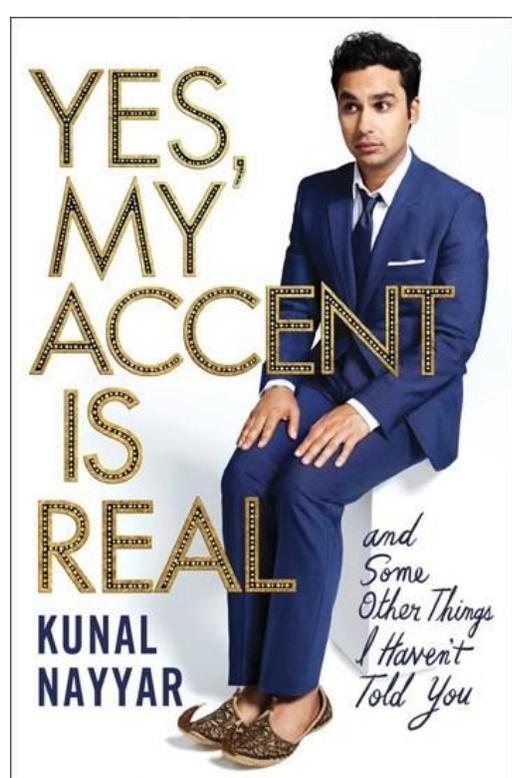


The Last Laugh

by [Jeanne E. Fredriksen](#) | Sep 3, 2015 | <https://indiacurrents.com/the-last-laugh/>



[YES, MY ACCENT IS REAL: AND SOME OTHER THINGS I HAVEN'T TOLD YOU](#) by [Kunal Nayyar](#). Atria Books, An Imprint of Simon & Schuster, Inc.: New York. September 2015. Available as hard cover, e-book, unabridged audio download, and unabridged CD.

Russell Peters, Mindy Kaling, Aziz Ansari. They are comedians and comedic actors of Indian background who have written books. Now, it's Kunal Nayyar's turn. The actor who plays astrophysicist Raj Koothrappali on the hit CBS sitcom [The Big Bang Theory](#) freely and openly takes the reader on a ride—bumps and all—in his collection of over 30 personal essays titled [Yes, My Accent Is Real: And Some Other Things I Haven't Told You](#).

From his childhood in New Delhi (but he'll point out that he was "Made in England") to his college days at the University of Portland to marrying his wife Neha Kapur (Miss India 2006, "[My Big Fat Indian Wedding](#)"), Nayyar neither uses the book to promote

himself as a Hollywood fixture nor sets himself up on a pedestal. Rather, he reveals a man who stumbled now and then, felt the full spectrum of emotions, and carried on like any other person whose sights are set on getting it right no matter the chosen profession.

What stands out above all in this collection of hilarious essays, cocktail napkin wisdoms ("Thoughts Recorded on an Aeroplane Napkin," "More Thoughts ...," "Still More Thoughts ...") and caringly-crafted lists ("My A-to-Z Guide to Getting Nookie in New Delhi During High School," "Kunal's Twelve Quick Thoughts on Dating," "Thirteen Things I've Learned from Playing an Astrophysicist on TV"), and brief musings ("Why Being Indian Is Cool," "The Art of the Head Bobble"), is the joy that permeates his life

His recounting exudes happiness through a wry sense of self as he looks back at his trials, shyness, triumphs, friends, creative endeavors. Along his journey as a business major, he decides to check out the university's Theater Department because that's where the pretty girls are ("Judgment Day in Boise"); discovers a love for the stage and is compelled to confess to his parents that he wants to be an actor ("How I Knew"); finds his footing when it seems he no longer has a sidekick/support system ("Diaby and Me"); and learns that love at first sight can truly happen ("And Then I Fell in Love").

This candid glimpse into the actor behind one of the most beloved sitcom misfits is both refreshing and inspiring. The majority of the offerings find Nayyar musing about the morals of each as if casually offering advice that he, himself, may have had to learn the hard way. Wise words also are discussed in "Dinners with Dad" where he learned at his father's table the important concepts of "Treat a king and a beggar the same," "Stand up when it counts," "Disarm with a smile," and "Use a spreadsheet."

Relationships loom large in his life, and there is a sparkle that comes from a restrained amount of manly conquest talk versus a large helping of honest analysis of his failure, near-miss, and success regarding some of them ("The Forbidden Kiss," "The Girl I Went to Mass For," "Lollipops and Crisps"). In "Everything I Know About Kissing I learned from Winnie Cooper" Nayyar swings from an inaugural kiss at the age of twelve from the first love of his life (his cousin's friend) to the third season of "Big Bang" when a script called for him to kiss the other first love of his life: guest star Danica McKellar, who played Winnie Cooper on the TV show [The Wonders Years](#).

Nayyar also explores with open eyes his initial loneliness, being different, not knowing how to handle certain situations at college (after all, his exposure to American college life came from watching the film *American Pie*). He struggles with not being cast in roles he coveted juxtaposed with the slow realization that it wasn't drama but comedy at which he excelled. Later, he realizes that all of his adventures and misadventures along the way had prepared him to be cast as Raj in 2007.

With that in mind, this collection gives hope to those whose social unease has held them back; bolsters those who find themselves in a sea of confusion regarding place and time; and offers encouragement from someone whose every dumb act, silly assumption, creative inventiveness, and eventual take-charge attitude has led him to the totally fulfilling life he leads today.

Whether your weekly TV viewing schedule regularly includes *The Big Bang Theory* (I'm surprised he didn't title "Holiday Traditions Part 3: Holi" as "The Big Bhang Theory") or it doesn't, this entertaining trip into the life of Kunal Nayyar is an upbeat and worthwhile read. Charming, introspective discourse and self-deprecating humor run hand-in-hand, allowing the reader to feel that the last chapter, titled "Goodbye," is truly as his father explained to him: just an opportunity for hello.

Jeanne E. Fredriksen lives in Wake Forest, North Carolina, where she is the managing editor of a monthly newspaper and is a Books for Youth reviewer for Booklist magazine, a publication of the American Library Association. Between assignments, she writes fiction, hunts for the perfect Bloody Mary, and heads to the beach as often as she can.
