



The Jam Fruit Tree (The Burgher Trilogy, Book 1)

Carl Muller

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The Jam Fruit Tree (The Burgher Trilogy, Book 1) Details

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Author : Carl Muller

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From Reader Review The Jam Fruit Tree (The Burgher Trilogy, Book 1) for online ebook

Amrit says

Boisterous, poignant, hilarious, wild, crass, and pictorial, in equal measures, The Jam Fruit Tree is just that. A jam fruit tree which is what it is.

Travis Gomez says

"They accepted Centuries ago, that Sri Lanka was their land. There was never any thought that they could, if things got bad, pack and hide back to Holland or to wherever they could trace back to. They were at home and where else could they 'put a party' and enjoy life as much as home?"

Carl Muller on the Burghers of Sri Lanka

The First Book in the Burgher Trilogy is also one of Carl Muller's most famous work which describes the adventures and misadventures of the Von Bloss's and their extended families and friends. The writer himself refers to the novel as a work of "Faction"; a work of fiction that sails very close to the fact and is believed to have partly been inspired by the authors own life.

The book describes the tumultuous lives of the Von Bloss family and their many extended family and friends through the period set in a time of transition in Sri Lanka. Like the Jam Fruit Tree that grows in the Von Bloss's garden, the Burgher's depicted in the novel are a hardy, fertile lot who like the tree cannot be tamed but nevertheless bear sweet fruit. In very vivid prose, key events of their lives including a Burgher funeral, Wedding, Christmas Party among many others in a very evocative way. The process of making the Christmas Cake ahead of the Christmas Season is particularly visceral and reveals the talent of the author.

"Heaven, it seemed to him, was operating some sort of a laundering service."

"That Viva making noises as if someone smashing his toes with rice-pounder. getting salvation, it seems. Lamb is washing his soul. Must be paining like Hell."

As highlighted above, the key strength of the books humor lies in the prose of the book which is heavily interjected with heavy use of Sri Lankan Idioms and Vernacular phrases, swear words that is distinctly Sri Lankan. As the novel primarily depicts the life of working class Burghers, some of the language is somewhat more pedestrian to reflect this, but nevertheless enhances the humor of the novel. Apart from the humor in the language itself, the novel also describes some hilarious situations like the government agents futile attempt to take away Sonnaboy's furniture in Kadugannawa.

But the book isn't all humor as it doesn't shy away from the darker aspects of the time such as Colourism, racism and patriarchy to put it more mildly. The language at times becomes quite crass and direct, possibly to contrast these issues with the more colourful descriptions used in the rest of the novel. While not as grim as Carl Muller's other work 'Colombo' which is far more bleak, the novel nevertheless does not shy away from highlighting these issues.

The novel is set during the early 20th century during the British Colonial period and the author manages to bring to life in vivid prose the facets of life in Colombo at the turn of the Century. The novel describes facets

of life at that time including schools, Universities, the origin of road names etc. that continue to endure today and which lends the novel its authenticity

Carl Muller also praises the amazing tolerance of the burgher community. In the words of the author "Sri Lankan Burghers are as Strident as the most Strident Sinhala Native and in a sense most wholly embraces the Island mentality of 'Eat, drink and be Merry'. The author attributes the peaceful coexistence the Burghers have managed to maintain while integrating with the fabric of Sri Lankan culture to their ability to fit in no matter the circumstances. The author laments the ethnic conflict and the situation that has forced many Burghers to reluctantly leave their homeland.

Overall anyone looking for a somewhat exaggerated glimpse into the past and as to what life was like in colonial Colombo should check out this novel.

Jann Weeratunga says

I loved being transported to the lanes and times of past Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon)
I was delighted to receive The Jamfruit Tree as a gift and couldn't put it down.

Thevuni Kotigala says

Burgher community is a Eurasian ethnic group in Sri Lanka, which descended from Portuguese, Dutch, British and other Europeans who settled in Sri Lanka back then. I know very little about the Burgher community, but the little I know was clearly reflected in this book - specially the unique qualities of the Burghers! This book has beautifully illustrated the history in an exciting way, and it gives a real good insight to the Burgher community and their way of living. For me, moral of the story is, "Live like a Burgher!" :D
Sending lots of love to the wonderful Burgher community out there! <3

Chaminda Peries says

January 28, 2013 By Chaminda Peries

A friend of mine, bought me this book because I told him that I had started to read books written by Sri Lankan authors. A bit of a rare breed.

I enjoyed this book. It took a bit of reading to get used to the language used by the characters in their many conversations. A very Sri Lankan way of speaking English, but the book gives the impression that everyone spoke that way all the time. Or maybe I have selective memory...

Carl beautifully portrays a bygone era in Sri Lanka. I feel his descriptions are quite authentic and honest. Things started to change in Sri Lanka in the 70's - so some of the things described I actually remember - rickshaws, buggy carts, etc. Many of the places and customs are still quite in tact. Brought back many, fond memories of places and people ... especially brought back memories of my grandfather relating stories of how the Japanese bombed Sri Lanka during WW II.

If you get used to the dialog and the funny names, you will definitely enjoy the book as he's quite a story teller. You don't have to be a Sri Lankan to enjoy this.

Lakna says

This book completely transported me to Ceylonese lanes of simpler days in 1930s. I laughed with them, got shell shocked with their expression of love, hate and everything in between and finally found myself completely lonely as the book ended. Hilarious and brutally honest take on everyday life in 1930s which I believe is largely applicable to today as well.

Marissa says

I really don't know if I liked this book or not - as a burgher I have a warm fuzzy feeling overall and i enjoyed laughing at it as an inside joke - but I think it was over the top and exaggerated in ways I didn't really like.

Tom Lee says

Colourful depiction of the burghers: mixed race Sri Lankans who were favoured by the British and created their own unique approach to religion, food and family. Set in the early 20th century, it follows one (very large) family as generation gives way to generation.

The narrative is written in a faux naif style, as though being told by a storyteller, though sometimes it feels like the intentional clumsiness of the narrative slips over into real clumsiness in the writing . A work of great flair or skill this is not.

But I really enjoyed it nevertheless, which just goes to show that a natural talent for imagery goes a long way toward creating engaging literature.

Suvasini Sridharan reddy says

I would rate this book 3.5. Interesting account of the Burgher community in Sri Lanka in the 1930s. Really funny in bits and enjoyed the details when it came to celebrations and funerals and all the food. Well written, but it was too sexually graphic and vulgar (wish that had been toned down).

Prasanna says

Blunt, filthy, and unapologetic. A mixture of fiction and fact, referred to him as 'faction', this book is the beginning of his Burgher Trilogy. The story itself is a thinly veiled retelling of his life (Carloboy ring a

bell?), and is full of all the ups and downs that any family goes through and more.

To many, Muller's style of writing could easily be categorized as filth. He is a master at bringing out the quirks and easily overlooked mannerisms of Sri Lankan culture, in ways that can be imagined happening in real life. Refreshing to read, especially after all the sadness or forced humour other SL authors seem to love writing about...

Amalie says

I had to read it, I would say this was a shotgun reading. It was text under Sri Lankan lit where we are trying to analyse the Burgher community. Whatever it is I'm sure the Burthers in Sri Lanka are cursing the the Von Bloss's.

Since I studied it, I do know the novel is semi-autobiographical, that infact Sonnaboy and Beryl are representative character of the parents of Carl Muller. I'll say this is pretty much doing dirty laundry, settling personal scores out in the open. A Good novel can address sex as an issue, but if the writer doesn't keep the control of his depth then we see art turns into vulgarity and that's The Jam Fruit Tree.

But I have to say the novel made me laugh, the funeral service, the bombing during the WWII. That's a funny point about the novel, tragedy turned into comedy and vice versa.

Zeina says

I think you would either have to be Sri Lankan or know Sri Lankans to really appreciate this book. Yes it can be categorized as filth, airing dirty laundry, whatever- But it's hilarious, it's touching and I love how the author has captured the way they speak so perfectly. It was a fun enjoyable book.

Jagadish says

Sad and funny. Reminds one of the hundreds of Anglo-Indians of Bangalore, Calcutta and Madras... slowly going the way of the Dodo..

Tasneem says

I love this book, this depiction of Ceylon and the Burghers during this late colonial period. Of course, this book shows you the class of Burghers that weren't doctors and lawyers, but the working people who lived and mixed with the people of Ceylon.

Re-read - 15/07/2015. Reading the book again after many a long year has left me feeling disappointed. It is an interesting story, don't get me wrong, but the language is at times a bit pedestrian and the narrative, though funny, weaves in and out without much cohesion. I think a good editor would have done much to tighten and refine the book. It is a great introduction to the lower-middle class of Burghers though and their

madcap existence in British Ceylon.

Haresh Eranga says

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