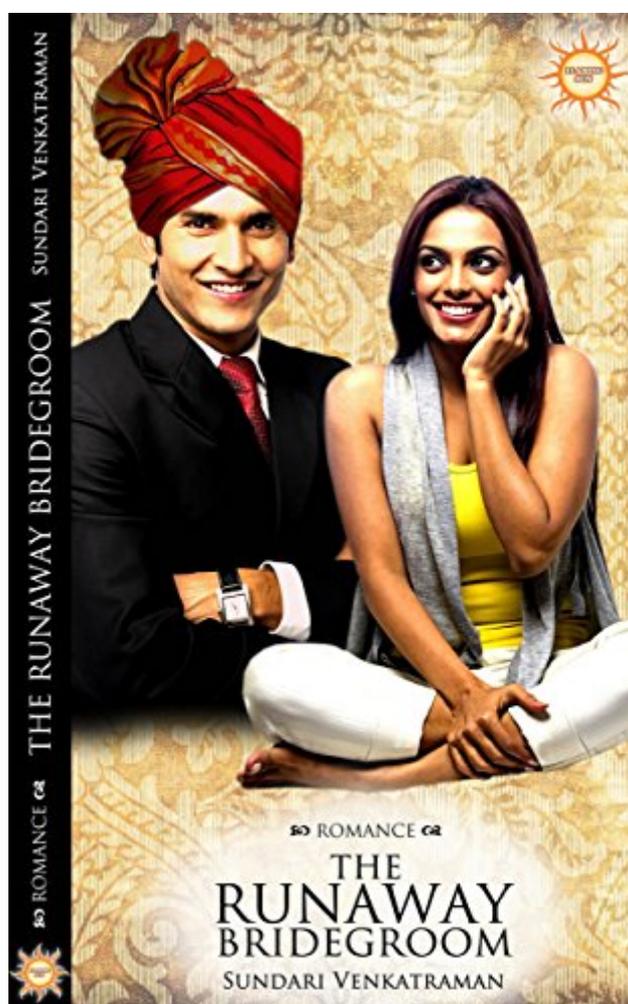


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The Runaway Bridegroom



Synopsis

Chanda Maheshwari's family is shaken when her thirteen-year-old bridegroom Veerendra runs away immediately after the wedding. The eight-year-old child doesn't even understand the impact on her life. Unable to face their neighbours and friends, the Maheshwaris move from their village to Jaipur and begin a new life in the city. Fourteen years later, Chanda is studying in a Delhi College. She takes up a temporary job at RS Software Pvt. Ltd. and falls head-over-heels for the boss of the operation. But what about Ranveer Singh? Is he interested in her? Ranveer's secretary Shikha is desperate to make him fall for her. All she wants is life-long security with a rich man. But it's her nerd Abhimanyu who keeps getting in the way. Abhi is Ranveer's second-in-command and Shikha isn't keen on him as she's eyeing the main chance. When Ranveer appears to show interest in Chanda, she's faced with a new problem. Astrologer Vidyasagar insists that she would get back with her husband Veerendra. Does anyone want to know what she wants? Chanda feels torn between the man she has fallen for and the family values that have been instilled in her. Will she ever find happiness?

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Customer Reviews

Sundari Venkatraman always mixes a social cause with Romance. Though she tries her best to claim that she is not preaching, but just writing a romance, her short, airy romances end up making you question our dogmatic society. In this one- it was about the evils of child marriage, which sadly is still prevalent in our society. Chanda - (a mix of Meena Kumari and Aliya Bhatt ???) is getting married. She is just an eight year old child. Reading about her, made me want to pick her up and abscond. But I was saved from kidnapping her, when her child- husband Veerender runs away. As with many of the child-brides, Chanda is left in a strange relationship with a man whom she would never meet. (Kinda reminds me of the movie Water) Does Chanda have the same stoic expression seen so often on the faces of the lonely widows in that movie. I think she does. For Sundari Venkatraman has brought out this emotion in the lines -" Chanda held her arms tightly around herself and wondered what she was missing in life. She heard her friends discussing romance and stolen kisses in whispered conversations. But Chanda felt that that life was not hers to live." Such pathos in the heart of a young girl can only make you want to scream at the mistakes some parents can commit in the name of social rulings. For those who are not well versed with child-marriages in India, it was quite common in the days prior to 1928 when Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 put a stop to it. Well, it did not. This act is only punishable when someone reports this act or the authorities discover it. But when the whole sect in a particular society follows this act, they hardly get reported.

Thanks to the author, Sundari Venkatraman, for providing me with an advanced review copy of her new book, in return for an honest review. Before beginning my review, I must mention that now I've read all of Sundari's books and I can conclude that her books are meant purely for enjoyment and to make you feel happy and light. To get that stress off your shoulders, sometimes, these romantically twisted stories are necessary. Her new book, The Runaway Bridegroom is one such book which screams "ENTERTAINMENT" in big black bold letters. Now after reading 3-4 of her books, I've fallen hard for Sundari's style of writing a charming love-story. Why don't these books are made into movies? Sundari's book has got that raw element and right emotions and twist of fate in every right decisions of the protagonist which the Indian Bollywood lovers would die for! Maybe someday, her books will be made into super-cool Bolly films. Sundari has written this book keeping in mind all the stigmas still lurking in our Indian culture. From an Indian reader's POV, I think, she has started off with the right event- a child marriage and guess what, city people might defer to the idea, but child marriage still happens. The moment a girl is born into a family, her parents try to tie her up with a decent prospect as soon as possible, as if she might bring stigma to their family if they don't bind

her into a nuptial. But unfortunately, in the book, Veerendra, the child groom runs away after the marriage is complete with Chanda, a little, innocent 8 year old girl. Leaving Chanda's family ashamed, they shift their base to Jaipur to start a new life.

The runaway bridegroom is a typical South Asian romance story that is set in against a backdrop of the social issue of child marriage. The protagonists, Chanda and Veer are married at a very young age by traditional Rajasthani customs. Veer, being thoroughly disinterested in the concept of wedding in such a young age escapes after the wedding is complete leaving Chanda married and without a husband. Fourteen years later, Chanda finally has the guts to love Ranveer, the big boss of the company where she takes up a temporary job. Ranveer's secretary, Shika already has her eye on Ranveer and has been trying to woo him to marry her. Sadly Ranveer doesn't reciprocate her feelings. Like every other typical Indian family, Chanda's family also consults the astrologer about Chanda's marriage only to be told that Chanda would get back to Veer, her long lost husband of the child marriage. This puts Chanda into a great dilemma. What follows is how Chanda's life changes with this revelation. Child marriage has always been serious and a rather common issue in the Northern and North-Western part of India. The writer took the unconventional route in talking about it. The conventional route obviously involves the young bride being saved and cops getting involved and a whole lot of drama. That typical plot line is a wee bit boring given that we are dealing with a fiction. Basing a story on a social issue is fine, but turning a work of fiction into a piece of advice is really a weak attempt in making a difference. Thankfully Sundari steered clear of that line of thinking. Though the story turned predictable at one point of time, the writing kept me hooked and made me want to know what actually happened. The characterization was perfect to dot.

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