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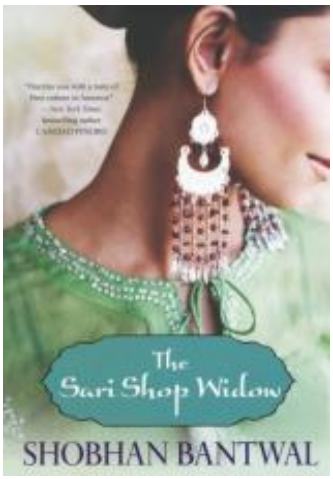
The Sari Shop Widow

by Shobhan Bantwal



About the Book

Since becoming a widow at age twenty-seven, Anjali Kapadia devoted herself to transforming her parent?s sari shop into a chic boutique, brimming with exquisite jewelry and clothing. Now, ten years later, it stands out like a proud maharani amid Edison?s bustling Little India?but when Anjali learns the shop is on the brink of bankruptcy, she feels her world unraveling. To the rescue comes Anjali?s wealthy, dictatorial Uncle Jeevan and his business partner, Rishi Shah --- a mysterious Londoner, complete with British accent, cool gray eyes, and skin so fair it makes it hard to believe he?s Indian. Rishi?s cool, foreign demeanor triggers distrust in Anjali and her mother. But for Anjali, he also stirs something else, a powerful attraction she hasn?t felt in a decade?and the feeling is mutual.

Love disappointed Anjali once before and she?s vowed to live without it --- though Rishi is slowly melting her resolve --- and as the shop regains its footing, gaining her trust. Then a secret from Rishi?s past is revealed, Anjali must turn to her family and her strong cultural upbringing to guide her in finding the truth.

Discussion Guide

1. Anjali Kapadia is a Hindu widow from a conservative family. Is her life different compared to the lives of widows from other cultures? Discuss the uniqueness of her situation.

2. Is a sari and jewelry boutique a good backdrop for a book set in the United States? Could it have been a different background, something that could have given the story an entirely different twist?

3. Jeevan-kaka, Anjali?s uncle from India, is an autocratic man with an agenda of his own. Discuss his entry into the lives of Anjali and her family, and the consequences.

4. What role does Anjali?s brother Nilesh play in this story? What does he bring to the plot?

5. Discuss Anjali?s lingering feelings for her dead husband and how they influence her actions and emotions throughout the book.

6. Why do you think Anjali has picked an unlikely man like Kip Rowling for a secret boyfriend? What kind of impact does he have on her life and the story?

7. Rishi Shah is the reluctant and unwelcome third party when he is introduced to Anjali. Do you think her overtly hostile reaction to him is justified?

8. What are some of the consequences of a widow falling in love with a man of mixed race, a man who does not even live in the same country?

9. Discuss Rishi?s relationship and eventual breakup with his girlfriend, Samantha. Compare and contrast that with Anjali?s relationship with Kip.

10. Does the grand opening of the new Silk & Sapphires store offer any insights into the planning and running of a large and diverse ethnic business? What about the cultural elements introduced as part of the opening festivities?

11. Jeevan-kaka has a couple of deep secrets, which are revealed toward the end. What do you think of the motives behind his actions, and some of the ramifications of his disclosures?

12. Discuss the unique Hindu family structure as portrayed in this story. How is this domestic arrangement different from that of western cultures? How does it affect Anjali?s present life and her potential future with Rishi?

13. Could the story have ended any other way? As a hopeless romantic, I naturally gravitate toward happy or hopeful endings, but you could discuss some other, highly interesting possibilities. And the possibilities are always endless...

Author Bio

Shobhan Bantwal was born and raised in India and came to the United States as a young bride in an arranged marriage. She has published short fiction in literary magazines and articles in a number of publications. Writing plays in her mother tongue (Indian language?Konkani) and performing on stage at Indian-American conventions are some of her hobbies. She lives in New Jersey with her husband. Shobhan loves to hear from her readers.

Critical Praise

"Shobhan Bantwal takes readers into a world that?s exotic yet completely accessible?a compelling and memorable story."

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