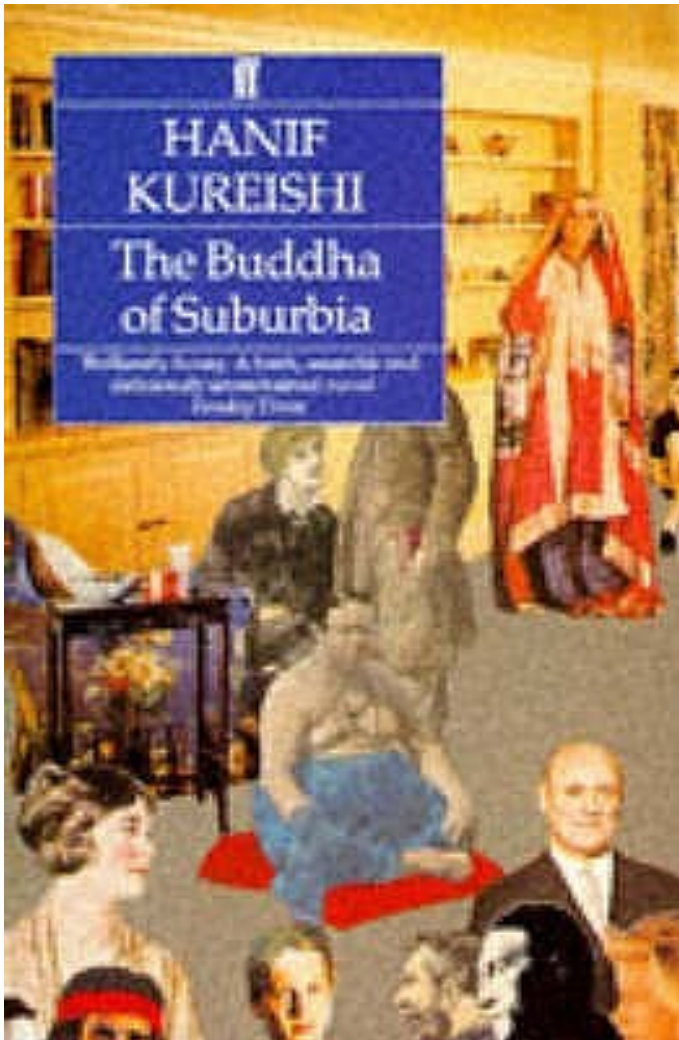

Hanif Kureishi

The Buddha Of Suburbia



Title: The Buddha Of Suburbia

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Description

A bureaucrat becomes a suburban guru who marries a follower with a son who's a punk rocker named Charlie Hero. Consequently, the guru's son is propelled from his bland life into a series of erotic experiences in London.

Insightful reviews

Antonomasia: There were three contemporary TV dramas I remember really speaking to me when I was a teenager: *The Lakes*, *The Crow Road* and *The Buddha of Suburbia*. All carried the sound of life revving up and starting to happen, and said that things were about to get a whole lot more interesting.

Now approximately twenty years separates me from watching *The Buddha of Suburbia* in the 90s, as the same span back then separated the series from its setting in the 70s. I should have read and treasured this book long ago. The first paragraph - and the whole book - still carries that same sense of promise and excitement.

My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories. But I don't care – Englishman I am (though not proud of it), from the South London suburbs and going somewhere. Perhaps it is the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not, that makes me restless and easily bored. Or perhaps it was being brought up in the suburbs that did it. Anyway, why search the inner room when it's enough to say that I was looking for trouble, any kind of movement, action and sexual interest I could find, because things were so gloomy, so slow and heavy, in our family, I don't know why. Quite frankly, it was all getting me down and I was ready for anything.

Maybe he spoke those words at the opening of the first episode - I can't recall for sure and I hadn't dared re-watch it recently. Nevertheless I remember a fantastic first scene in which he was getting changed to the sound of Get It On by T-Rex. These and so many other lines strike a chord or express something perfectly: perhaps it's because of the thrill of nostalgia and because they were formative when I first heard them all that time ago: they are right because to me they are among the originals.

Perhaps that's also why the whole book seems perfectly pitched, sort of an old-fashioned British comic novel of eccentric families and cartoonishly cool friends, yet, unlike that often conservative form (Kingsley Amis etc), it's on the side of characters who are Indian immigrants, bisexuals, left-wingers, hippies and arty types of all stripes. Affectionate satire, like the hint of authorial knowingness in Karim's voice. "I wanted to live always this intensely: mysticism, alcohol, sexual promise, clever people and drugs." You care despite or because his ambition is a teenage cliché (especially from the days before university tuition fees; as one of the last cohort who didn't have to pay, I remember the sudden seriousness of the younger ones who, to our eyes, were doing too much work too early and didn't seem to get - our old-fashioned idea of - what being a student was about).

I suppose there are one or two scenes that don't quite work, and one or two characters who could have been better drawn, yet it barely seems to matter. (There are so many memorable people here and they feel so familiar and magical that it seems daft my trying to list and describe them.) It's academic that I didn't actually read the book twenty years ago; I have all the affection and longing kinship for it that I have for firm favourites from then, such as *The Secret History*, and often it would make me feel as if everything was still to happen, just as if I'd been reading it two decades ago. And it manages to be funny, sexy, political and grubbily glamorous. It's not like Karim has an entirely easy time, but, as I also keep thinking when I flick through the graphic novel [Nelson](#) (which I can't yet bring myself to actually read), in this book is a life I would like to have lived.

mark monday: 3 Things about [The Buddha of Suburbia](#):

(1) i read this one because of my fondness for the movie *My Beautiful Laundrette*, which was written by this author. that movie was so generous, its characters so busy, its perspective so uncomplaining about unruly complicated messy awkward life. the book has that same feeling. i have a (too) organized mind and i feel vaguely envious of how Kureishi must see the world, taking in all of the confusion and seeing it as natural, organic, sometimes awful but mainly kinda beautiful. that generosity of spirit is the best thing about this delightful but sometimes rather minor note novel. it is crammed with life. even in suburbia!

(2) the protagonist is casually bi. so am i. this is maybe the only other time i've read of such a protagonist in contemporary literary fiction (the other being *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh*). beyond sexuality, Karim tries to be open-minded and even-handed; he often fails utterly and holds things against people that he knows he shouldn't. Karim is also a very internal person, yet is surrounded by outgoing people and is part of a dynamic whirl of events, socializing, coming-and-going, people changing, etc. he is a part of different groups while being apart from those groups as well. it was a nice experience to read all about a character who showed me a way of looking at myself.

(3) i should also mention that Karim is a Class A Jerkoff. he makes poor decisions. he is a condescending know-it-all who talks on and on and on. he's such an asshole at times and was quite hard to deal with. at those points it was even harder realizing that i still saw myself in him. ah well. the best character is actually his friend Jamilla ('Jammie') who has a rather adorably pathetic fiance and is a smart, sensible, rather mean-spirited, tough-minded, down-to-earth lady that i would like to marry.

Ricardo: Este libro me lo recomendó mi analista hace muchos pero muchos años (bueno, 10 u 11, no tantos). El año pasado finalmente me lo compré y entendí porque: yo había salido del ropero y estaba viviendo la vida loca, tal como hace Karim y todo Londres a lo largo de estas páginas. Me vino bien haberlo leído ahora, después de haber estado en esa ciudad trepidante pero que indudablemente ha perdido la frescura que debió haber tenido por aquel entonces. Lo que más me gustó es que el autor no solo se preocupó por delinear muy bien sus personajes y el siempre vigente sistema de clases británico, sino por recrear un gran fresco histórico de los años setenta al ritmo del glam rock, el efímero movimiento punk y el nacimiento de la new

wave. Despiadado, divertido y plagado de personajes inolvidables y muy bien delineados, en el último capítulo pierde algo de su vuelo al querer dejar clausurado el devenir de los caracteres principales. Muy recomendable.

Francesca: Very nice, relaxing ebook with attractive characters.

Kinga: i've got lately learn Turgenev's Sketches from a Hunter's Album, the place he charges an anecdote a few Frenchman who someway bought misplaced in Russia after Napoleon's hasty retreat and after being captured through villagers able to lynch him he used to be rescued through an aristocrat who was once trying to find a French and piano instructor for his daughters. It didn't topic that the stated Frenchman couldn't really play the piano, his Frenchness gave him all of the credibility he needed. We discover a related state of affairs within the Buddha of Suburbia the place Karim's father, Muslim raised in response to very English ideals, instantly makes a decision to turn into a yoga, meditation, all of the New Age mumbo jumbo guru and rises to reputation within the suburbs of London, the place his darkish pores and skin serves for all of the credentials he may need. Karim, his mixed-race, moment iteration immigrant son doesn't relatively be afflicted by an identification quandary until eventually humans inform him to and check out to inform him to be this or that. He performs Mowgli in a play and is informed by way of the director to faux an Indian accessory to be extra authentic. whilst he joins a special theatre troupe he's reprimanded by way of fellow 'people of colour' for no longer representing his race the best way he should. But here's the wonderful thing about this booklet – Karim doesn't outline himself in any way. He does begin his ebook through asserting he's an Englishman of a brand new breed yet that's all you'll pay attention approximately it. He appears to be like drawn to women and men both, yet he'll by no means say even if he's heterosexual, or homosexual, or perhaps bisexual. for many of the e-book he doesn't appear to want any labels and is bemused through the actual fact other folks desire them to classify their world. All he desires is simply to get laid and get out of the suburbs prior to they smother him. this is often what he'll pass on doing leaving the challenging activity of constructing experience of every thing to the reader. As some distance as coming of age novels go, this one is a gem. this can be what Vernon God Little attempted to be yet failed – a satire that regardless of being surely humorous feels additionally uncooked and authentic. the sentiments do not get misplaced in caricatures. There remains to be the texture of a past due hippy liberalism yet with the delivery of punk you could already see the indicators of proto-Thatcherism and Kureishi captures that zeitgeist superbly. I have heard that during his later novels Kureishi have proven a few sexist trends (please be aware this can be simply anecdotal and that i don't really comprehend what I'm speaking about), yet I can't see any strains of this in 'The Buddha of Suburbia' which incorporates a few nice woman characters who supply us with very attention-grabbing history plotlines to pay attention to whilst the most personality wishes a break. All in all, a good rounded debut novel, deserving defined as a type of glossy classic.

Michele: The name to this one is a section deceptive because the 'buddha' of suburbia is barely current through the first half the book. And he does not get the position of narrator both - his story, the components of it that you just do get, are informed via his son. The Buddha of the identify is the daddy of Karim Amir, the narrator of the story. His father and uncles emigrated from India as younger males - his father married an white lady and his uncle one other Indian. Uncle Anwar ran a shop together with his spouse and daughter Jamila whereas Karim's father

labored as a civil servant and his mom in a shoe store. the tale starts whilst Karim is 17 (and ends approximately 3 years later) and his father takes up buddhistic principles, going as far as to guide a meditation crew with a friend, Eva (whose son Charlie Karim admires greatly, not just for his type yet simply because he is drawn to him - the sensation turns out mutual). Karim accompanies him to Eva's condo (they all dwell in South London) one evening for this kind of classes that's whilst he discovers his father is having an affair with Eva. He leaves his wife, strikes in with Eva, and Karim bounces among Eva's house, his uncle Ted and Aunt Jean's condo (where his mom is staying) and Jamila's residence together with her mom and dad (he sleeps with Jamila on a typical basis, even after her prepared marriage to Changez, a person who Karim really likes).Eva encourages him to go into the theatre, whereas relocating his father and him into the town from the suburbs. His first function is to play Mowgli in Jungle Book, yet then he lands a task with a extra prestigious corporation led by means of Matthew Pyke. He falls in love tough with considered one of his co-actresses, Eleanor, yet she sleeps with Pyke simply because he's strong and interesting, so he breaks it off, yet now not until eventually he has had workforce intercourse with Matthew, Eleanor and Matthew's wife. Meanwhile, Charlie has learned his glam band isn't really making it and takes up punk instead, changing into the hit singer "Charlie Hero" and relocating to New York. the second one play Karim is in is very winning and runs in long island for a month, the place he hangs round with Charlie till one evening while he watches Charlie in a sub intercourse position with a dominatrix and realizes that he does not take care of Charlie anymore. Returning to London, it sort of feels various to Charlie and he realizes it's him that is different.The tale describes not just transformations among London and New York, but in addition category adjustments among teams in London (and the suburbs).The ebook used to be made right into a stageplay by way of Kureishi, which was once produced on the time of a hate-crime in Britain opposed to a tender man, Stephen Lawrence, and this created loads of severe reaction to the play (and the book).

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