



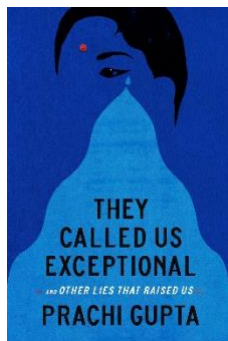
They Called Us Exceptional: And Other Lies That Raised Us

Author: Prachi Gupta

Publisher: Crown Publishing, New York

First Edition (2023), 270 pages

In her memoir, *They Called Us Exceptional*, Prachi Gupta depicts her life that is true of the most



girls of Indian origin born to Indians emigrating to North America. Gupta always found herself torn between perfect minority image her father demanded of the family and the naturally messy behind-the-scenes family life shaped by individuals with unique desires and troubles.

Gupta explores her Indian American culture, her parents' expectations, society's pressures, and the fiction that her family attempted to portray of being perfect despite conflict, messy moments, and Gupta's need to be seen for who she really was.

The book begins with Gupta's apology to her mother for airing the family's dirty laundry rather than writing the book as a novel. She explains that only by telling the truth in this way does she have any hope of allowing others to live their truths as well. The book itself is directed to Gupta's mother. Gupta explains to her mother the reality of past events, her points of view, and her reactions to various occurrences in a way that emphasizes her estrangement from her parents--and her particular pain in being distant from her mother.

Gupta's father has volatile whims and desire for Prachi to adhere to his stringent model minority myth and his will in all things. Prachi goes through intense stress of being forced--through verbal abuse, violence, emotional blackmail to comply with her father's set ideas and hypocrisy.

Her father uses his mental illness to emotionally manipulate the family, then demands that no one outside the household know about it – false family prestige practiced by Indian parents. He lays out a history of familial depression and suicidal thoughts as though the occurrence is inevitable for his children, which haunts Prachi and seems to singularly take hold of her brother Yush who commits suicide.

Being a first generation Indian immigrant to this country myself, I could relate to many of the idiosyncrasies and dysfunctions depicted by the characters of this book. In my opinion, *They*

Called Us Exceptional should be mandated to all Indians emigrating to read before coming to America. -Reviewed by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'