrigar's second novel, *The Space between Us*, was also well received and became a national best seller. The author offers a look at life in two different households in Bombay, showing how, even in modern times, the nation is ruled by class and social structure, firmly rooted in traditions and in the perceived difference between the sexes. One example is

the relationship between Sera Dubash, who is an upper-class Parsi homemaker, and her servant, Bhima. The two may share a cup of tea and chat as if they are close friends, and yet Sera is seated in a chair while Bhima is left to sit on the floor and must use her own cup for her tea. However, Umrigar also illustrates that, while class separates the women, they are united in their treatment at the hands of men, who consider all women inferior.

Joy Humphrey, in a *Library Journal* review, wrote that "Umrigar beautifully and movingly wends her way through the complexities and subtleties of these ... relationships." A reviewer for the *Economist* commented that "the author prevents her story from descending into emotional soup by tackling, across the span of her characters' lives, many of the issues affecting India today."

In *If Today Be Sweet*, Umrigar depicts the painful choices before grieving widow Tehmina. Following the death of her husband, she goes to visit her son and his family at their home in Ohio, where her son settled following graduate school in the United States. Tehmina must determine if she should move to Ohio and stay with her son or return to Bombay, her true home and the place where she lived with her husband, to continue her life alone.

Booklist reviewer Allison Block called the book "a sublime, cross-cultural tale about lives driven by tradition and transformed by love."

The Weight of Heaven is about a grieving couple who move to India after the sudden death of their young son. Frank and Ellie Benton, an earnest young couple from Ann Arbor, Michigan, are devastated after their seven-year-old son dies shortly after contracting meningitis. Frank works for a company that produces herbal diabetes treatments, and when the company asks him to take over management of its plant in India, he and Ellie see the move as an opportunity to make a new start. Ellie finds it easy to adjust to their new life; she strikes up a close friendship with Nandita, a journalist, and finds purpose in her work to improve the lives of the impoverished villagers around them. Frank, however, finds himself reviled as the face of the greedy corporate West, intent on robbing developing countries of their precious resources (in this case, a plant from which Herbal Solutions extracts its product) and bent on exploiting indigenous workers. Unable to find a way to appreciate Indian people and customs, Frank feels emotionally isolated. Eventually he becomes attached to Ramesh, the young son of the woman who cooks and cleans for him and Ellie. This bond, which quickly grows intense, angers Ramesh's father, Prakash, who feels that Frank is buying the boy's affection with pricey toys and the promise to help him attend school in the United States.

A *Publishers Weekly* reviewer admired Umrigar's treatment of the theme of culture class in this novel but found the story line about Frank's obsession with Ramesh even more compelling. Allison Block, writing in *Booklist*, noted the author's "rich prose and vibrant depictions of India," and called *The Weight of Heaven* "a bold, beautifully rendered tale of cultures that clash and coalesce." Highlighting the book's somber and difficult themes, Ellen Emry Heltzel wrote in the *Seattle Times* that "Umrigar carries a burden as heavy as the title by using a tale of personal tragedy to depict the balance of power in global economics. Although her writing sometimes lapses into cliché and the commonplace, she's dispassionate and astute enough to deliver at both levels. This is a morality tale that's tuned to the times."

Described by a *Publishers Weekly* reviewer as "colorful and moving," *First Darling of the Morning: Selected Memories of an Indian Childhood* chronicles Umrigar's childhood and adolescence during the 1960s and 1970s. A member of the Parsi minority in a majority Hindu culture, the author was further set apart by attending Catholic school, and questions about how and where she fits in pervade the memoir. Though Umrigar's family was comfortably middle-class, home life was far from easy. The author describes her mother as an angry woman with a volatile temper who beat her daughter with a cane. Close to her father but unable to confide in him, Umrigar found solace with Mehroo, an unmarried aunt who lived with the family. Surrounded by family dysfunction and by the immense squalor and poverty of the city, Umrigar sought escape through friends, books, and pop music, ultimately imagining a new life for herself--no longer as her family's "First Darling of the Morning" but as an independent woman in the United States.

Lisa Klopfer observed in a *Library Journal* review that the memoir explores "not just [Umrigar's] personal heartache but also that of a global middle-class cohort," though the author's experiences growing up in the throes of postcolonial India give the book a unique context. A writer for *Kirkus Reviews*, describing the memoir as "stunningly detailed," recommended it as a "heartfelt memoir about the significance of origins and self-identity."

Umrigar writes every day. She explained in the interview on her home page that "it helps to take the mystique out of fiction writing--which I think is a healthy thing--and to approach it as a job, with a more roll-up-your-sleeves-and-get-to-work kind of attitude." She has always been interested in stories "that buck the trend, that the minority position. And for fiction to be startling and fresh, I think that posture--of telling the unpopular truth--is almost essential."

The World We Found, is the story of four middle-aged women, who decades before had attended university together in Bombay. They were all student activists who for a fought for a "New India." Now, much later, they reflect on whether or not conditions have changed.

Reviewing the work in the *Washington Post Book World*, contributor Frances Itani assessed: "It takes courage to explore the idealism and hopes of youth and to compare these with the realities of lives lived three decades later. ... Umrigar handles these important themes with expertise and without judgment. A storyteller through and through, she ensures that her characters face up to the costs and consequences created by their choices, right or wrong, principled or unprincipled." *Boston Globe* contributor Kevin O'Kelly provided: "This is a novel that rewards reading, and even re-reading. *The World We Found* is a powerful meditation on friendship, on loss, and all the regrets of middle age, mingled with the recognition that for most of us it's not too late to remake our lives in some way." Betty Hafner a contributor to the Gaithersburg, Illinois *Town Courier*, lauded: "Umrigar's characters, no matter how incidental, come to life. She allows us to hear the four women review their youthful lives at a time of great political and social change for India with the added insight of doing so through the lens of their present."

Related Information:

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PERIODICALS

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- *Boston Globe*, January 14, 2012, Kevin O'Kelly, review of *The World We Found*.
- *Christian Science Monitor*, April 10, 2009, Yvonne Zipp, review of *The Weight of Heaven*.
- *Economist*, January 28, 2006, review of *The Space between Us*, p. 82.
- *Elle*, March 22, 2009, Corrie Pikul, review of *The Weight of Heaven*.
- *Entertainment Weekly*, January 13, 2006, Missy Schwartz, review of *The Space between Us*, p. 85.
- *Globe & Mail* (Toronto, Ontario, Canada), February 4, 2006, Keith Garebian, review of *The Space between Us*, p. D5.
- *Kirkus Reviews*, May 1, 2001, review of *Bombay Time*, p. 621; November 15, 2005, review of *The Space between Us*, p. 1210; May 1, 2007, review of *If Today Be Sweet*; October 15, 2008, review of *First Darling of the Morning*; March 1, 2009, review of *The Weight of Heaven*.
- *Library Journal*, June 1, 2001, Michelle Reale, review of *Bombay Time*, p. 219; December 1, 2005, Joy Humphrey, review of *The Space between Us*, p. 117; April 15, 2007, Marika Zemke, review of *If Today Be Sweet*, p. 76; August 1, 2008, Lisa Klopfer, review of *First Darling of the Morning*, p. 93; February 1, 2009, Susanne Wells, review of *The Weight of Heaven*, p. 68.
- *Marie Claire*, April 1, 2009, Katie Charles, review of *The Weight of Heaven*, p. 71.
- *National Post*, March 4, 2006, Patricia Robertson, review of *The Space between Us*, p. 11.
- *New York Times Book Review*, January 22, 2006, Ligaya Mishan, "The Clash of Caste," review of *The Space between Us*, p. 14.
- *Nieman Reports*, spring, 2003, review of *First Darling of the Morning*, p. 108.

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- *Times Literary Supplement*, April 7, 2006, Chitralkha Basu, review of *The Space between Us*, p. 22.
- *Town Courier* (Gaithersburg, IL), March 30, 2012, Betty Hafner, review of *The World We Found*.
- *Tribune Books* (Chicago, IL), August 5, 2001, review of *Bombay Time*, p. 3; July 7, 2002, review of *Bombay Time*, p. 6.
- *Virginia Quarterly Review*, summer, 2006, Mark Meier, review of *The Space between Us*, p. 271.
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- *Bookreporter.com*, <http://www.bookreporter.com/> (January 26, 2012), Melanie Smith, review of *The World We Found*.
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- *Case Western Reserve University Web site*, <http://www.case.edu/> (September 5, 2012), author profile.
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- *Marly Rusoff and Associates Web site*, <http://www.rusoffagency.com/> (June 17, 2009), author profile.
- *Thirty Umrigar Home Page*, <http://www.umrigar.com> (June 17, 2009).
- *Writer's Voice with Francesca Rheannon Online*, <http://www.writersvoice.net/> (June 17, 2009), transcript of radio interview with Umrigar.*

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Muslim

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

A **Muslim**, sometimes spelled **Moslem**,^[1] is an adherent of Islam. The Qur'an is the holy book of Islam and Muslims believe that it is the verbatim word of God as revealed to the prophet Muhammad. Muslims also follow the teachings and practices of Muhammad as recorded in traditional accounts called *hadith*.^[2] "Muslim" is an Arabic word meaning "one who submits to God".

Muslims believe that God (*Allāh*) is eternal, transcendent and absolutely one (monotheism). They also believe Allāh is incomparable, self-sustaining and neither begets nor was begotten. The core of Muslim beliefs are to be found in Chapter 112 of the Qur'an, *The Purity*, in which Allāh instructs the faithful in purity of faith.^{[3][4]} Muslims believe that Islam is the complete and universal version of a primordial faith that has been revealed before through many prophets including Abraham, Moses and Jesus.^[5] Muslims also believe that these previous messages and revelations have been partially changed or corrupted over time^[6] and that the Qur'an is the final unaltered revelation from God (The Final Testament).^[7] Muslims acknowledge that Muhammad is the Seal of the Prophets and the final prophet.

Most Muslims accept as a Muslim anyone who has publicly pronounced the *Shahadah* (declaration of faith) which states:

I testify that there is no god except for the God, and I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.

The religious practices of Muslims are enumerated in the Five Pillars of Islam, which, in addition to Shahadah, consist of daily prayers (salat), fasting during Ramadan (sawm), almsgiving (zakat), and the pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj) at least once in a lifetime.^{[8][9]}

The majority of Muslims are Sunni, being over 75–90% of all Muslims.^[10] The second largest sect, Shia, makes up 10–20%.^[11] The most populous Muslim-majority country is Indonesia home to 12.7% of the world's Muslims followed by Pakistan (11.0%), Bangladesh (9.2%), and Egypt (4.9%).^[12] Sizable minorities are also found in India, China, Russia, Ethiopia, Americas, Australia and parts of Europe. With about 1.6 billion followers, almost a quarter of earth's population,^{[13][14][15]} Islam is the second-largest and one of the fastest-growing religions in the world.^{[16][17][18]}

Contents

- 1 Etymology
- 2 Other words for *Muslim*
- 3 Meaning
 - 3.1 Used to describe earlier prophets in the Qur'an
- 4 Demographics
- 5 See also
- 6 References and notes
- 7 External links

Etymology

See also: Islam#Etymology and meaning

The word *muslim* (Arabic: مسلم, IPA: [ˈmʊslɪm]; English /ˈmʌzɪm/, /ˈmʊzɪm/, /ˈmʊslɪm/ or *moslem* /ˈmɒzləm/, /ˈmɒsləm/^[19]) is the participle of the same verb of which *islām* is the infinitive, based on the triliteral *S-L-M* "to be whole, intact".^{[20][21]} A female adherent is a *muslima* (Arabic: مسلمة). The plural form in Arabic is *muslimūn* (مسلمون), and its feminine equivalent is *muslimāt* (مسلمات). The Arabic form *muslimun* is the stem IV participle^[22] of the triliteral *S-L-M*.



Dongxiang Muslim students in China

Hinduism

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Hinduism is the dominant religion^{[1][2]} of the Indian subcontinent, particularly of India and Nepal. It includes Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Smartism among numerous other traditions. Among other practices and philosophies, Hinduism includes a wide spectrum of laws and prescriptions of "daily morality" based on karma, dharma, and societal norms. Hinduism is a categorisation of distinct intellectual or philosophical points of view, rather than a rigid, common set of beliefs.^[3]

Hinduism consists of many diverse traditions and has no single founder.^[4] Among its direct roots is the historical Vedic religion of Iron Age India.^[5] As such, Hinduism is often called the "oldest living religion"^[6] or the "oldest living major religion" in the world.^{[1][7][8][9]} Since Vedic times, a process of Sanskritization has been taking place, in which "people from many strata of society throughout the subcontinent tended to adapt their religious and social life to Brahmanic norms".^[10]

Hindu texts are classified into Śruti ("revealed") and Smṛiti ("remembered"). These texts discuss theology, philosophy, mythology, Vedic yajna and agamic rituals and temple building, among other topics.^[5] Major scriptures include the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Manusmṛiti, Bhagavad Gita and Agamas.^[5]

Hinduism, with about one billion followers^[11] (950 million estimated in India),^[12] is the world's third largest religion, after Christianity and Islam.

Contents

- 1 Etymology
- 2 Definitions
 - 2.1 Pluralism
 - 2.2 Commonalities
 - 2.3 Indigenous understanding
 - 2.4 Western understanding
 - 2.5 Colonial influences
- 3 Typology
 - 3.1 McDaniel - six generic "types"
 - 3.2 Michaels - Hindu religions and Hindu religiosity
- 4 History
 - 4.1 Periodisation
 - 4.2 Prevedic religions (until c. 1750 BCE)
 - 4.3 Vedic religion (c. 1750-500 BCE)
 - 4.4 Ascetic reformism (c. 500-200 BCE)
 - 4.5 Classical Hinduism (c. 200 BCE-100 CE)
 - 4.6 Islamic rule and Sects of Hinduism (c. 1100-1850 CE)
 - 4.7 Modern Hinduism (from c. 1850)
- 5 Scriptures
 - 5.1 Shruti
 - 5.2 Smritis
 - 5.3 Order of precedence of authority
- 6 Beliefs
 - 6.1 Concept of God Almighty
 - 6.2 Devas and avatars
 - 6.3 Karma and samsara
 - 6.4 Sin and Penance
 - 6.5 Self-control and Self-realization
 - 6.6 Objectives of human life
 - 6.7 Yoga

The World We Found

A Novel

By Thrity Umrigar

Introduction

The acclaimed author of *The Space Between Us* and *The Weight of Heaven* returns with a breathtaking, skillfully wrought story of four women and the unbreakable ties they share.

As university students in late 1970s Bombay, Armaiti, Laleh, Kavita, and Nishta were inseparable. Spirited and unconventional, they challenged authority and fought for a better world. But much has changed over the past thirty years. Following different paths, the quartet drifted apart, the day-to-day demands of work and family tempering the revolutionary fervor they once shared.

Then comes devastating news: Armaiti, who moved to America, is gravely ill and wants to see the old friends she left behind.

For Laleh, reunion is a bittersweet reminder of unfulfilled dreams and unspoken guilt. For Kavita, it is an admission of forbidden passion. For Nishta, it is the promise of freedom from a bitter fundamentalist husband. And for Armaiti, it is an act of acceptance, of letting go on her own terms even if her ex-husband and daughter do not understand her choices.

In the course of their journey to reconnect, Armaiti, Laleh, Kavita, and Nishta must confront the truths of their lives—acknowledge long-held regrets, face painful secrets and hidden desires, and reconcile their idealistic past and their compromised present. And they will have to decide what matters most, a choice that may just help them reclaim the extraordinary world they once found.

Exploring the enduring bonds of friendship and the power of love to change lives, and offering an unforgettable portrait of modern India—a nation struggling to bridge economic, religious, gender, and generational divides—*The World We Found* is a dazzling masterwork from the remarkable Thrity Umrigar.

Questions for Discussion

1. *The World We Found* is the story of four close friends—Armaiti, Kavita, Laleh, and Nishta—separated by time and the detours of life. Compare and contrast the four friends both as students and as adults. What does their friendship mean to them? What is the significance of Armaiti in each of these women's lives?
2. Explain the meaning of the novel's title, *The World We Found*. How is it reflected in the book's themes and its characters?
3. How have the lives of these women changed? As young university students, all had dreams for the future. How did reality match with those young dreams? Why did things work out—or not—for each of them? What dreams did you have in childhood and youth? How do they compare to the reality of your life today?
4. As students, the quartet fought to change their homeland. Describe their India then and now. Is today's India the kind of place they demonstrated, marched, and argued for? What happened to their activist spirit? What is activism? Were the women still socially involved and aware at middle age? Can we ever escape the compromises that threaten our values? How do we hold onto our idealism in the face of change, or must it inevitably fade, as youth does?
5. When Kavita and Laleh visit Nishta early in the novel, she confesses to them, "I don't usually feel sorry for myself. It's just that seeing both of you is reminding me of the gap between my life as it is and what I'd dreamed it would be." How do we reconcile ourselves to those gaps? How can we bridge them? How did these characters?
6. The four friends harbor secrets large and small. What are they and how have they affected each of their lives? What happens when those secrets are revealed?

7. Armaiti shocks and angers everyone when she decides not to endure chemo, arguing that she “must live on my own terms.” What do you think of her decision? Her daughter calls her selfish. Is she, or is her daughter selfish for not understanding her wishes?

8. All those years ago Nishta was proud to have a Muslim boyfriend and then husband. Does she still feel that way? What has her love for Iqbal given her? What has it cost her?

9. Talk about Kavita. What holds her back from embracing who she is? Are her fears justified? How does her silence shape her life? What motivates her to break free of her fear?

10. What are your impressions of Laleh? Why is it so important for her to gather her friends and visit Armaiti in America? Has she changed the most—or the least—of the four friends?

11. Do you agree with the women’s plan to intervene in Nishta’s life? By saving Nishta, were they saving a part of themselves as well?

12. Talk about the husbands in the novel. How do these middle-aged men compare to who they were as youths? What kind of husband is Adish to Armaiti? What about Iqbal and Nishta? How did each man become the way he is—what circumstances shaped their lives? Which man is truer to his younger self? How would each man describe the other?

13. Iqbal desperately wants to protect his family. How does that desire transform him and guide his behavior? Why does Iqbal treat Nishta and his sister as he does? Could he be protective without being destructive?

14. What happens at the airport? Does Adish do the right thing? Was his choice a repudiation of his youthful ideals or ultimately, their fulfillment?

15. *The World We Found* shows both sides of love— how it can become a prison—and how it can set you free. Discuss how this is demonstrated in various characters’ lives. What sacrifices did each of the characters make for love?

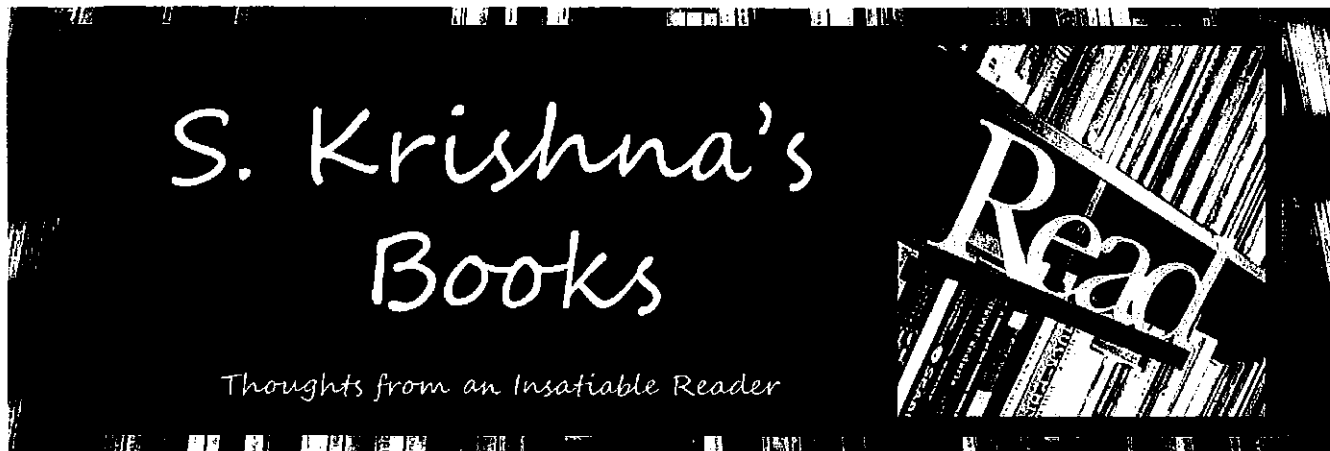
16. *The World We Found* illuminates the painful struggle between Muslims and Hindus. How does religion divide this country? Use examples from the novel in your discussion. Are Iqbal’s actions understandable in light of what he has suffered? Does he deserve better?

17. Think about the student protests of the 1960s and even today. How does this story reflect the changes in our own country and our own lives?

18. Thrity Umrigar offers a vision of modern India as seen through the lives of her engaging characters. Describe the India you discovered in these pages. Have you ever traveled there or would you like to visit?

About the Author

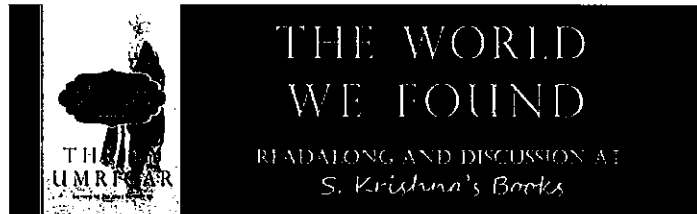
Thrity Umrigar is the author of four previous novels—*The Weight of Heaven*, *The Space Between Us*, *If Today Be Sweet*, and *Bombay Time*—and the memoir *First Darling of the Morning*. A journalist for nearly twenty years, she is the winner of the Nieman Fellowship to Harvard and the 2009 Cleveland Arts Prize, and a 2006 Finalist for the PEN/Beyond Margins Award. She is a professor of English at Case Western Reserve University and lives in Cleveland, Ohio.



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[2013 books](#)
[south asian challenge](#)
[review policy](#)
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The World We Found Discussion - Other Topics

Thursday, January 26, 2012



The World We Found by Thrity Umrigar deals with many timely topics, some of which I haven't covered in our discussions so far. This is a catch-all post to discuss those issues, as well as whatever might be lingering on your mind about the book. Feel free to answer any, or all, of the questions in the comments, or share your own thoughts on things we haven't talked about.

1. Kavita is a lesbian, but has hidden her sexual identity from those closest to her because her country's views on homosexuality are harsh. Why does Kavita believe her personal struggle is less important than the socialist causes she used to protest for?
2. Iqbal is perhaps the most complicated character in the book. It's true he's been through horrors, but do they justify what he's done to the women in his life? What were your feelings on him?
3. "In the end, what matters is what remains." This is a lingering theme in the book - what does it mean to you?
4. Why did Thrity Umrigar choose to end the book where she did - on the flight to see Armaiti, rather than her death? Did Umrigar want to keep their friendship alive for the reader, through the end of the book and beyond?

Please feel free to answer any or all of these questions in your comments, as well as expound on your thoughts about the book as a whole. If you're new to this readalong and would like more information or to see the rest of the discussion posts, please visit my [landing page](#) for *The World We Found* discussion.

Thanks for participating, and I hope you've enjoyed yourselves!

Labels: [discussion](#), [thrity umrigar](#)

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2 comments:

Welcome!

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Melissasaid...

I finally read the book! Woo!

What happened to Iqbal at the end KILLED ME. His actions infuriated me, but I also felt sympathetic towards him a lot of the time. This probably belongs more in the religion thread, but I had mixed feelings about the way Islam was portrayed throughout the book, and Iqbal's ending was just devastating. It stayed with me. Complicated, indeed.

The overall ending was unexpected, but appropriate--it seemed very fitting to reassert that the book was about the journey, rather than the end. I loved it.

January 27, 2012 at 1:56 PM



Lindseysaid...

1) It seems to be two things. The first is that it's easy to be offended on behalf of something that doesn't actually affect you. We can be indignant on behalf of others, but when the stakes are personal and could have negative consequences (like Kavita's loss of friends and career) it is harder to take on. I think it also feel selfish to her. It's one thing to fight for a big cause that affects many people, but do you really need to be fought for? It may seem like there are bigger injustices.

2) I don't think Iqbal's actions are justified, but I think that Ms. Umrigar did an excellent job of making him accessible. He's not a monster, he's a conflicted man who can't find a solution to the problems in his life.

4) I was upset when I turned the last page. I was ready to go to America and see their reunion. How would the friends help Armaiti? How would they care for her daughter? It's a testament to the writing that I wanted to read more about all of these characters. However, on further reflection, this was a good place to end the novel. It's tough to end a book with death. That seems almost like a sequel - how do the women who are left behind deal with this? Thrity Umrigar, are you reading this? Please?

January 28, 2012 at 3:31 PM

Post a Comment

I welcome comments and read each one I receive. If your comment needs a response, I will provide it in a timely manner, as I read every comment I receive.

Please keep your comments civil and polite! I reserve the right to delete any comments that are rude or inappropriate.

Because of spam, I have to moderate comments on old posts. Please be patient - I will approve your comment quickly.

Comment as:

South Asia





Book: The world we found (Jan 2012)

Author: Umrigar, Thrity N.

Adults Fiction

Description: American divorcee Armaiti has six months to live and her last wish is to see her three best friends again--Laleh, Kavita, and Nishta, all in Bombay. But Nishta's husband, Iqbal, a fellow university idealist turned fundamentalist, will be the biggest obstacle to fulfilling Armaiti's final desire.

Book Appeal Terms: Definition of Appeal Terms

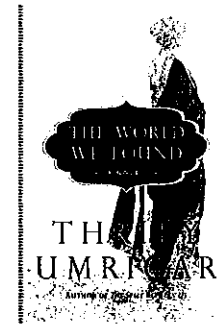
Genre: Psychological fiction; Women's lives and relationships

Storyline: Character-driven

Tone: Moving; Reflective

Persistent link to this record (Permalink): <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=noh&lg=UI&an=10029111&site=novelist-live>

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BookList:

/ Starred Review */* In late-1970s Bombay, four college women share a bond of friendship and dreams of a better India and a better world. For four years, Laleh, Kavita, Nishta, and Armaiti enjoy the pleasure of one another's company, whether chatting over masala chai or carrying a picket sign in a campus protest. They exchange intimate details about their lives and the men they love, except for Kavita, who secretly pines more for Armaiti than for members of the opposite sex. After graduation, the four drift apart. Laleh marries a rich Indian businessman. Kavita becomes a successful architect and falls in love with a German colleague. Nishta takes up with a Muslim man, whose views become progressively more extreme. Only Armaiti leaves India, attending graduate school at Harvard, then remaining in the States. Thirty years later, news that Armaiti is dying of cancer brings the quartet together again. As they prepare for their reunion, each revisits past hardships and joys, reconciling present lives with the world they once knew. In her fifth novel, Umrigar (*The Weight of Heaven*, 2009) renders a vivid portrait of modern-day India as she meditates upon the power of friendship, loyalty, and love. Like her previous works, *The WorldWeFound* is eloquent and evocative, bitter and sweet. -- Block, Allison (Reviewed 11-15-2011) (Booklist, vol 108, number 6, p23)

Publishers Weekly:

Umrigar (*The Space Between Us*) illustrates India's national identity crisis over the past 40 years through four friends who reconnect in this absorbing novel. Divorcée Armaiti is living in America with a daughter at Harvard when she's given six months to live. Her last wish is to see her three best friends again—Laleh, Kavita, and Nishta, all in Bombay. In college, as idealistic Communists, they'd been inseparable, but now they're barely in touch. Kavita is a successful architect, Laleh a wife and mother, and none of them have heard from Nishta in years. When they finally find her beneath a burkha in a strict Muslim neighborhood, it becomes clear that Nishta's husband, Iqbal, a fellow university idealist turned fundamentalist, will be the biggest obstacle to fulfilling Armaiti's final desire. Umrigar is never shy in her portrayal of a divided India, deftly pinpointing major issues facing the country today and tracing them through a legacy of cultural death and rebirth. Armaiti's ruminations on unexpectedly encountering the end of one's life and Kavita's struggle to live openly as a lesbian despite supportive friends act as strong secondary narratives. Though none of the major story elements Umrigar employs are remotely fresh, her characters make this a rewarding novel. (Jan.) --Staff (Reviewed October 3, 2011) (Publishers Weekly, vol 258, issue 40, p)

Library Journal:

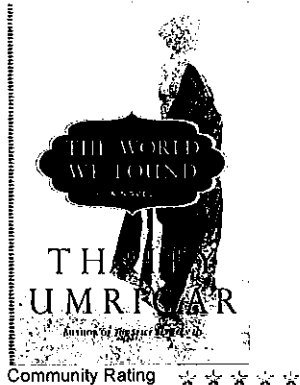
/ Starred Review */* The bad news arrives over the long-distance line bridging the United States and India. Laleh's dearest friend, not yet 50, is coping with a fatal diagnosis. Eschewing debilitating treatments, to the chagrin of her daughter Diane and former husband Richard, the clear-eyed Armaiti nurses one desire: to revisit those heady student days when she, Laleh, Kavita, and Nishta were inseparable activists, marching, protesting, and speaking out for a new India. But over the ensuing years life has gotten in the way of the revolution. Kavita, a renowned architect, has embraced her once hidden sexual orientation, while Nishta's increasingly fundamentalist husband, Iqbal, has buried her personhood beneath a burka. The invitation to America acts as a catalyst, propelling the story forward as the three friends reconnect, reminisce, and contemplate the vagaries of life that will take them to Armaiti's door. VERDICT From the first sentence of this insightful novel, Umrigar (*The Space Between Us*; *The Weight of Heaven*) will enthrall readers with her deft portrayal of the depth of women's friendships, the many facets of love, and the oh-so-human conundrum—whether to live with one's choices or walk away. Oprah would love this book, and so will your patrons. Buy multiples. [See Prepub Alert, 7/25/11.]—Sally Bissell, Lee Cty. Lib. Syst. Ft. Myers, FL --Sally Bissell (Reviewed October 15, 2011) (Library Journal, vol 136, issue 17, p79)

Kirkus:

A crisis reconnects four young firebrands from college who have grown apart as adults, in a story dense with sensitive scrutiny. Straddling India and the United States, this tale of friends reunited in disparate maturity is heavy on internal reflection, lighter on events. The highpoint of Armaiti, Nishta, Laleh and Kavita's student years in late-1970s' Bombay was their involvement in political activity, in particular a demonstration that saw two of them arrested. Now, three decades later, Nishta, renamed Zoha, has spent years in an oppressive marriage to Iqbal, a Muslim who has grown very devout. Impulsive Laleh is comfortably settled with her influential husband Adish and children; architect Kavita has finally come to terms with her lesbianism; and, in America, Armaiti has just been diagnosed with an incurable brain tumor, a catastrophe that pulls the four together again at Armaiti's request. Laleh and Kavita are free to leave India immediately but Nishta has to be found, persuaded and then assisted to escape. Umrigar (*The Weight of Heaven*, 2009, etc.) enhances her simple scenario via sympathetic analysis of all perspectives including Iqbal's and Adish's, whose final confrontation at the airport reflects some of the prejudices and practices of modern India. Umrigar extends a boundless, occasionally lyrical sympathy to her cast, but her slender plot, even padded with extensive rumination, still disappoints. (Kirkus Reviews, November 1, 2011)

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Read-a-Likes



Community Rating ★★★★★

Hardcover0061938343 Trade Cloth
9780061938344 Trade Cloth**Softcover**0062107135 Trade Paper
9780062107138 Trade Paper**The World We Found (2012)****Leela's Book (2011)**

Leela's family is a complicated subject. After living in New York for many years, Leela must return to

**The Red Book (Kogan, Deborah Copaken) (2012)**

This novel by Deborah Copaken Kogan is based on the Harvard tradition that graduates submit brief summaries

**Arcadia (Groff, Lauren) (2012)**

A rambling old home in upstate New York called Arcadia provides the setting for this novel by Lauren

**The Buddha in the Attic (2011)** AWARD WINNER

The Buddha in the Attic is a novel written by author Julie Otsuka. In it, the author tells the story

**The Same Sweet Girls (2005)**

King's novel examines the friendship of six women, who meet at a small liberal arts college in Alabama.

**American Dervish (2012)**

Life in his American-Pakistani household was simple before Mina arrived; he cared about sports and school



Hikikomori and the Rental Sister (2013)

In this novel by Jeff Backhaus, extreme grief has made Thomas Tessler a hikikomori --a term the Japanese



A Walk Across the Sun (2011)

One of the most heinous crimes, and one of the most difficult to fight, is human trafficking--the abduction



Sisterhood Everlasting (2011)

In Sisterhood Everlasting , best-selling author Ann Brashares presents a sequel to her runaway smash



The Sisters (Jensen, Nancy) (2011)

In The Sisters , author Nancy Jensen tells the heart-wrenching tale of two sisters whose lives are forever