

## Meeru's Multan

Miral Azam Khalil

Benazir Khan Lodhi, Illustrator

Kheloney (Jun 19, 2023)

(36pp)

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*Bright art with whimsical embellishments enhances this nostalgic tale, which brings a mother's memories of book-lined market stalls and constellation-filled skies to life.*

In Miral Azam Khalil's sweet bilingual picture book *Meeru's Multan*, a Pakistani mother shares her childhood memories.

Saif is unable to sleep. He asks his mother tell him a story. She recalls life in Lahore, from where her family traveled to her aunt's town, Multan. Prompted by Saif's questions, she shares other experiences there: sleeping on a rooftop on a *charpai*; savoring local specialties, including mangoes; shopping at a bazaar; and attending cricket matches. Later, she promises to take Saif and his sisters to visit Multan too.

The English text is accompanied by an Urdu translation, creating a subtle interplay between Saif and his siblings' two cultures. And the beautiful illustrations elevate the tale: they employ saturated shades of saffron, orange, blue, purple, and olive to depict Saif's home. There are busy, cozy compositions of people too. Indeed, the vibrant art is a highlight with its bright patterns and whimsical embellishments. Illustrations depict a mountain of bubble gum, carpeted rooms, book-lined market stalls, skies filled with constellations, and children gathered at an outdoor water pump. And Saif's mother's memories are shared both in full-page images and in window cutout scenes that evoke the dreamy past.

Still, the book's focused trajectory leaves minimal space for imaginative revelations. Saif's mother's narration is loose, composed of fleeting memories of isolated incidents. Nonetheless, her fondness for the town is evident, and her coverage of cultural elements is rich, leading into to a scrumptious recipe for a chewy sweet, Multani Sohan Halwa.

In the warm picture book *Meeru's Multan*, a mother's abundant heritage inspires bedtime stories that spark eagerness for travel.

KAREN RIGBY (August 2, 2023)

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