



# First Darling of the Morning: Selected Memories of an Indian Childhood

By Thrity Umrigar

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First Darling of the Morning is the powerful and poignant memoir of bestselling author Thrity Umrigar, tracing the arc of her Bombay childhood and adolescence from her earliest memories to her eventual departure for the United States at age twenty-one. It is an evocative, emotionally charged story of a young life steeped in paradox; of a middle-class Parsi girl attending Catholic school in a predominantly Hindu city; of a guilt-ridden stranger in her own land, an affluent child in a country mired in abysmal poverty. She reveals intimate secrets and offers an unflinching look at family issues once considered unspeakable as she interweaves two fascinating coming-of-age stories—one of a small child, and one of a nation.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Freelance journalist Umrigar alternates between sweet and biting accounts of her middle-class Parsi upbringing in 1960s and 1970s Bombay. With a mixture of rawness and warmth, she recalls moments from her tumultuous childhood through her teenage years, and finally into her early 20s when she leaves India for the U.S. She describes her mother's strictness with her and other children (her mother doesn't think twice to strike disobedient kids with a cane), tempering these scenes with memories of the tight bond with her father as well as her Aunt Mehroo's unflappable love. As she encounters worker strikes and student protests, she begins to understand class differences and the gap between her privileged, private school background and India's poverty. In the end, Umrigar's memoir is colorful and moving. (Nov.)

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From [Booklist](#)

\*Starred Review\* A melancholy mood suffuses Indian author Umrigar's eloquent coming-of-age memoir (after *If Today Be Sweet*, 2007). Born in Bombay to middle-class Parsi parents, smart, precocious Umrigar spent much of her childhood feeling out of place. She was very close to her gentle father and her beloved aunt, but her mother was menacing and cruel, frequently mocking her and beating her with a switch. Umrigar's life changed when she met Jesse, a forward-thinking—and rebellious—young woman five years her senior, who introduced her to the wonders of literature and art. Umrigar soaked it all in, even shunning her family's privileged existence after reading Irving Stone's *Lust for Life* (1934), a novel based on the life of Vincent Van Gogh. Umrigar's upbringing in an apolitical family left her unprepared for the passion she felt after participating in a demonstration against the government. A sense of restlessness, combined with relentless family discord, fed her desire to escape to the U.S. The memoir ends with Umrigar at 21, departing for America, where she now works as a journalist and associate professor of English at Case Western Reserve University. But she has never forgotten her native land, brilliantly rendered in three critically acclaimed novels and now in this latest bracingly honest and bittersweet memoir. --Allison Block

Review

“[Umrigar] has never forgotten her native land, brilliantly rendered in three critically acclaimed novels and now in this latest bracingly honest and bittersweet memoir.” ([Booklist \(starred review\)](#))

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