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Karma

Author:
Kathy Ostlere

Reading Level: Grades 7+

The year is 1984. Fifteen year old Maya packs a suitcase for a trip to India with her father. They are going to lay Maya's recently deceased Hindu mother to rest. Not long after they arrive, however, tumultuous religious differences between the Sikhs and Hindus explode into violence when prime minister Indira Gandhi is assassinated.

Maya and her father, a Sikh, are caught in the middle of the clash and separated when their hotel is attacked. Afraid for her safety because of her Hindu-Sikh parents and her sex, Maya quickly hacks off her long ponytail with a pair of scissors and runs, forgetting her mother's ashes in the hotel room.

The next hours are harrowing for Maya as the riots swell around her, Sikhs and Hindus fighting unrelentingly around her. When she finally emerges from the violence, rescued by a kind desert family but traumatized into muteness, it is only the 17-year old son, Sandeep, devoted to helping Maya find her father, that can save her again.

This historical fiction romance in diary-format free verse will have you turning pages back again and again to reread Maya and Sandeep's words and longing for more after the end. *Karma* is fraught with emotion, culture, violence, religion fear, but most importantly, family.

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