

Abby Spencer Goes to Bollywood

Varsha Bajaj

Reviewed by: Annie, 23

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Abby Spencer Goes to Bollywood is the tale of a Houston thirteen-year old and her experience meeting her father for the first time. Abby has known she is bi-racial, Indian and Caucasian, and that her father lives in India. What she learns is that her father is Naveen Kumar, the Brad Pitt of Bollywood films. Surprised and pleased he as a daughter, Naveen flies Abby to his home in Mumbai to meet both him and his elderly mother. Abby and her father have a lot to catch up on. They also must find a way to reveal her existence to the media and to Naveen's gigantic fan-base – without sparking rumors of a scandal. It remains a secret until the media gets in Abby's face, provoking her to reveal the truth that the actor has a teenage daughter before their planned announcement, threatening to overshadow Naveen's film production debut.

Varsha Bajaj weaves humor and romance around the serious subject that is the acquaintance of a daughter and father thirteen years late. Abby's discovery is comical as she at once blushes with embarrassment that her father is a Bollywood heart throb, and is relieved he is not a dead-beat loser. Amid the culture shock in Mumbai, Abby meets, and falls for, the son of an old neighbor of her father's. Shaan, who happens to be Abby's age, as well as an Indian American living in Texas acts as Abby's sidekick and sounding board while she is flooded with the emotions of new family, a new city, and life in the spotlight.

I recommend Bajaj's novel for teen girls and guys alike. I am reminded of Meg Cabot's *The Princess Diaries* with Abby Spencer's shift in identity when she finds out her father is famous in another country. For young people raised by single parents or who may not know one of their parents, this book may help them confront the conflicting feelings they may have. Abby feels both anger and admiration for her mother, first, for hiding her father's identity, and second, for raising her all on her own. This novel also will give children a glimpse into Indian culture and a bi-racial experience. I give Bajaj a 10 out of 10.