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# Killing Honour

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Racially complicated Leicester here seethes with drugs, status cars, booze, bars and clubs, lust, wife-beating and murder. Not the easiest place for fifteen-year-old Satinder Kooner to grow up, especially as his Sikh family is scarred by contradictions and denials. When wealthy, shop-owning dad suspects his daughter Jaswinder of 'seeing some Asian lad' at college, his version of family honour prompts a swiftly arranged marriage to a rich club owner. Duty done, he ignores his daughter's evident suffering, preferring the consolations of Chivas Regal. Sat isn't buying into this hypocrisy and empty tradition. When Jas suddenly disappears, accused by his sadistic brother-in-law of running off with a lover, he knows he must search for her. Danger crowds on danger for Sat, distancing him from the normal adolescent pleasures and pains of the inter-racial world of his school friends. Instead, he is adrift in a vicious underworld which ranges from seedy Leicester back rooms to the fields of the Punjab where a discarded woman is raped and slaughtered. Though there is to be no easy ending to his search, Sat eventually finds others willing to take on his murdering in-laws. Sat tells a journalist he meets to talk about the fate of abused wives: 'The media call it 'honour killing' or 'honour-related abuse', which is a joke. Those murders aren't about honour ? more like killing honour.'

Bali Rai mostly works with actions and surfaces. He's strong on uncompromising violence and language. A machete killing is prefaced by multiple rape. As she quits a hated employer, a woman leaves on her screen, GOODBYE NEEDLE DICK. Sentences are clipped and urgent **BfK** readers with long memories might worry that some episodes come close to gratuitous excitement, maybe remembering the salacious Skinhead or Boot Boys of the seventies. But the integrity of the writing here is very different. Leicester is Bali Rai's home town, and there is an anger and directness driving the excitement which I think Young Adult readers will respect and trust.

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