



The Sun in the Morning: My Early Years in India and England

M.M. Kaye

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Readers of M.M. Kaye's fiction will discover here the source of the characters, settings, and certain incidents of her novels. Most of all, they will bask in this warm account of a young woman's remarkable life--and the beginnings of a love affair with an India whose time has passed but which has not been forgotten. 24 pages of black-and-white photographs.

The Sun in the Morning: My Early Years in India and England Details

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Author : M.M. Kaye

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From Reader Review The Sun in the Morning: My Early Years in India and England for online ebook

Brietta says

Oh to have lived this woman's fascinating, globe-trotting life.

Sonia says

You can really feel the love MM Kaye and her family (especially her father) had for India and its people. Even when she is telling simple ordinary adventures of her childhood she kept me interested.

Dorcas says

Wow. I really milked this one out. Three months, that's *insane!* But it wasn't because I didn't like it, more that I savored it in small bedtime size portions.

If you're at all remotely interested in the Raj or India in general at the turn of the century, you must read this. M.M.Kaye lived a fascinating life and was able to see and experience things before the "march of progress" changed everything; and thankfully she possessed a photographic memory and could then share her lifetime of adventures with us.

A few things that really stood out from this book:

Her father. He really sounded like a character! Astoundingly, he spoke 11 languages and 18 dialects! Incredible!

Her childhood. How many children have played in abandoned palaces, watched Tibetan villagers come across the Himalayan pass peddling their goods, or swiped tea trays on board ship during a horrendous storm (in which several other ships sank) to go 'sledding' down the deck when the ship tipped? True life is far stranger than fiction!

It wasn't all fun and laughs though. Children of the Raj knew that eventually they'd go "home" to England for schooling. (Even though the only home they knew was India and their parents would stay behind). However, WW1 was a grace for the author as it delayed the inevitable for a few years; but her brother was sent to England at age 6 (just before the war) and it was 6 years before either parent saw him again. Heartbreakingly, he did not recognize or remember any of them.

I loved this book so why 4 stars and not 5? Well, the bits in England did drag a bit. The author didn't quite know what to leave out so told us everything down to which song was playing when, and what picture show they went to. Probably very interesting to pop culture fans, just not me.

CONTENT:

SEX: None

VIOLENCE : None per se but a few unpleasant (yet fascinating) details about the Spanish Flu that hit India particularly hard. Apparently so many died the population couldn't afford the wood for cremation so started dumping the bodies in the rivers where they collected like decomposing dams until even the crocodile were to satiated to move.

PROFANITY :Mild to none

PARANORMAL ELEMENTS : Two passages about haunted houses. One in India (pretty frightening) and one in England. I chose to remove these from my book.

MY RATING : PG

Jennifer says

There are books I read where I look back and have a hard time remembering who wrote it...what was that author's name? And then there are other books where I may not remember the story but feel like it introduced me to an amazing person, someone I wish I could meet. This book left me loving Mary Margaret Kaye. The details may be fuzzy in the future, but I will never forget this lovely lady and her storytelling genius. I initially was introduced to her writing in *The Ordinary Princess*, which spurred me to look for more. And this autobiography in which she paints with vivid colors her childhood in India certainly did not disappoint.

Mary Margaret writes superbly, with an eye for the important and poignant detail and a gentle, self-deprecating humor. She describes beauty with poetic grace and then captures the humor of the humblest of life's moments. She left me loving what she loves and hating what she hates (really there isn't much that M.M. Kaye hates, though). I think her goal in writing *The Sun in the Morning* was to beguile the reader into a full-fledged love of India and she certainly succeeded with me. I hate flying in airplanes, but I'd almost be willing to get on one to go see the Taj Mahal, simply based on her description of it.

This is a book that unfolds slowly and it took a bit for me to get "into" it, but once settled into the story, I loved every page and was sad to see it end. I really want to know what happened with the rest of M.M. Kaye's life...so on to her next autobiographical volumes!

Evelyn Hill says

If you don't mind a slow pace, this very detailed description of M.M. Kay's childhood in India is fascinating. It is very detailed and some people might find it a bit long.

Magda says

Wonderful. I love the way she tells stories. My favorite parts were the places she pointed out the fascinating, real-life stories from her father's life which she used in her fiction books.

Denise Tarasuk says

Fantastic! The Sun in the Morning is wonderful and touched my heart. I enjoyed every word of M.M. Kaye's autobiography. What details! I love India for each word and sentence she writes and am homesick for a land that she writes about. Wonderful!

Debbie Brown says

As wonderful as her fiction. I wish it was my life!

Bobby Underwood says

M.M. Kaye's memories are as beautiful as her descriptive prose in this colorful and wistfully evocative memoir of her youth in India, which to her was always home. The reader will come away with a different view of India during the time of the Raj, and before the Great War. Anything but a political book, this is simply a breathtaking look at a time and place, a woman's memories of the country she loved.

Kaye's first spoken language was Hindustani, and though more a collection of memories of this beloved country closer to her heart than Britain, this mostly apolitical memoir dealing with her childhood does occasionally argue for truth, and a more balanced view of this period than now exists. She points out — on rare occasions — that in an effort to pile on against the time period, regardless of facts, many falsehoods have been created. Kaye maintains that some of these falsehoods were created by E.M. Forster, whom she holds in palpable disgust. Unfortunately, as she notes, some of these falsehoods were perpetuated by others once put forth, and though easily disproved — and Kaye does so with eloquence — the damage has been done, because they have been accepted as fact. As she notes near the end of the book, historians did not learn the lesson Orwell taught.

But enough of that, because that's not what this book is in any way about. This is a memory shared with the reader, as only a writer with Kaye's magnificent gift for words could ever have described it. There is much here about her father, about historic events, but the best moments, and most frequent throughout, are those where she describes a place, a festival, a country that was as much a part of her as any country can be a part of a person's soul. Part One of Kaye's memoirs is a potpourri of remembrances, of people and places, some long gone, of India's beauty and history. These are colorful, crystal clear recollections of childhood houses which had names, and sometimes ghosts. Her memories are so vibrant that as she returns to this time in India, she lets us live it as well. Rather than a linear memoir, these are scattered but detailed snapshots of her youth, of a time and a place which will never be again:

"No one else will ever again live the kind of life that I have lived. Or see what I saw. That world has vanished for ever — blown away by the wind which as the Chinese proverb says 'cannot read'."

There is a great deal about her father Tacklow at the beginning, his various posts, his integrity, his fairness. He appears to be a man worthy of the way Kaye feels about him. He spoke eleven languages, and had many friends in India and other parts of the globe at which he was stationed, but fewer among his own, because he

found the attitude of many other British in India annoying. He taught Kaye from infancy — she was born in Simla, at the foothills of the Himalayas — that India was their country, it belonged to Indians. Tacklow also had a special gift I'll leave for the reader to discover. He read books to her, fueling her imagination, and he spoke to her as an adult, even as a child. During this portion Kaye contrasts the warmth of India and its people with the stifled chill of British life she experienced later.

None of the big stuff is missed here, but this is more the fun and wonder of a childhood in India during this time. There is Holi, a colorful Saturnalia lasting for days, the Diwali (Feast of Lights) in honor of the Hindu goddess Lakshmi, and to commemorate Lord Krishna's slaying of the demon, Nakara. And the fireworks and sweets and lights of Sipi Far, where brides were for sale! She also recalls Mohammedan Festivals and remembrances such as Id-El-Fitr, Shab-i-Barat, and Mohuram. I am typing from some semi-legible notes I had to make while reading this wonderful and sprawling memoir, so if any spelling is incorrect in regard to these events and festivals, I apologize.

There are nightjars and monsoons, butterfly summers, and sentimental pilgrimages made by Kaye and her sister, Bets, later. But Kaye's Delhi is Old Delhi, City of the Moguls. She stood on the British built cantonment area beyond the shadow of The Ridge, on Flagstaff Tower, looking out over miles of open, beautiful country, and thousands of years of history, including the ruins of Seven Cities of Delhi, which only then had 280,000 souls. She tells of Curzon House in Old Delhi, which later became The Swiss Hotel. She describes the cemetery of John Nicholson, the Hero of Delhi. And she tells of a Leopard mauling and the harrowing aftermath.

The reader experiences Christmas in India along with Kaye, which was a mingling of cultures. Dàlis baskets, gifts from friends of other faiths, were reciprocated on their special festivals — there's a lesson there for us all, to be sure. Kaye recalls the Okla Christmas camp, and the jackel scare. The reader picnics with Kaye on the grounds of Khutab Minar, which existed over a thousand years before Christ. We take night trains from Delhi to Agra, and trollies in Narora. Calcutta, Bombay, it's all here, as it once was, like a film in Kaye's mind that she plays back for us, so that we can see what it was like.

One of the most poignant memories is of her father returning from an aborted trip along the Ganges. Only later did Kaye discover the horrifying reason the trip was aborted: thousands of Hindu bodies had washed ashore. Many had died during the Black Frost, and though Hindu custom and tradition called for cremation, wood was scarce. Many Hindus were too poor to carry out a proper cremation, so they set the bodies adrift in the water, only to discover they had returned. Kaye describes the horrifying, tragic sight in a way you'll always remember, with vultures and carrion crows too gorged from feasting on the dead to fly:

“One learned very young to accept the beauty and wonder of that most beautiful and wonderful of lands, and with it the ugliness and cruelty that was an integral part of it.”

If you've ever wondered about the beauty in Kaye's novels, her historical fiction, or her vibrant mysteries, you will discover some of the people and the places from which they sprung in this memoir. The Far Pavilions, Shadow of the Moon, it's all here, and Kaye tells you where. But there is so much more in this beautiful memoir that it would be impossible to cover it all. Some of the descriptive quotes were so breathtaking I chose not to use them, as it might lessen their impact when you come across them.

Then the Great War ends. There is at first, elation, and then deflation, as Kaye discovers she'll have to return “home” to a place that she no longer considers home at all, for India runs through her veins. Her time back on British soil, and her restlessness as she waits to return as a young woman, is palpable. There is a Knighthood for Tacklow, and the poignant death of her mother. And a final thought as Kaye quotes from

Eleven Leopards by Norah Burke. It will rankle some, but as all balance seems to have been lost about this time period, however deeply flawed it may have been, it is a reminder of the deep love some British had for the country and its people, and that there are always two sides to every story. One can never read these beautiful reminiscences and doubt that Kaye loved India, and considered it home, both beneath her feet, and in her heart...

Celeste Hogan says

I have loved MM Kaye's writing since I was in my twenties. At that time, I read her Indian novels and her mysteries, which I would say were my favorites. I admire her spirit. Many military wives, or other people who find themselves in a foreign place at a loose end, don't engage with their places of residency. Our Mollie Kaye was not one of those. She learned about the countries where her husband and father were stationed, and she chose to spend her hours writing books that took place in those locations.

At my local used bookstore, I saw the first installment of her autobiography, The Sun in the Morning, and after a hurried purchase, I was busily putting aside the things I needed to do each day so I could get back to her tales of her childhood in India. She tells such detail of her experiences there, that I felt I knew India myself. Not the India of today, but the one of Kaye's day. The Delhi that was composed of under 110,000 residents, that was under the rule of the British Raj, and the one that stole her heart and became the place she called home--that was the one I wanted to read about.

I have ordered the second installment of Kaye's autobiography in hopes of reading of her return to her beloved India. Anyone who is hoping to enjoy the writings of a talented storyteller would enjoy this volume as well as any of her novels. Her mysteries are reminiscent of Christie's, who made the most of her travels as a British military wife as well.

Ellen says

Gifted to absolute detail in her memories, this is a book of delightful anecdotes from M.M. Kaye's childhood and formative years which were spent in India in the very early part of the 20th century in India. Although Great Britain was always referred to her as home, young M.M. was born in India, spoke several native languages before she spoke English and was able to converse with just about everybody she encountered in her long walks everyday. In fact, subjects her parents felt were not suitable for young girls ears and were swirled in cones of silence were extremely well known to her because she was able to find out everything from the gossip of the people who worked for her parents or by the many vendors in town. She grew up primarily in and about Simla, a town located high in the mountains and used as a retreat for those that could afford to move away from the summer heat of the plains. It even today looks to the snows of the towering Himalayas. M.M.'s father was stationed there permanently with the Indian Army working as a cryptographer during the first world war so it was there that M.M. and her little sister spent their formative years in a number of different houses that had tin roofs, a plethora of flowers and wild life, and that all shared the same sort of "back garden" - a sheer drop straight downwards down the high cliffs. Sometimes there was about a foot out back, sometimes the drop started at the edge of the houses.

Leopards and monkeys and parrots are among some of the animals she writes about but especially lovely are the things and places she takes the reader to. the devastation at losing a favourite teddy, constantly exploring

and finding places no adults would ever go. M.M. explores the entire Taj Mahal repeatedly at a time when no one went to the Taj. It was in a place her parents like to visit regularly for brief family getaways. Any one could go to visit at any time but it wasn't the tourist mecca that it is today.

She is separated from her older brother Bill because when boys reached the age of six, it was the fashion to send the sons back to England to be educated. Not much into his first boarding school experience, the First World War broke out and he was unable to see his parents or sisters for six more years. When M.M. next meets her brother, they are of course, strangers to one another. To her mother he was no longer the little boy she left behind, he was a 12 year old boy seasoned to boarding school life. Girls could stay with their families longer as it wasn't as imperative during that time that a girl have the same education as a boy. Therefore, it wasn't until she was ten, her sister eight, that the decision was finally made to send the girls to school "at home" too.

That's all I'll say about the first of her three memoirs but do note, it's her descriptions that really brings the words and the book to life. The authors ability to excise and write down detailed memories from her childhood exercises all of the readers senses and places the reader right along side of M.M. when she witnesses the troop of silver backed monkeys who emerged from the mist of the jungle to silently cross in front of her and disappear on the other side of the path she was standing on (the nanny had run backwards shrieking leaving her two young charges aged approximately four and two to defend themselves in the event of an attack); when she helps an old man to feed the wild red headed parrots in a city park; and when she says a jolly hello to the tinkerers from Tibet who travelled across the peaks of the Himalayas to beyond on their mule drawn carts with bells attached and filled with handmade trinkets and wares for sale. She writes with a thick colour palette at her disposal for her descriptions are vivid, tickling the senses of the reader and to really help to breathe to life her memories, and to make the people she meets very three dimensional and real. Almost as if we are there...

If you have an interest in stories of people growing up in places completely different than what you know, then this is a vivid and hearty history and a great place to start. Do not let the size of the book deter you. For it is utterly fascinating and is a memoir about a place in a time that only lives in history books now.

If you are a fan of some of her fiction works, notably "The Far Pavilions" and "Shadow of the Moon", then this memoir is definitely for you. The reader will discover some of the vivid history in those novels actually comes from the official British versions of the events. The British government requested that her great uncle write the official version of the events surrounding the 1857 mutiny plus she also heard an alternate version of events from the local Indian Indians who also had first-hand eye witness accounts to tell but from an alternate point of view...

Katherine Spivey says

Absolutely splendid.

Anduine says

Oh how I would have loved to be M.M. Kaye's companion during her childhhod years. Her love for India pours from every page and even lasted through the "dull years" in England, which was never home to her. If

you liked *The Far Pavilions*, you will also fall in love with this book. You can smell, see and feel the India of the Raj through the eyes and the clever writing hand of a woman who truly loved that country.

Mare says

She is truly a gifted story teller.

Lobstergirl says

Bestselling novelist Kaye (*The Far Pavilions*) was the daughter of a kindly, ciphering expert father and a party-loving, vivacious young mother who were posted to the Raj, where she was born in 1908. The family sojourned alternately in Simla and Delhi, and Kaye gives vivid descriptions of the beautiful hill country where the family rented a series of houses. At age six her older brother was left behind in England with relatives to start the necessary schooling; it would be seven years before his mother next saw him. There were no such requirements for girls, and Kaye and her younger sister Bets's education consisted mostly of history and poetry readings from their beloved father, and running around Simla with their Anglo and Indian chums, supervised either by an ayah, or not at all. When the Great War ended, there was no reason for mother and daughters to remain in India, and as soon as a ship's berth was available they sailed for England. The realization that this meant boarding school and lots of gray skies and rain was a grim one. Kaye never cottoned to classroom learning and confesses that even as an adult she could never do "sums." The only thing she was good at was drawing. The memoir ends in the 1920s, when she is around 18 or 19, having turned down a chance to go to the Slade school because she has no interest in being a serious artist. Her assumption is that she will marry and live on her husband's money.

One memorable scene of India is the sisters' sadistic British nanny, who would force large amounts of castor oil on Kaye, setting her bowels in motion while out on the town; she tries to run home to the loo but ends up shitting herself before arriving there. The nanny is sent packing, but the diet of castor oil caused gastrointestinal problems for the rest of her life. Another scene is the girls' many trips to the Taj Mahal, where they would have the run of the entire mausoleum and grounds because it hadn't yet become a huge tourist destination.

Kaye specifies that this will not be a political memoir, and she hews to that except for the passages where she extols colonialism, more than a little tone-deafly. While insisting that her parents had not a racist bone in their bodies, which could very well be true, she seems not to understand that a deep love for a country and its people, at the individual and personal level, never precludes systemic racism and de facto servitude. She ridicules Forster's *A Passage to India* as "a virulent attack on his own race" which came to be "regarded as Holy Writ by the trendy." If only people would look at old photographs or talk to "left-overs from the Raj" they would realize how mistaken the anti-colonial stance is. Her biggest complaint about the British empire is what it does to British families, separating mothers from children and fathers from all of them.
