



5 Female South Asian Authors You Have to Read



By: Zayn Dhillon
July 26th, 2021

South Asian women are brilliant. Their experiences are highlighted by intelligence, community, resilience, and imagination.

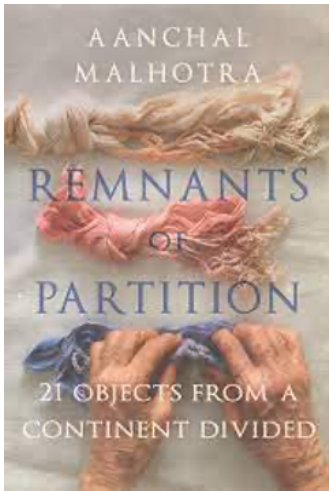
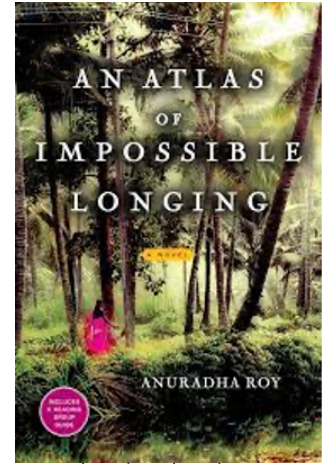
We can see some of the contributions they make in this world every day, and the integral role they play in our communities. I've been fortunate enough to read some literary works by incredibly talented South Asian women. They spin tales of family ties and craft remarkable characters, bring awareness to the events of our past, and memorialize their experiences of love, queerness, and otherness in this life.

South Asian girls, especially daughters, may see themselves represented in some of these works. These books help daughters find a place in this world through written word. These five authors showcase a spectrum of cultural, religious, sexual, familial, and historical experiences, pushing them into the spotlight and really making you think about the diversity of South Asian women and non-binary people.



An Atlas of Impossible Longing by Anuradha Roy

Anuradha Roy writes about a multi-generational Bengali family years after the Partition of India. She tells the tale of a large house, its ghosts and its gardens, and those who come and go with enduring love, longing, and madness. Roy crafts a resounding tale with fleeting moments you do not forget, capturing rainy years in Bengal and lonely days in Calcutta through the backdrop of a shifting and divided India.



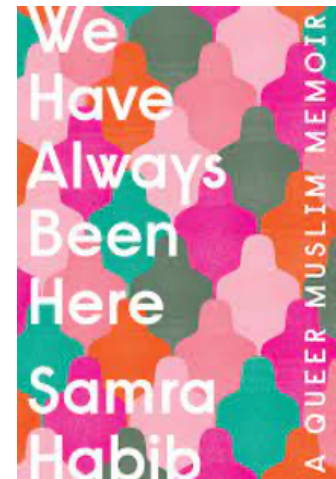
Remnants of Partition: 21 Objects from a Continent Divided by Aanchal Malhotra

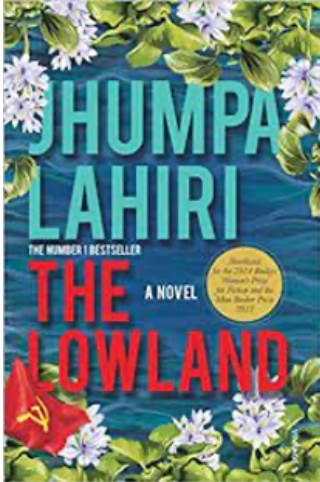
Aanchal Malhotra is an oral historian that memorializes the stories of 21 individuals and the items that have survived decades with them after the Partition of the Indian subcontinent in the 1940s. Beginning with her great-grandparents, Malhotra recounts individual histories of people and families who hold onto the memories inside a string of pearls, kitchenware, and poetry, among other things. Remnants of Partition paints a vivid picture of generational trauma, connection, family ties, and colonization. This is a must read for those interested in oral histories, and understanding that small moments tell big stories.



We Have Always Been Here: A Queer Muslim Memoir by Samra Habib

Samra Habib is a photographer based out of Toronto, Ontario. They are the creator of Just Me and Allah: A Queer Muslim Photo Project, which explores the meaning of being Muslim and queer. Habib's memoir details their upbringing in Pakistan as an Ahmadi Muslim, and their subsequent immigration to Canada. Growing up in Toronto, Habib explores their queerness, their Muslim identity, family ties, and developing their sense of self with a multi-faceted identity. This memoir brings sorely needed representation to the South Asian queer community.



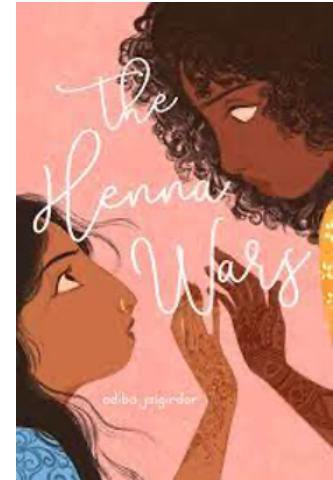


The Lowland by Jhumpa Lahiri

Jhumpa Lahiri is an award-winning author whose works are often brought up when discussing South Asian literature. Her novel *The Lowland* tells the story of Subhash and Udayan, two brothers whose intertwined lives slowly diverge to different parts of the world. Udayan's political involvements shape the future of everyone dear to him, including that of his wife, Gauri. Lahiri chronicles the lives and relationships of Subhash, Udayan, and Gauri from India to the USA, and across generations. Her work is tragic, empathetic, desperately intimate, and overall a gripping read.

The Henna Wars by Adiba Jaigirdar

The Henna Wars is the only young adult (YA) novel on this list. This book tells the story of Nishat, a young Bengali Muslim lesbian who creates her own henna business to combat against cultural appropriation from her classmate, Flavia. Throughout the story, Nishat explores racism, sexuality, religion, and new relationships. Stories about young queer South Asians are rare, and this novel provides necessary representation that younger readers will wholeheartedly enjoy. Jaigirdar does an excellent job of taking heavy and important themes that are still so taboo and presenting them in a way that begins the discussion around South Asians and the LGBTQ+ community.



Zayn Dhillon is a Punjabi Canadian woman living in Waterloo, ON. Finishing up her BA at the University of Waterloo, Zayn is a researcher and writer. She is interested in South Asian literature, and exploring the experiences of being a queer South Asian woman in the Canadian space. Normally, you can find her reading, hoarding podcast recommendations, or getting a coffee.