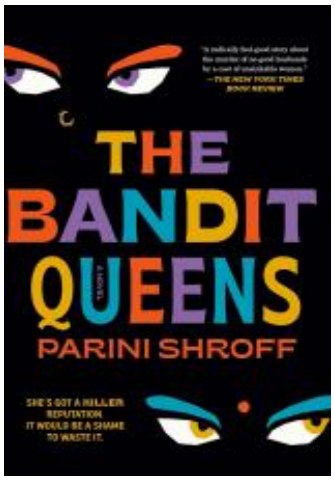
The Bandit Queens

by Parini Shroff



About the Book

A young Indian woman finds the false rumors that she killed her husband surprisingly useful --- until other women in the village start asking for her help getting rid of their own husbands --- in this razor-sharp debut.

Five years ago, Geeta lost her no-good husband. As in, she actually *lost* him --- he walked out on her, and she has no idea where he is. But in her remote village in India, rumor has it that Geeta killed him. And it?s a rumor that just won?t die.

It turns out that being known as a ?self-made? widow comes with some perks. No one messes with her, harasses her or tries to control (*ahem*, marry) her. It?s even been good for business; no one dares to *not* buy her jewelry.

Freedom must look good on Geeta, because now other women are asking for her ?expertise,? making her an unwitting consultant for husband disposal.

And not all of them are asking nicely.

With Geeta?s dangerous reputation becoming a double-edged sword, she has to find a way to protect the life she?s built --- but even the best-laid plans of would-be widows tend to go awry. What happens next sets in motion a chain of events that will change everything, not just for Geeta, but for *all* the women in their village.

Filled with clever criminals, second chances, and wry and witty women, Parini Shroff?s THE BANDIT QUEENS is a razor-sharp debut of humor and heart that readers won?t soon forget.

Discussion Guide

1. Discuss the title ?The Bandit Queens.? How do you think it relates to the overall story? How does it apply to each of the characters in the book?

2. India and the village Geeta lives in are intrinsic to the narrative. Discuss the ways in which the setting functions as a character in the novel and how each of the other characters relates to it.

3. The caste system has existed in some form in India for at least 3,000 years. It is a complex social structure wherein social roles like one?s profession and status became ?hereditary,? resulting in fixed hierarchies. Were you familiar with India?s caste system before reading THE BANDIT QUEENS? In which ways did the pervasive societal structure appear within the novel? Are you familiar with any other caste systems across the globe? How are they like --- and how do they differ from --- India?s caste system?

4. In what ways does the past seem to control, or at least influence, the present in THE BANDIT QUEENS? How do the characters try to repress or escape the pain of their pasts?

5. Discuss the significance of the following quote from the book:

?It was, Geeta felt, just another example of women living within the spaces that others defined. Farah?s words came back to her: *They don?t get to make all the choices. We get to make some, too.* It was pretty but it wasn?t true.?

In what ways are the women in the novel limited in their choices? Did you find that Geeta?s view on the matter in the quote above evolved over the course of the story? How?

6. What role does gossip play in the narrative? To what extent does it change the course of the characters? lives and help drive the plot within the story?

7. The author infuses snark, wit and humor into a devastating storyline about women wanting to escape their abusive marriages. Explore ways in which you use humor in your own life to deal with difficult situations. Do you find this method to be effective?

8. How are female relationships depicted in THE BANDIT QUEENS? How does the novel play with and subvert female stereotypes and archetypes? How would you position Geeta in relation to contemporary feminist discourse?

9. Love, family, friendship and feminism are all major narrative themes. What other overarching ideas did you notice? What did you take away from reading the book overall?

10. What did you think about the ending? Were you satisfied or disappointed? How do you picture Geeta?s life after the story closes?

Author Bio

Parini Shroff is the bestselling author of THE BANDIT QUEENS, which was a "Good Morning America" Buzz Pick, a

PEN Open Book finalist, and longlisted for the Andrew Carnegie Medal and the Women?s Prize for Fiction. Her latest novel is SOME PEOPLE. She received her MFA from the University of Texas at Austin. She is a practicing attorney and currently lives in the Bay Area.

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