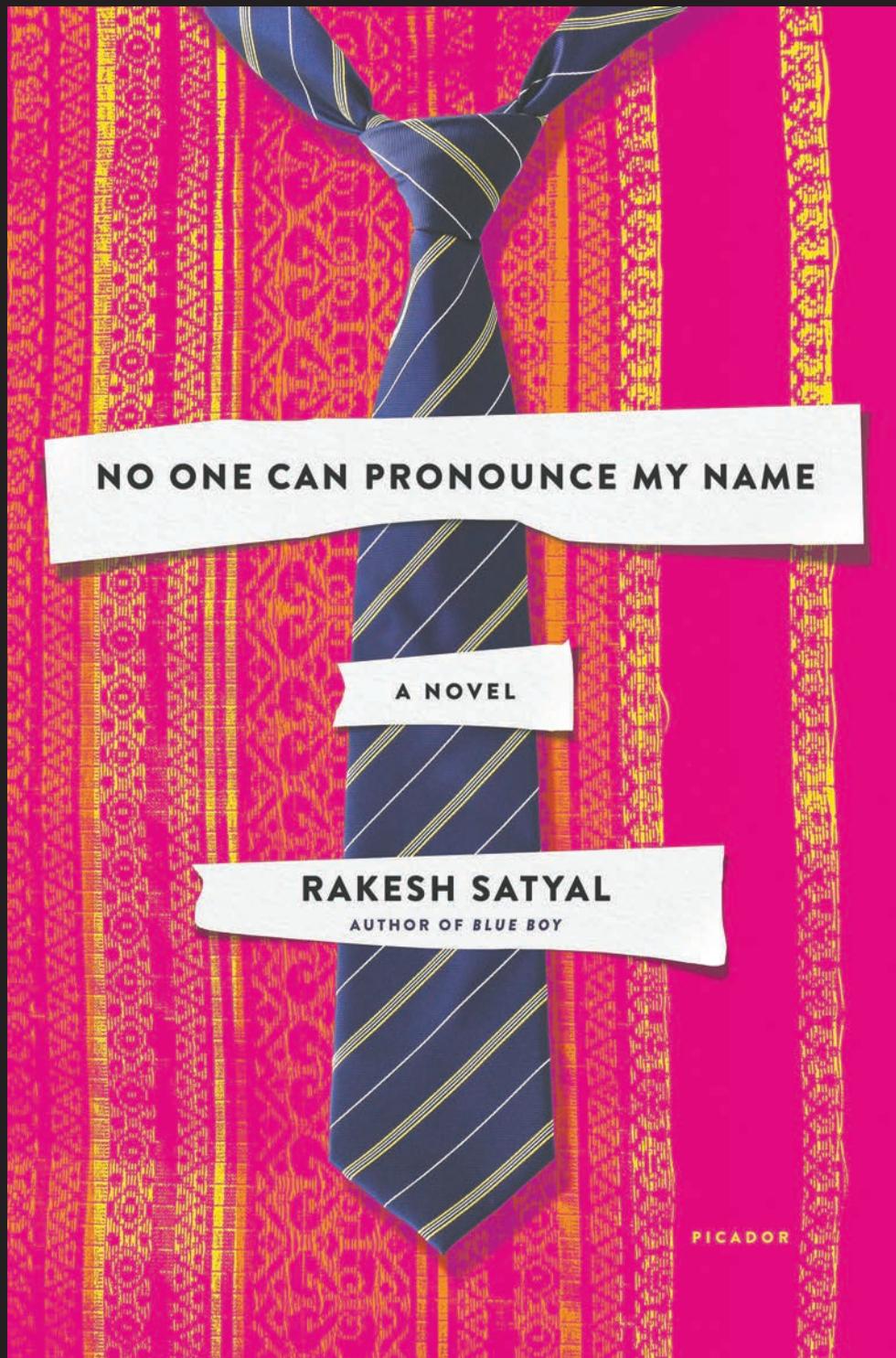


Deschutes Public Library Foundation presents

2018 A Novel Idea ...READ TOGETHER

15 YEARS



Author

RAKESH SATYAL



Sunday, May 6, 2018

4:00 p.m.

Bend High Auditorium

Get free tickets starting 4/21/2018 at
www.dplfoundation.org and all libraries.



DESCHUTES PUBLIC
LIBRARY
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RAKESH SATYAL INTERVIEW

w/A Novel Idea Staff

A NOVEL IDEA: In your novel you explore differences in assimilation from generation to generation. What were differences for your family as they assimilated to American culture and could you share your family's immigration story?

RAKESH SATYAL: My parents immigrated in the early '70s; my mother was getting her second master's degree (in education) at Miami University of Ohio, and my father was getting his business degree there, too. Because my mother had siblings in the US, both she and my father had somewhat of a safety net. They also had other Indian families whom they met on campus that helped them navigate this new country and worldview. But there were certainly challenges—in terms of reconciling their Indian heritage with a rather rural American setting and carving out new narratives for themselves that didn't quite resemble the experiences that they had had in India. And, of course, raising children was a new experience for them, too. I think that there was a kind of symbiosis there, in that, as much as they were teaching my brothers and me, we as kids were also helping to reveal the America that we knew as our home country and make it all the more available and understandable to them.

Your characters tend to be quiet and hold their truths within. Was this your experience or were you able to live your truth out loud?

In my first book, *Blue Boy*, which is very much a coming-of-age book, I definitely explored how growing up on the margins of society can feel stressful and even stunted. But in both that book and this one, I wanted to show how, even though you might not be able to live your truth out loud all the time, there is a process of self-examination and self-realization that occurs that eventually allows you to do so. That forms the backbone of this novel, to be sure.

Are you more similar to Harit or Ranjana?

Even though you might assume it's the former, it's actually the latter: I see a lot of myself in Ranjana. Not just because she is a writer, but there is a certain neurotic tendency to her overthinking that I embody! A lot of the rumination about her creative endeavors later in the book echoes a lot of my experience as a writer, and she certainly acted as a kind of conduit so that I could explore those themes and devices.

Your use of humor throughout the novel is artfully crafted to add levity but to never trivialize the character's situation. Please explain your use of humor and the purpose it served in telling your characters' stories.

One thing that I've stressed in all of my writing is that even though life can be full of trauma, it is, indeed, levity that provides to us our firmest sense of resilience. I wanted to make sure that I showed characters who might be struggling with very difficult challenges but how those moments of humor would help them understand themselves better and afford them a certain strength and wisdom. And one of the techniques by which you might achieve this as a writer is by putting wildly different characters in shared social interactions—by quite literally juxtaposing them to create a meaningful tension and an eventual connection. This is the root of so much comedy, and I wanted to approach it in a fresh way in this book.

How does your work as an editor inform your work as a writer?

Being an editor definitely makes me more empathetic as a writer, chiefly because editing forces me to see a work with fresh eyes, which is then something that I try to do when I'm revising my own work. There are also logistical publishing processes that I know about from my work as an editor that inform who I am as a writer—practical things like the copyediting process and what happens with advance reading copies and what the ramp-up to publication date should look like. But in a more holistic way, working as an editor gives me a wise perspective on the industry that allows me to play with form and subvert expectations about what my work as a person of color or queer person "should be like" and, instead, to offer something that is hopefully fresh and distinctive.

If your family had not emigrated to the United States, what do you imagine your life would have been like in India?

I wonder about this often. It's hard to conjecture. Both of my parents have an appreciation for the arts (they actually host a local radio program in Cincinnati that plays Indian music), so I'd like to think that being creative would have still found its way into my life. But of course, growing up queer in that culture is even harder than it is here, so it would have been a challenge.

It seems you like to sing! If you could choose between having the lead role in "Hamilton" or become an award-winning author, what would you choose and why?

Oh, that's an impossible question! Let's just hope that I can one day achieve both!

1 After observing Achyut’s friends at FB—the bar where he works—Ranjana notes, “In the past few decades, this country had tried to instill a feeling of progress in not just Indian people but also in people of all colors. We were supposed to feel united, all of our children starting from the same place, where cultures melted into each other, yet the divide between Eastern ethnicity and this American setting was greater than ever.” Why do you think Ranjana feels this great divide? How might some of the younger characters in the novel respond to this statement?

2 When Prashant’s friend Charlie suggests he take on a nickname, Prashant laments, “But this is my name. I shouldn’t have to leave my name behind just because of other people’s ignorance.” To this Charlie responds, “It’s not ignorance, man. People just can’t do it.” The title, *No One Can Pronounce My Name*, speaks to this struggle between cultural confrontation and accommodation. Can you identify other examples of this tension at play in the novel? What are some of the different ways that the characters handle this tension?

3 In what ways does Ranjana change through her writing?

4 Alcohol plays a complicated role in the novel. In what ways does its consumption shift along cultural lines? How about gender lines? Age?

5 There’s a particular preoccupation with appropriate behavior in this Indian community. In what ways do the central characters’—Harit, Ranjana, and Prashant—senses of propriety change from the beginning to the end of the novel?

6 In their first meeting at the French restaurant, Harit observes that Ranjana had been “proficient in becoming American. The way she pulled the cheese, the way she managed a small sip of wine without its looking overly studied, it was clear that she had honed her social skills to something beyond culture.” What do you think the term “beyond culture” means in this context?

7 Teddy acts as a kind of “matchmaker” for Ranjana and Harit. Why do you think he does so?

8 After Prashant interrupts the older men’s political discussion at Ranjana’s party, he surveys the room and surmises: “All of his father’s friends wore bemused, condescending grins on their faces. He had seen this look before, a look that simultaneously laughed at youth and reiterated the superiority that these men had demonstrated in traveling halfway across the globe. They didn’t appreciate Obama’s struggle... because they already saw their own journeys as vastly more impressive.” Do you think there are other ways to interpret their reactions to Prashant’s speech? How so?

DISCUSSION

9 Did your opinions about Teddy change at all when you read his backstory in Part III? How so?

10 Toward the end of the novel, Harit realizes that, despite his resistance, Teddy has become a true friend and tells him about his family’s tragedy. He decides, however, to tell him everything “but his many times wrapped in a sari.” In fact, he decides “that he will keep this between his mother and himself. He will not even tell Ranjana.” Why do you think Harit decides to keep this practice between himself and his mother?

11 The ways in which the different characters communicate, fail to communicate, or miscommunicate, is a major preoccupation of the novel. How do you see different characters change their communication styles—in romantic relationships, with colleagues, and across generations—throughout the story?

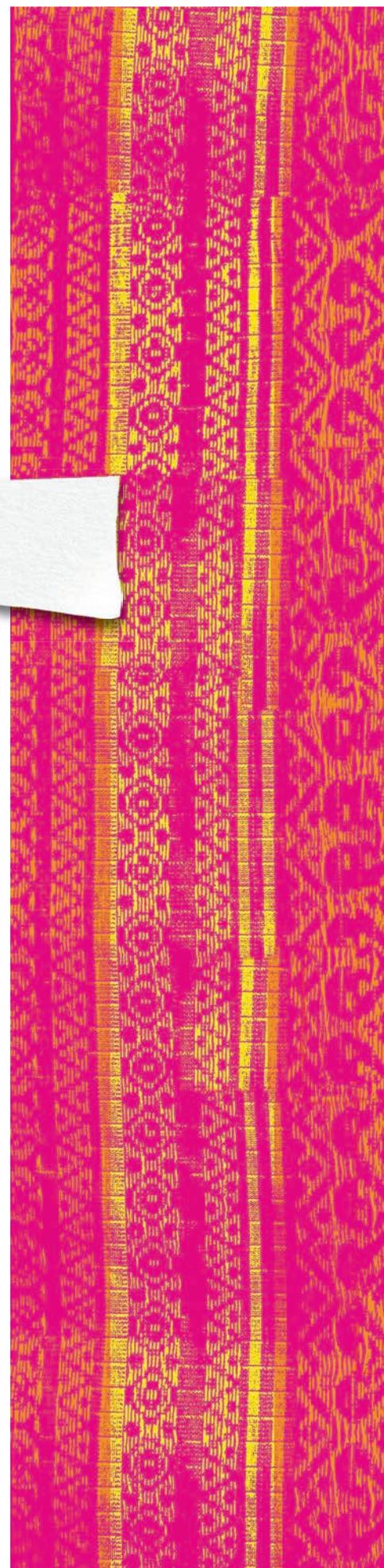
Join the discussion online or at any of the eight DPL discussions (see page 7). Need a book club kit? Contact Liz at lizg@deschuteslibrary.org for a free kit.

A NOVEL IDEA SELECTION COMMITTEE

Alyssa Bennett, Tina Walker Davis,
Stacey Donohue, Judy England,
Paige Ferro, Liz Goodrich,
Kim Jackson, Richard Jenkins,
Dan Murphy, Karen Roth,
Chantal Strobel

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Chantal Strobel PROJECT MANAGER
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Tina Walker Davis MARKETING & SOCIAL MEDIA
Ann Hettinger GRAPHIC DESIGN
Suzy Olsen FOUNDATION COORDINATOR





SOUTH ASIAN IMMIGRATION

South Asians began arriving in North America in the late 19th century. Vivek Bald's book *Bengali Harlem* documents how Indian Muslim traders arrived as sailors and deck hands at Ellis Island but quickly jumped ship and moved on to cities like Detroit, Baltimore, New York, and New Orleans to establish lives within communities of color. On the Pacific Coast, South Asians arrived in the 1890s in British Columbia seeking work in the lumber industry and in agriculture. Most of these immigrants were Sikh and Muslim men from Punjab, but the popular press referred to them as "Hindoos."

In 1907 several hundred immigrants crossed the US-Canada border and arrived in Bellingham, Washington, and worked in the lumber mills there. This was an era of strong anti-Asian immigrant sentiment and these workers were referred to as a "Tide of Turbans." White workers in Bellingham incited riots against them on Labor Day in 1907 and after the riots, these men moved south down the Pacific coast and eventually established a thriving community in California.

In 1913, South Asian workers and students in Astoria, Oregon, formed the Ghadar (Revolutionary) Party to fight for workers' rights, immigration reform, and for independence for India from British rule. This period of Indian immigration is significant as immigrants fought racist exclusion laws (Bhagat Singh v. United States, 1923) and resisted Alien Land Laws and anti-miscegenation laws that shattered their lives. Although the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 recognized the citizenship rights of several Asian immigrant communities including South Asians, the country-based quotas policy of the time limited the number of South Asians arriving in the United States. The passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (also known as the Hart-Cellar Act) transformed the immigration landscape by removing country-based quotas and establishing skills-based criteria for immigration.

The passage of the 1965 Act brought college-educated South Asian immigrants, particularly those in the science and technology fields, and the family reunification policies established in the 1980s led to a dramatic growth in the South Asian community. The 2013 American Community Survey notes that South Asians number 4.3 million in the United States (up from the 2010 Census data that listed 3.5 million). This population traces its heritage to South Asian nations such as Bangladesh,

Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives and to the Indian diaspora in places like Fiji, Trinidad, Guyana, Kenya, and Tanzania.

South Asian communities have grown and established themselves in urban areas including Boston, Detroit, New York, Chicago, Houston, San Francisco and the Bay Area, the greater Seattle area, Portland, and Los Angeles.



A **BELLINGHAM HERALD** newspaper published September 5, 1907, the day after a town-wide riot against East Indians, showed some of the hundreds of immigrants who were stiff-armed into jail by the mob.

COURTESY OF BELLINGHAM HERALD. WWW.BELLINGHAMHERALD.COM/NEWS/LOCAL/ARTICLE22195713.HTML

The growth of aerospace, software, and e-commerce industries has contributed to dramatic growth of the South Asian community in the Pacific Northwest. Although the general perception of the community is that of high achieving and audent people, data shows that in 2013 median household income for Indian-Americans was \$100,547 but for Bangladeshi Americans it was \$51,331. Nearly 70 percent of Indo-Americans 25 years and older were college educated and almost a third of the population worked in science and engineering fields according to data from the American Community Survey and the Pew Research Center. However, South Asian communities also include undocumented immigrants and people on temporary worker visas.

The model minority perception often obscures questions of poverty, immigration status, and economic vulnerability amongst South Asians. The long history of the community in the United States; its diversity in terms of national origin, religion, class, caste, and language; and its impact on the US economy, culture, and politics makes this group an important one in current national debates on immigration reform, racial politics, and cultural representation.

Nalini Iyer, Ph.D., is Professor of English at Seattle University where she teaches postcolonial literatures from South Asia, Africa, and their diasporas. She is also Vice President of the South Asian Literary Association (SALA).



Gender relations and women's roles in modern India exist as a direct consequence of British imperial rule that lasted around 200 years until the country's independence in 1947. The British, completely befuddled by the enormous diversity of people, languages, set of religious practices, and customs they encountered, decided to simplify what they saw. Hence, the vast subcontinent became "India," various religious practices came to be called "Hinduism," and the diverse status of women across the region that until then had depended on ancient customs and geography, came to be clubbed under common laws. For instance, matriarchal rules in Southern Indian regions that now form the state of Kerala were delegitimized to enable more patriarchal patterns of land ownership that benefited the British.



Policeman facing women in a protest march in Kolkata, (formerly Calcutta), India in 2005.
© JORGE ROYAN / [HTTP://WWW.ROYAN.COM.AR](http://www.royan.com.ar) / CC BY-SA 3.0

Nevertheless, women were not just passive recipients of the British law but also active social workers and freedom fighters, and they played a key role in the struggle that led to independence. The constitution of independent India granted equality to women and all genders, the right to vote (although this was available even earlier to some degree), and several other progressive rights. At the same time though, the law of independent India divided women based on religion when it came to civil rights like marriage, and this lack of a Uniform Civil Code has to date meant that many married and divorced women can continue to be victims of oppressive religious customs since their marriages are governed by the rules of that religion and not a uniform, national law.

Apart from enforcing progressive legal regulations such as women's inheritance rights and protection against sexual harassment at work, Indian women, especially a confident, vocal and social media savvy

GENDER, WOMEN, AND SEXUALITY IN INDIA

younger generation of women, have brought gender oppression issues into mainstream media and discussions. For instance, many women have taken up the global #MeToo campaign to generate lively debates not only around sexism but also around masculinity, society, and violence. Since the 1990s women have also been forced to rethink "gender" to include men and transgender folks, whose struggles led the Supreme Court in 2014 to officially declare transgender as a third gender. Women are also now increasingly discussing sexuality, both as different sexual desires instead of assumed heterosexuality between "women" and "men," but also going beyond sexual violence to thinking about sexual pleasure.

In spite of these welcome changes, India's current political climate is also deepening gender inequalities in the country and creating dangerously narrow visions of womanhood that see women solely as mothers and housekeepers and confines them under deeply religious and caste-bound identities. It remains to be seen if India's millennial generation of women can resist this wave of hateful, divisive politics and even better, change the system to create a more gender-equal India.

Akanksha Misra is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Washington, Seattle. She is currently on an American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) fellowship for the 2017-18 academic year in order to conduct her dissertation research in India and is currently based in Secunderabad.





the
BIG LIST

Fifteen years ago a social networking site called Facebook launched, George W. Bush began his second term in the Oval Office, the Boston Red Sox won the World Series, and *The River Why* was selected as the first book for what would become Oregon's largest community read program: "A Novel Idea."

"A Novel Idea" has taken our imaginations to distant lands and cultures, raised our voices in song and poetry, moved our feet and hands in dance and drumming, and bridged our hearts and minds towards deeper understanding and empathy. We have journeyed through Afghanistan, Mexico, Ghana, Mississippi, Alaska, New York City, and, most recently, India. We have studied America at its core from the land of dreams to staring down its blatant racism. Together we have created beautiful art, food, and music

in celebration of the books we read. We stood firm in agreement, and in disagreement, about how and what we drew from the words on the pages.

BUILDING COMMUNITY
One Book at a Time

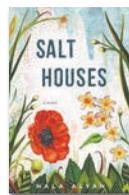
Gathered around one book we have created shared experiences that fostered community and deeper understanding. This has been the magic of "A Novel Idea" and we promise to find books that push us in new directions and take us out of our own heads and into the hearts and minds of others. With great appreciation for 15 years of discovery and community, we thank you for your constant participation and continued support of "A Novel Idea."
Chantal Strobel, Project Director

We've made some changes in how we select "A Novel Idea" books. The circle of readers has been expanded to include a team of Community Readers that have already started meeting and reading for "A Novel Idea" 2019. The objective of the changes is to get more input from the community and to compile a list of vetted books that meet "A Novel Idea" criteria. We are excited about the changes and are looking forward to many more years of great picks for "A Novel Idea."

Between January and May 31, the Community Readers compile a list of books that meet the "A Novel Idea" criteria. That list is passed along to the Selection Committee who read, discuss, and decide on the final vote. After vetting the authors the list is whittled to three and passed along to Library Director Todd Dunkelberg for review. The committee meets once more for a final vote. And voila! Another great "A Novel Idea" selection is chosen.

Every year people are curious about the books that weren't picked. Here is the list of the four books that rounded out the final five:

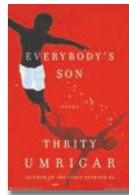
SALT HOUSES
by Hala Alyan



In her debut novel, Alyan tells the story of a Palestinian family that is uprooted by the Six-Day War of 1967 and Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. This is heartbreaking and important story examines displacement, belonging, and family in a lyrical style.

— The Millions

EVERYBODY'S SON
by Thrity Umrigar



The bestselling, critically acclaimed author of *The Space Between Us* and *The World We Found* deftly explores issues of race, class, privilege, and power and asks us to consider uncomfortable moral questions in this probing, ambitious, emotionally wrenching novel of two families—one black, one white.

— Harper Collins, Publisher

SPOILS
by Brian Van Reet



In a strong debut, an Iraq War veteran tells the before and after for both sides of a brief respite in the early days of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

— Kirkus Review

THE WANDERERS
by Meg Howrey



In four years Prime Space will put the first humans on Mars. Helen Kane, Yoshi Tanaka, and Sergei Kuznetsov must prove they're the crew for the job by spending 17 months in the most realistic simulation ever created.

— G.P. Putnam's Son, Publisher

EVENTS

*Registration required

Book Discussions

Thursday, April 12 • 12:00 p.m.
Downtown Bend Library

Thursday, April 12 • 12:00 p.m.
Redmond Library

Friday, April 13 • 6:00 p.m.
Herringbone Books
422 SW 6th St, Redmond

Monday April 16 • 6:00 p.m.
Sunriver Books & Music
57100 Beaver Dr., #25C, Sunriver

Tuesday, April 17 • 12:00 p.m.
East Bend Library

Thursday, April 19 • 12:00 p.m.
La Pine Library

Wednesday, April 25 • 5:30 p.m.
Sisters Library

Wednesday, May 2 • 6:00 p.m.
Roundabout Books
900 NW Mt. Washington Dr., #110

Bollywood and BollyX



Immerse yourself in the culture of Bollywood films and move to its beats with BollyX, the dance workout that combines dynamic choreography with music from Bollywood. Presenter **Jaspreet Arora** is a Bhangra (North Indian Folk Dance) performer and certified instructor. Be prepared to explore rejuvenating moves and the Bollywood phenomenon.

Saturday, April 14 • 12:00 p.m.
Sisters Library

Tuesday, April 17 • 6:00 p.m.
Redmond Library

Hinduism 101



Kristin Scheible from Reed College presents a introduction to Hinduism, using references in *No One Can Pronounce My Name* as a framework. How does Hinduism inform the themes (cultural conventions, attitudes toward sexuality, relationships, obligations, identity) explored through the characters? What are some Hindu practical and theological concerns that transform in diaspora?

Saturday, April 14 • 12:00 p.m.
Sunriver Library

Sunday, April 15 • 1:00 p.m.
Downtown Bend Library

A Novel Idea Kick-Off

Stacey Donohue provides a snapshot of *No One Can Pronounce My Name* and **Jaspreet Arora** provides a glimpse of the entertaining world of Bollywood.
Saturday, April 14 • 3:00 p.m.

Taste of India at Mantra Indian Kitchen and Tap Room*



Food plays an important role in *No One Can Pronounce My Name*. During this program **Runi Srikantaiah** and his team from Mantra demonstrate traditional Indian cooking with a modern twist. Samples and recipes provided. Beverages available for purchase.

Sunday, April 15 • 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, April 22 • 1:00 p.m.

Mantra Indian Kitchen and Tap Room
744 NW Bond Street, Bend

Vampires: A History of the Creatures of the Night



Community Librarian **Nate Pedersen** explores the cultural history of the vampire in folklore and literature. These creatures of the night exist in countless cultures across the world, including ancient Indian mythology and legend. Nate is a Community Librarian with Deschutes Public Library and serves on the Board of Directors for the Deschutes County Historical Society & Museum.

Monday, April 16 • 6:00 p.m.

Downtown Bend Library

Wednesday, April 25 • 3:00 p.m.
La Pine Library

Workshop: Handmade Book of Secrets*



Many characters in *No One Can Pronounce My Name* are extremely private, with secret or unspoken ambitions, desires, or histories. Do you harbor something secret or unspoken? Do you wish it to remain secret...or are you ready to share it? In this workshop, create a handmade book to hold your secrets. You decide whether your secrets are fully revealed or remain safely hidden within your book.

Thursday, April 19 • 5:30–7:00 p.m.

East Bend Library

Friday, April 20 • 12–2:00 p.m.

Bend Art Center

550 SW Industrial Way #180

Saturday, April 21 • 12–1:30 p.m.

Sisters Library

South Asians in the Pacific Northwest



Nalini Iyer, Professor of English at Seattle University and co-author of *Roots and Reactions: South Asians in the Pacific Northwest*, discusses the history of South Asian immigration to the Pacific Northwest. She also considers how South Asian American literature has evolved in the U.S. and examines the contribution of writers from the West Coast to the literary world.

Saturday, April 21 • 11:00 a.m.

East Bend Library

Saturday, April 21 • 3:00 p.m.

Redmond Library

The Partition of British India



This presentation looks at the way the British colonial period in India created conditions that made the idea of a single independent India, and the many ideas of different ways of dividing it, plausible. This program is led by **Keith Snodgrass**, the Managing Director and Outreach Coordinator at the South Asia Center at the University of Washington.

Saturday, April 28 • 12:00 p.m.

Sisters Library

Sunday, April 29 • 1:00 p.m.

Downtown Bend Library



Vintage Sari Bookmark*

Create a one-of-a-kind bookmark using vintage saris, glass beads, and vintage trinkets. **Jennifer Nordby**, the creative mind behind Cultivate Creativity, leads the workshop and provides all that you'll need to make a masterpiece.

Tuesday, May 1 • 3–5:00 p.m.

East Bend Library

Wednesday, May 2 • 12–2:00 p.m.

Redmond Library

Women and Gender in India



India's culture is a rich and diverse one, one engrained in religion and custom. **Dr. Anita Weiss**, professor in the Department of International Studies at the University of Oregon, explores the customs, traditions, and roles women and gender play in India, and how these roles have evolved within the framework of Hinduism and the changing political landscape of the times.

Saturday, May 5 • 1:00 p.m.

East Bend Library

Saturday, May 5 • 3:30 p.m.

Redmond Library

AUTHOR RAKESH SATYAL

More Together Than Alone*

One of the key themes in *No One Can Pronounce My Name* is loneliness—and how it can be both limiting and constructive. In this workshop, author **Rakesh Satyal** explores what makes strong characters, how writers create them, and what literature might achieve when infused with both compassion and insight.

Saturday, May 5 • 1–3:00 p.m.

Library Admin Conference Room
507 NW Wall Street, Bend

MAIN EVENT

Rakesh Satyal, the author of *No One Can Pronounce My Name* takes the stage at the final "ANovel Idea" event.

Tickets are free but required and available starting April 21 at www.dplfoundation.org and at all libraries.

Sunday, May 6 • 4:00 p.m.

Bend High School
230 NE 6th Street



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Tony & Claudia Hinz
Cezanne Hitchcock
Carla & Gary
Hoagland
John & Jackie
Hoffman
Jan Hollenbeck
Deborah Hollens
Mike & Sue Hollern
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Marcia Houston
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Claudia & Todd
Johnson
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Kristin Kovalik
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Suzanne Kukar
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Leanne Latterell
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Milree Latimer
Michael Lavrich
Martha Lawler
League of Women
Voters of Deschutes
County
Seth Lefkowitz
Rebecca Plassmann &
Dorothy Leman
Jerry Lindstrom
Ralph & Janet
Litchfield
K.C. Lockrem
Mary Hay Long
Patricia Long
Kathryn Loring
Leila Lovdale
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Erin MacDonald

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Machala
Janet Mager
Steven & Cynthia
Magidson
Jill Mahler
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Mahoney
Liz Main
Thomas & Patricia
Majchrowski
Ann Malkin
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Emilie Marlinghaus
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Suzanne Martin
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William Castell
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