

# KIRKUS REVIEWS

★ Chopra, Deepak  
SOULMATE  
Putnam (320 pp.)  
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Love as the basic fabric of human life offers mind-body healer Chopra a more focused story this time around than he found for his debut fiction, *The Return of Merlin* (1995), a tale about the magical effects of Arthurian archetypes on today's England.

*Soulmate* lopes along for 60 pages before hitting its stride. Born in India, Raj Rabban, 25, works in Manhattan as a psychiatric intern. He's engaged to Maya, a hands-on college counselor/caseworker, but falls for sibylline Molly Mahoney, a brilliant if minor Broadway actress who speaks in enigmas and tries to draw Raj into his inner being. He still loves Maya but acts like a bastard, pursuing Molly, who can't speak the word *love*. Maya has a grip on this world, even as Raj lusts to rise above the pack at his hospital, hoping to be given a permanent residency, while Molly offers insight into truths beyond the material world. The story lifts off when Raj faces the mentally ill on his ward and requires himself to enter the patients' disoriented minds. Chopra mauls modern psychiatry, its patients treated almost universally by drugs and electroshock. Raj's boss tells him: "Reality is an elephant that we can't move. None of us . . . It just stands there; it is what it is." But when Molly dies and returns as his soulmate, Raj begins to learn the power of love in healing the crazy. While Raj at first can see only symptoms, Molly in the beyond has a wider view

of the sick and feeds Raj ways to reach in, dissolve fears, and draw patients back into the reality they distrust so violently. In a showdown with his boss, Raj says, "To me, you've been saying that loving these people is feeble and pointless. Insanity is too powerful and reality doesn't give a shit."

To this, add Chopra's humor, his brilliant medical dialogue, and the power and richness of Raj's battle against materialist psychiatry. A contender.