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Bend it like Beckham

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Doubtless many young people who read this novel will already have seen the film on which it is based. Many of my Asian/African friends found the film hilarious and look forward to reading the book.

Jess, a British girl of Asian descent, fresh from A-level studies, loves football. Jess has two problems, though. Firstly, she is a girl who wants to play football and secondly, her family not only expects her to become a little woman, learning to make aloo gobi and behave in a manner conducive to securing a nice Indian boy for a husband, but to become the modern version of that stereotype - a little woman with an education and a topnotch career as a solicitor.

Bend it pokes gentle fun at the community which lies at its heart. The book is as filled with Indian family stereotypes as a Woody Allen film is with Jewish ones. Of course, as in Allen's films, here the stereotyping is done by an insider - and only an insider is presumably allowed to send up a group, be it a religious, gender or racial one, with impunity. In addition, an insider gets laughs based on the degree of accuracy of the send-up. Such stereotypes invariably receive a split reaction. Some find it funny. Others think that such stereotypes are humiliating to that community.

The book does, however, also have some interesting and serious elements, not least of which is the fact that an Asian girl is an ordinary everyday heroine. The plot itself is interesting in that Jess not only wants to do something different with her life, but to do something utterly and completely different. Her goal (ahem!) is one which even her English-descended friends might find hard to achieve. Other issues might have been delved into more deeply - Jess's best friend Tony is gay, for example, but this is not explored.

Running Order:

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