



Bitter Chocolate: Child Sexual Abuse In India

Pinki Virani

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A book that challenges our notions of family honour and morality.

Sometime, somewhere, the conspiracy of silence around Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) in Indian homes had to be shattered. This path-breaking book—the first of its kind in the country and subcontinent—attempts to give that sexually abused child a powerful voice. It provides damning disclosures about men, and some women, in middle and upper-class families who sexually abuse their children, then silence them into submission.

Based on studies, reports and investigation, this book reveals that a minimum of 20% of girls and boys under the age of 16 are regularly being sexually abused; half of them in their own homes, by adults who have the child's trust.

In *Bitter Chocolate*, journalist and best-selling author Pinki Virani travels across the country to record the testimonies of the police, doctors, child psychologists, mental health professionals, social workers, lawyers and the traumatized victims themselves.

The book opens with an account—brave and devoid of self-pity—of the author's own experience. Going beyond blaming, Pinki Virani then proceeds with her insightful analysis of the issue in three notebooks. The first spells out what constitutes CSA, why and how this happens, its devastating after-effects which haunt the victims as they grow into adulthood. The second notebook describes these effects through two real-life stories of women who were betrayed as children by men of their family. The third provides practical solutions on how to counter CSA, including a framework involving the law, the parent and their child.

A special chapter addresses adults who have never before disclosed their sexual abuse as children. Plus: a nationally coordinated helpline.

Accessible yet comprehensive, *Bitter Chocolate* is written for the young parent and guardian, principal and teacher, judge and police, lawyer and public prosecutor, teenager and tomorrow's citizen.

Bitter Chocolate: Child Sexual Abuse In India Details

Date : Published May 27th 2014 by Penguin India (first published April 2000)

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Author : Pinki Virani

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Abhaga says

A little dated. I feel 15 years later, there is a lot more awareness about the issue. But reading the book made me wonder how can a parent keep their child safe unless they just be with them all the time! It is scary.

Also the author does not seem very fond of gay and bisexual people. Also the tone gets very self-righteous at times. The book also contains at least one instance of "Be rest assured". :-)

Sonny Sweatt says

When I looked at the majority of other people's ratings for this book, I am not surprised. Most people rate this book with a 1 or 2 out of 5. Which, to me, makes perfect sense. This book is extremely painful to read. When I read it I was living in India and it made it that much harder to believe and relate to everyday experience. I remember reading this book and physically hurting when doing so. My legs and hands would go numb. Did I enjoy this book? Absolutely not. Reading it was hell. Do I recommend this book? Most definitely. Though it was not fun or enjoyable to read by any means, it is almost necessary. So, though I hate this book, I love it also.

Bhavita says

Stunningly disturbing reality! We all know it's happening everywhere, everyday but still we live a life of denial. The book brings out the stories of child abuse, incest in a simple narrative but with spine chilling effect. Being a lawyer, i have read quite a few testimonies of young victims and the book has done justice to all such other young survivors by not indulging into sensationalism or exaggeration. An eye-opener!

Sayeeda Pearl says

Just completed reading, and I'm shattered. Damning disclosures are extremely painful, and leave you numb and sleepless especially if you are a parent. Alarming and disturbing statistics, which point to the vulnerability of young lives living amidst a sick society.

Chilling reality to accept the fact that around 50% abuse happens at safe environment of home by close kins. Silence, denial, and minimizing it, make it happen again and again.

The author has done a great job, by writing a book about an issue like CSA, which is need of the hour. The book clearly exposes the limitations of our legal system, and the redressal process correctly termed as secondary victimization.

It's a tough read, but we can't runaway from what's happening around, we can't allow emergence of a scarred generation. I would recommend this book as a must read for all parents, teachers and whoever deal with children.

Give full stars for bringing out the dark skeletons out of our sick society.

Ushnav Shroff says

The more said about this book, the better. For Pinki Virani's outdated 'Bitter Chocolate: Child Sexual Abuse In India' is a very difficult read, and for all the right reasons. It took me nearly 20 days to finish this extraordinarily researched piece of work, and I cannot imagine how many triggers Mrs. Virani would have had to face while completing the manuscript.

The one thing that I learnt and now know forever after reading the book is that a child can be molested almost anywhere and everywhere. Even in houses that are well to do, specially those that have servants in them to take care of the children. And that sickens me to the core. The book triggered me time and again to read accounts that I was lucky to have escaped; incidents that have irreversibly destroyed a child and yet shaped his/her life and behavior for the future.

A flawed model of masculinity, the paternal voice of authority, the outdated bullshit excuse of religion and culture, lack of accountability for the various rings of child prostitution in India and a system of silence surrounding bad acts in the country enable Child Sexual Abuse to thrive today. Nothing will change while these aspects remain.

Kripa Jayakumar says

This is the unspoken truth about Sexual abuse in India. We are part of an age old ancestry, culture and heritage, that people don't speak up in fear of being judged and mocked at.

Honestly I can't imagine the amount of incest cases that are blatantly strewn across ,that the Indian law and order purposely turn a blind eye upon. My heart goes out to each victim.

Personally I am happy I came across this book, because this is a book that will help me create a better understanding about Sexual assault to the future generation as a parent. That being said, every mother should read this because it is in their hands how their children will grow up... And how these grownups will directly affect the world we create for them.

Nupur Jain says

Some books move you to the deepest core. These books are not to be celebrated, but remembered for the right reasons. Bitter Chocolate shall be recalled every time I hear, suspect, witness, read a case of child abuse - physical, verbal, sexual.

This is a painful, hard to believe read. Yet, it will keep you glued if CSA is a subject that disturbs you. The book, with every page, unsettles your unperturbed idea of the ideal Indian society and family.

To give a final word - this book moved me to tears. It is a MUST, MUST read for anyone even remotely interested in studying about CSA. Also a recommendation to anyone brave enough to hold a mirror to our patriarchal, chauvinist, biased society.

5 stars is an understatement to this courageous book.

Ronit says

Very sobering and challenging book with a lot of helpful information. It would be nice if it could be revised/updated in case laws or systems have alerted since it was originally published.

Marcy says

I wish I could give this book more stars because I think it is an important one and, unfortunately, it is the only book on the market that deals with child sexual abuse in India. The first part of the book I thought was quite good--especially the variety of case studies. But then there was just too much of Virani's own experience embedded throughout the text. And far too much liberty taken with the English language for a nonfiction book. However, the thing that I found the most troubling was the way she dealt with homosexuality. It seems as though the author equates male-male or female-female child sexual abuse with homosexuality, something she does not do in relation to heterosexuality. There is of course substantial evidence that one's sexuality has nothing to do with their propensity to sexually abuse children. That seems to me to be quite an egregious error in this book, one that should be corrected in future editions.

Jonathan says

Depressing look at the horrific face of child sex abuse in India. The book is sometimes hurt by the bitter, sarcastic tone of the author (who is still dealing with her own related horrors), but the need for such an open look at such a horrid problem overcomes those faults.

Priyanka Pokhriyal says

Spine chilling accounts of child sexual abuse in India at every chapter. This book may make you cry and very very angry. You feel a rage inside you to know the light under which such cases are handled making the life hell for the victim and the accused remains unharmed be it an outsider or own family member. Though the laws have now become more stringent and less ambiguous in nature, the book pointed out the prevention of the problem before cure and this is only possible wherein our families can provide their children an ecosystem to open up about such encounters without fearing of consequences. Where families do not swipe such cases underneath the carpet thinking this will spoil "ghar ki izzat" in a girl child's case and pay less heed since this has nothing to do with "ghar ki izzat" in a boy child's case. People should be aware that such cases though shocking to know are not uncommon and can snatch away the childhood out of an innocent soul.

Puja Gupta says

So much of researched and reported child sex abuse in India and so much yet to be unveiled! Shocking though but it portrays that the world is so full of sick people. Subjects who undergoes this trauma are usually unaware what they are going through and beings kids no one believes them, because children are always

fantasizing. And when over-secure adults over rules their (children's) complaints, the child goes mute. And by mute i mean mute forever the child is never the same. They still know something wrong had happened but they don't know exactly what it was. Their lives change, change completely. they are alive but something is dead within. The child grows, blossoms but with the question mark within. If adult rapes can go unreported, child abuse stands no competition. Save your child's childhood today to save their tomorrow.

Sindhu says

Every parent, read this book. Please.

It left a bitter taste in my mouth, but it was necessary.

Actually, everyone in the country should read this book.

My 24 year old neighbour, who's getting married next year and saw the book in ny hand and said, "what a boring topic!" please read this before you have kids.

it's not boring, it's gut-wrenching and real. We are breeding incessantly and we are breaking our children.

Please let's stop. Let's fight this today.

Use this book as an introduction on how to.

Henna Achhpal says

Leaves you disturbed and sleepless. Not recommended for the faint hearted.

Hrishikesh Joshi says

The fact that the language of this book lacks eloquence is eclipsed by its content. The book exposes the morbid underbelly of our society-- that of child sexual abuse. The stories narrated are harrowing and ghastly and the appalling statistics provided might shake your faith in humanity. This book is a must read for anyone who is a parent, or who intends to become a parent, or whose loved one has suffered the trauma of abuse in childhood, or whether someone is a victim themselves.
