

Happy Birthday!

Meghna Pant

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Happy Birthday! (Random House, India) is a beautifully written, compelling and emotionally intelligent collection of short stories by award-winning novelist Meghna Pant. These finely nuanced stories provide a rare glimpse into the complex and mysterious inner lives of human beings.

Happy Birthday was longlisted for the prestigious Frank O'Connor Award 2014. It has also been voted the TOP title on Flipkart's editors picks for this month: <http://www.flipkart.com/books/~editor...>

A dedicated friend undertakes one last labour of love for a childless woman. Nadia - married into money - finds herself facing uncomfortable truths about her comfortably numb marriage. A Mumbai slum-girl dreams of speaking words valuable enough to be translated into English. An American tourist seeking nirvana sets off a sudden chain of events when his bag is stolen, and destiny plays her hand. A retired civil servant of modest means struggles to support his snooty foreign-returned daughter.

Meghna Pant's knife - sharp stories are compelling, emotionally intelligent and provide a rare glimpse into the strange workings of the human heart. They evade neat categorization and are the perfect read for all curious spirits.

"These are stories with a large heart and a keen eye, deeply aware of the complex, sometimes uncomfortable realities of India, its many layers. Meghna Pant knows how to create characters that will surprise and move you."

– Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

"Deft, merciless and expertly-tuned parables for the new Indian century."

– Jeet Thayil

"Meghna Pant pierces one's heart with the reality and depth of her stories, wrapping up her tales with unanticipated yet undeniable flourish. Exceptionally thought-provoking narratives that manage to be provocative and inspirational in the very same breath."

– Ashwin Sanghi

"These intimate stories juxtapose a range and register of aerial and emotional perspectives, with craft, delicacy and an intensely human sensibility."

– Namita Gokhale

Happy Birthday! Details

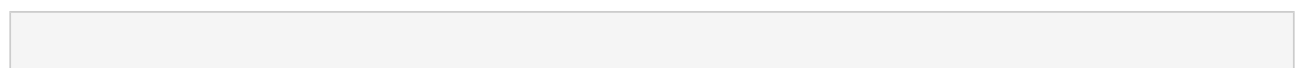
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Author : Meghna Pant

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From Reader Review Happy Birthday! for online ebook

Harak Soni Jain says

I really liked the way Meghna Pant after every story give us a Point to Judge about the story.

The collection of Short Stories made me Happy, Sad, Joyful and Forced me to interact with myself.

Will recommend it to all youth.

Nishant Jha says

A decent collection of short stories and across genres! I enjoyed reading all of them and all of them had a fair share of emotions, intimacy and provocations! One can't really categorize them under one category and that is the sheer beauty of this book! All Short story genre fans would definitely enjoy this too :)

Samarpita Sharma says

an awesome bunch of short stories.highly impressed.

4.5 stars

<http://sankshvet.blogspot.in/2013/07/...>

Sarika Patkotwar says

*NOTE: We (The Readdicts) received a copy of Happy Birthday! by Meghna Pant from the author herself in exchange for an honest review. We thank Meghna for the book!

It is not everyday that you get an email from an author personally inviting you to their Book Launch Event. Janhvi and I were elated to receive an email from author Meghna Pant to join her in launching her latest book, Happy Birthday! in our city. Not one to miss any bookish event, we went there and it was really nice to meet *Meghna* not just that one time but a couple of times later as well.

I was happy when the author gave us a copy of her book in exchange for a review and I am even happier now that I have read the book.I always worry about reading a book after meeting the author thinking that I'll be partial to it. Turns out, I had nothing to worry about. *Happy Birthday!* in itself was amazing.

Happy Birthday! is a collection of thirteen absolutely enthralling and real short stories. These are stories about people who exist amongst us but we prefer to pretend like they don't exist. These are stories about feelings all of us experience but we are too scared to express. They are essentially raw, concrete, genuine and actual. They are so emotionally powerful that I found myself closing the book after every story and actually feeling nothing and everything all at once. And that, for me, is the best connect and feeling a book can give the reader. The only part better than this was the apt and intelligent title given to each story and how each balloon on the cover has some significance to it.

Predominantly set in Mumbai, in thirteen stories, we move from the slums to the Parsi colony to the

prostitute lanes to the posh societies of the fascinating city. Unlike most of India, I am not at all a regular Mumbai visitor but I believe I know the city enough to picturize everything and for those things that I didn't know, I was both horrified and glad to learn. I must admit that I didn't quite get every little detail but I loved reading it anyways.

Author *Meghna Pant*'s writing is simply amazing. I loved it so much. Her words have a beautiful flow to it, like a pretty flowing river. After having read many short stories, I feel that they end in a way that doesn't satisfy the reader but *Meghna*'s stories- although they don't end concretely- ended in way that had me feeling content.

Happy Birthday! was exactly the kind of book I like with exactly the kind of stories that I devour. It is an amazing read that is full of emotions, feelings, grit, reality and beauty. This is easily one of the most memorable Indian reads I have read till date. This book is good and right in every possible way.

Anwasha Bose says

Verdict: The book is a powerful portrait of humans and the various shades of life. Meghna Pant has a gift of precise evocation of people, place and emotion. She artfully ensures that the complexities of questions which arise from real life are not toned down or made surreal by fiction.

Read TIF Review - Happy Birthday! and Other Stories by Meghna Pant Book Review

Pratibha Jain says

A commendable job!
Good Book!

Readers Cosmos says

Positives: All the stories, the writing style in each and the message is different, though they are centered around a common theme. This is difficult and brilliantly done by Meghna. In most stories I couldn't and didn't want to predict what happens next, I was happy to flow with the story.

Negatives: Two of the stories *The Gecko on the Wall* and *Clip and cane* are predictable. Though *Lemon and Chilli* also is but I just loved the way it was presented.

The Verdict: Highly Recommended for short story lovers. 4 stars on 5.

Arti says

Happy Birthday by Meghna Pant is a collection of thirteen heartwarming, introspecting, emotional stories which are eye-openers. When I ordered the book, the name suggested that these would be happy stories but they were realities of life, realities we run away from, reality we close our eyes to.

Let me start with the cover - it is beautiful at the first glance but if you look at it very carefully, you realize

that the balloons have something printed on them, and these are all related to something or the other in the stories.

Most of the stories are either set in Mumbai or America. The stories are about a father who, for the sake of his only son's happiness, does not acknowledge the last and only remnant of his childhood, about rich children who feel that, in India, the boundaries we live in must be respected, about parents who keeping their needs aside give in to their children's happiness. Then there are stories about sacrificing friendship, Sati, two blind friends, and a lady choosing responsibility over love and parental love and affection which the children realize only when it is too late.

A very special book but every story needs about an hour to digest.

Madhur Sarkar says

I saw the beautiful trailer of this book and immediately got hold of a copy. Good decision. The characters and situations were so real and moving that I almost cried for them. Meghna's language is elegant and she ended each story at the right moment. Simply love each and every story in this collection and this book will stay with me for a long time to come.

Varun says

Engaging and a good read, this collection of short-stories is tight in its formation albeit the language could have been better. The stories are captivating and tender with people from all walks of life encompassed in great detail. I would recommend this as an easy and a satisfying read as the stories have a way of their own when they dissolve and end.

Mrs TJ says

Happy birthday is a book of 13 short stories. Each story gives us a glimpse of the present and delves into the past explaining the current situation. The cover illustration was a bunch of balloons and my first impression was that they would be happy moments of life. But life is life and mostly the stories cover an array of emotions with glimpses of happiness. Majority of them are set in India and America. Mainly one can see the selfish, cut throat nature of our society that pushes us to go above and beyond to protect ourselves.

Do I need an intelligence to read this book. Probably! because after every story I had to take a break to let it sink in and relate to what the author was trying to say. I had to have some kind of emotional intelligence to understand the message which is written subtly under the many shades of each characters. She does not come forth and draw a line, in black and white for us to understand. After Ashes story was much more than I thought it would be. The lemon and chilli story with episodes of life around India and America touched my heart. It could have been anyone's story. But I had to choke back a sob. Sometimes I too fear of the future. Every time I reminiscence I think of a different meaning. The same character who was an protagonist of the story suddenly turns antagonist and I was too overwhelmed then to understand such workings of the human mind.

The author is a journalist. So her characters are very structured and I think the characters could have been etched from her personal and some professional experiences too. But all together the stories are being told with such audacity that we would think it is happening around us, perhaps to a neighbour or a person showcased in media. Some were open ended stories. I know they are shorts and only a glimpse of the story would be given, but somehow I cannot help pondering how it would have gone, positive or negative! The author has already won many accolades for her novel One and a half wife and I am really psyched to read it one day.

Qurat ul ain Ansari says

This book wasn't available in my country and I had to ask my friend to get it for me from NYC. The book could have been named something else as there are better stories the title named story in the book. For few stories I really didn't get the abrupt ending.

Varun says

fantastic book.... stories are very gripping n once u start the book u can't stop.... great read

VaultOfBooks says

By Meghna Pant. Grade: A+

Meghna Pant is an Indian author and financial journalist. She has written one novel, One & A Half Wife, and a collection of short stories, Happy Birthday! Pant's short stories have been published in over a dozen literary magazines, including Avatar Review, Wasafari, Eclectica, and QLRS.

“The Gola Master” is about a man who is helpless and woeful, being injured and hurt from his failed marriage, has a son who is no longer his, and a past that he is too ashamed to admit because of the “class of society” that he is a part of now.

“Hoopsters” is about a girl who is pessimistic about everything in life and believes that all poor people are either thieves or killers.

“Happy Birthday” is about a woman called Nadia who is the perfect Indian wife and despite her lifeless marriage and her husband's infidelity, remains loyal to her hurting bondage. A flashback of her last novel.

“Friends” explores the selfless relevancy that is friendship.

“Lemon and Chilli” describes a man's pain and sadness which is caused from his own actions, how he deals with it and how it affects his decisions regarding family.

“Clips and Cane” explores the mindset of a poor, blind chair maker while he deals with a sad past, heartbreak and betrayal.

“Shaitans” portrays how destiny works hand in hand with karma.

Each story is more overwhelming than the last. Each end leaves the reader astounded and amazed, at the same time feeling sympathetic towards the characters of the story. Each story has an unpredictable turn, a heart rending back story and a soul stirring plot.

(Quote)

“I try not to look outside but when our car passes him, Kaka’s smile, which contains the last fragment of my childhood, fades. I turn away.”

(Quote Ends)

The narrative is agonizing and knife-sharp.

(Quote)

“I took four hundred dollars – equivalent to the loan Baba had taken – and burned the notes. I put the remains in a copper urn and dispersed them in the Hudson; the ashes of family, of strife, and of tallying up your life’s score and realizing that you came to naught.”

(quote ends)

This book will make even the toughest of hearts melt and cry. There will be instances in the book where the reader would be forced to accept the truth about society and its functioning, and uncomfortable truths we ignore about ourselves.

(Quote)

“Though her sari was as bright as the chandeliers in the high ceiling, the women around her were flaunting their assets to greater effect: the lower the neckline and the shorter the dress, the richer they were.”

(Quote Ends)

Filled with heavy-hearted, deplorable and sympathetic characters, this is a recommended read for all.

Originally reviewed at Vaultofbooks.com, a close-knit community of fanatical readers. We are looking for perceptive readers who can write well, and we are eager to provide lots of free books in exchange for reviews. Shoot us a mail at contact@vaultofbooks.com

Tarang Sinha says

It's the first short story collection I finished like a novel and liked a lot! Meghna Pant is one of my favourite authors (I really liked One & a Half Wife)and in Happy Birthday she creates magic with beautiful short stories. Her neat, crisp and interestingly 'natural' style of writing makes this book a smooth & engrossing read! I'm really impressed!
