



LOVE, HATE & OTHER FILTERS BY SAMIRA AHMED

Young adult fiction
Ages 13 to older
Good premise, mediocre plot

I first saw *Love, Hate & Other Filters* next to Becky Albertalli's books on the library shelf. Promising, I thought. I picked the book up, flipped the front cover open, and read the blurb. An American-Indian protagonist, you say? Count me in.

Love, Hate & Other Filters is centered around the Muslim Indian-American teenager Maya Aziz, who is an aspiring filmmaker. The first half of the book goes by like a normal coming-of-age story, including the compulsory love triangle and the rebellion against parents. The second half of the story gets more interesting, however, when a terrorist attack is committed not far away. As the prime suspect is Muslim, Maya and her family are unfairly subject to hate crimes, racism, and bigotry, and it doesn't help that at times Maya herself doesn't feel very Muslim or Indian.

There are reasons I like this book very much, and reasons for why I dislike it very much. First of all, the premise. I liked how the book tried at Indian representation, but it was merely an attempt, not a success. Indian food isn't just samosas and daal; there's way more to it. Same with Indian parents; not all of them are as oppressive as they're shown in the book. I can't judge the Muslim representation here, as I'm not Muslim myself, though. However, the fact that Maya is Muslim is never quite acknowledged in the book, and it is somewhat used just as a plot device.

Second, the plot and characters. The characters were great, and I liked Maya best. She wants to be independent and make her own decisions while still being a good daughter. However, the love triangle she's put into fails to make the story better. While I applaud Maya wanting to be more independent, in the book, "being independent" is just shown as going to prom and kissing boys.

The second half of the book is a great improvement from the first, as there's an actual outside conflict. The prejudice Muslims, including Maya and her family, face is shown well in the story. Sometimes, however, trivial things like dating are talked about more in the story than actual Islamophobia, so beware of that weird and unnecessary love triangle.

I recommend this book to anyone who wants a glimpse into Indian-American life (though not always accurate). The book is also suitable for fans of other YA authors such as Becky Albertalli (what can I say, she has the best books). 7/10

