

THREE DAYS OF
CATHARSIS

A woman with her back to the camera, wearing a light-colored floral dress, stands in a dark, narrow cave. She is looking out through a large opening in the rock wall towards a bright, sunlit beach and the ocean. The cave walls are rugged and textured, and the light from the opening creates a strong contrast with the dark interior.

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*Three Days of
Catharsis*

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About The Book

The story revolves around the reminiscences of Katyayani Krishnan, an NRI girl from Singapore, who comes to IIM Kolkata on a student exchange program. She is born to a Bengali mother and a Tamil Iyer father. A sarcastic interactive session with two IIM officials needles her to start questioning her identity. Furthermore, when her maternal grandfather introduces her to the norms of a patriarchal society, she reminisces about several incidents where her parents pedantically make her understand that she is a cultural blend and unique. Her cathartic journey continues when she meets her gamophobic cousin, Thia. A series of conversations makes Katyayani to reveal the nitty-gritties of an intercultural family, her learning process to speak a multitude of languages, how God provided her a channel to start eating non-vegetarian food, and most importantly her fun-filled journey amidst the behavioral and cultural differences between her bloodlines.

The story continues with her past chequered love life with a Bengali cultural bigot, Sudhanshu, marking an attendance in her present. Amidst the god-fearing family members, Katyayani reveals her open relationship with God and her concept of spirituality to Thia. Even after knowing the

minutiae of her life when Thia still questions her identity, she finds her mind free from befuddlement. She defines the true meaning of culture to Thia, she declares her accomplishments as her virtue and she redefines her identity as an outcome of true love and a cultural blend. This book is an effort to bring about the monumental change in humanity to grow and survive as homo sapiens and not to cling on to a particular language or culture to define ourselves.



About The Author

Atrayee Bhattacharya is a Microbiologist by qualification, an Educator by profession and a Writer by passion. She is a columnist in two reputed online magazines, reviste.in and bkhush.com.

She is also a regular contributor to e-Fiction India magazine. Currently she resides in Singapore with her husband and travels extensively between Singapore, Kolkata and Chennai. She is fond of writing about the myriad of emotions in tangled human relationships.





*Dedicated to all those
humans who believe virtue
lies in their accomplishments
and not in their cultural and
linguistic background*



Acknowledgement

We all have hidden desires in life. In a competitive world, and in the constant battle for earning to make ends meet, those desires remain concealed. I am indeed a fortunate soul to have a bunch of friends and family, who encouraged me to pursue those hidden dreams of mine. I have penned this story largely out of my personal experiences with various people whom I have interacted with. But there are some people whom I must definitely thank for bringing this novel to the light of the day.

First and foremost, I am deeply indebted to my husband Dr. Harish Venkatakrishnan, for his undying support, encouragement and for meticulously improving my English. Huge thanks to Mahashweta Bhattacharya for her timely guidance, to Sushmita Prayaga, Rajnita Chatterjee and Manaswita Mukhaty for believing in me and a special mention to Krithika Rangarajan for bringing about a monumental difference in my life.

I hope this novel will spur me on to weave many more intricate tales around many more interesting characters. However, Kutu shall always remain close to my heart akin to a first born. *Three Days of Catharsis* is entirely fictitious. Every character in it is a product of my roving imagination

only. Though some characters may be familiar and recognizable to certain people, their lives certainly has no connection with reality.



Chapter 1



“Madam, I think you have made a mistake. Please check the column of your mother tongue.” A semi bald man with a pencil moustache, who had tried his best to dye his remaining hair black, handed over my form back to me for correction. With a smirk on my face, I started observing him more carefully before I could clarify his doubt. That’s in my genes. Or, to be precise I got this habit from my mom. His pencil moustache reminded me of John Waters. The typical Bengali accent made me modify the alphabets in his words to match his accent. It was like *“Madaam, aai theenk you habh made a mistayke. Please cheyck the kaulaam of your maadar taang.”*

Before I could laugh out loud on my observation he reminded me of the much needed job to be done from my side.

“Sir, my mother tongue is Bengali, rather Bangla.”

“But you have written Krishnan as your surname.” He continued. “There must be a cohesion madam. It is India, not Singapore.”

“Then what shall I write sir? My mother is a Bengali. So my mother tongue remains Bangla irrespective of my surname.”

“Oh.” There was a prolonged silence from his side. “So you know Bangla? Thank you. *Ingreji te katha bolte boro daate byatha hochilo*. I mean why to speak in a foreign language if you know my mother tongue.” He meant it was painful to speak in English. But along with that candid confession, Bangla no longer remained just a language of communication. It became HIS mother tongue. He became more comfortable in handling the documents for my student exchange program trimester in IIM, Kolkata. He spoke uninterruptedly about Bengal, *maacher jol*, *Rabindrasangeet*, all prominent features of Bengali culture and eminent Bengali personalities. There was a sort of pride while he introduced me to one of his colleagues. His pride was supplemented with the fact that my surname and mother tongue didn't have the much needed cohesion.

My file was transferred to the next step of the ladder. In the last one week I realized something extremely important about India. There are thousands of interconnected ladders which you must climb before you start thinking about your ladder of success. I was asked to wait for a few hours in the waiting hall. Few more students were waiting for their turn. I exchanged courteous smiles with all of them. They resembled the “good students” category of Mom which I do not belong to. According to Mom, I am a

good student but I don't *look* the part of a "good student." It seems she was also like this during her college days. The unnecessarily long discussion over my Bong connection had made me a bit thirsty. As I moved towards the water dispenser, a guy approached me asking whether I was joining in the student exchange programme. While he tried to start a full-fledged conversation, I put all my efforts into drinking water rather than converse with him. This was something strange for I never do this usually. His efforts weren't futile as I finally paid attention to what all he was asking. We exchanged our basic details and I comprehended that he accepted me as a complete South Indian.

"So, where do you belong to?"

"India." I smiled

"No. I mean, which country do you reside in?"

"Okay! My upbringing was in Singapore."

"Your parents are still there? I mean, do you have plans to go back?"

"I am a very poor planner. I have not yet planned for my interaction with Mr. Gurunathan." I smiled and ransacked the whole area for anyone calling out my name.

"Why should you plan for him? He is 'your people' only." A statement like this from a MBA student and a future entrepreneur sounded ridiculous to me.

"My people! *Maane*? What does that mean?"

THREE DAYS OF CATHARSIS

Katyayini Krishnan, also known as Kutu, is an NRI girl born out of an intercultural marriage between a Bengali mother and an Iyer father. She comes to India on a trimester exchange program in IIM Kolkata but gets tangled in a series of events that force her to seek her own identity. Ostensive thoughts of officials, needling words of her Dadu and a series of events with her gamophobic cousin Thia, force Kutu to revisit her tumultuous past, desperate to unearth the veracity of her life. She traverses through the pages of her chequered love life, the mutinous thoughts of self-proclaimed 'close relatives' and her inbuilt dilemma regarding her existence in today's multi-cultural world. The three days preceding the start of her trimester do not remain an assortment of hours in her life but prove to be three whole days of a cathartic journey towards self-realization. The story revolves around her life's predicaments, the existential prejudiced mentality of Indian society, her battle with a myriad of emotions and how she finally justifies her evolution as a cultural hybrid.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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