



The Folded Earth by Anuradha Roy

About the author:

Anuradha Roy won the Economist Crossword Prize for Fiction for her novel, *The Folded Earth*, which won and was nominated for several other prizes including the Man Asia and the Hindu Literary Award. Her first novel, *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*, has been translated into 15 languages across the world. It was named by World Literature Today as one of the 60 most essential books on modern India and was shortlisted for the Crossword Prize. She won the Picador-Outlook Non-Fiction Prize in 2004.

Anuradha Roy's journalism and book reviews have been published in *Outlook*, *Daily Beast*, *India Today*, *Outlook Traveller*, *National Geographic Traveller*, *Biblio*, *Telegraph*, *Indian Express*, and the *Hindu*. She works as a designer at Permanent Black, an independent press which she runs with her husband, Rukun Advani. She lives in India.

Source: Author's website (<http://anuradharoy.blogspot.ca>)

About this book:

With her debut novel, *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*, Anuradha Roy's exquisite storytelling instantly won readers' hearts around the world, and the novel was named one of the best books of the year by *The Washington Post* and *The Seattle Times*.

Now, Roy has returned with another masterpiece that is already earning international prize attention, an evocative and deeply moving tale of a young woman making a new life for herself amid the foothills of the Himalaya.

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Desperate to leave a private tragedy behind, Maya abandons herself to the rhythms of the little village, where people coexist peacefully with nature. But all is not as it seems, and she soon learns that no refuge is remote enough to keep out the modern world. When power-hungry politicians threaten her beloved mountain community, Maya finds herself caught between the life she left behind and the new home she is determined to protect.

Elegiac, witty, and profound by turns, and with a tender love story at its core, *The Folded Earth* brims with the same genius and love of language that made *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* an international success and confirms Anuradha Roy as a major new literary talent.

Source: Simon & Schuster (<http://books.simonandschuster.ca/>)

Discussion Questions:

1. The setting of *The Folded Earth*, particularly the author's descriptions of nature in the Himalayan foothills, plays a huge role in the book's narrative. In what ways does nature—from the weather in Ranikhet to the landscape—impact the story of *The Folded Earth*?
2. Why does Maya come to the small, isolated village of Ranikhet? Is it to escape her troubled past? Does she succeed? Do you think there's any physical place a person can go to get over the past and begin a new life? If you had to start over, where in the world would you choose to go?
3. Maya's parents formally disowned her when she married outside her faith and caste. How do the residents of the Light House come to be a surrogate family for Maya? What are the problems and rewards of being part of this makeshift family?



4. Roy describes two of her characters, Kundan and Charu, as both being “a child of the hills.” What do you think it means to be “a child of the hills”? Does it come with a particular personality or outlook on life? How might a person’s hometown come to define him or her?

5. Puran is called half-witted and an imbecile, he’s a kind of “holy fool” who creates mayhem, but he has a special gift for communicating with and gaining the trust of animals. What do you think the character of Puran represents in the novel? What important roles does he play?

6. Ama and Diwan Sahib, two central, elderly characters in the book, are from vastly different backgrounds. One is an unread, poor village woman, the other a learned aristocrat. What is the source of their mutual trust and unstated affection?

7. Why do you think Maya first falls in love with Veer? How is he similar to Michael? Is there any indication that he might have ill intentions?

8. Two of the book’s prominent characters, Michael and Maya’s father, play no direct role in the events, and we meet them only through Maya’s thoughts: the past seems as vivid as the present in her life. What does this tell us about the role of memory in the book?

9. Why was Jim Corbett’s life so appealing both to Diwan Sahib and to Maya? How do both characters try to live by Corbett’s philosophy? What does the act of writing about him say about the personalities of both Diwan Sahib and Maya?

10. Diwan Sahib and the General are relics of an old way of life in India. Do you think the new generation will learn from their mistakes? Can the younger people



fully appreciate the old men's glories and struggles?

11. Charu is illiterate when readers are first introduced to her, but she eventually learns to read and write, and she eventually escapes her small village. Did her evolution surprise you? What would have happened to her if she hadn't been able to find Kundan in Delhi? Would she have been able to resume her old way of life?

12. Why do you think Diwan Sahib never shared the letters between Nehru and Edwina?

13. Given the heavy foreshadowing of political and religious unrest in the region, it's a great relief when Ranikhet native Ankit Rawat wins the election. Do you think this victory shows that the village will remain intact? Or will these pockets of unrest cause further problems in the future?

14. For most of the novel, the situation for Miss Wilson and the other teachers and students at Maya's school seems ominous. Do you think they'll continue to be safe?

15. Where do you think Maya will go at the end of the novel? What will happen to Ama and Puran? Did Maya do the right thing in destroying Diwan Sahib's will?

Source: Simon & Schuster (<http://books.simonandschuster.ca/>)

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