



Shakti: The Divine Feminine

Anuja Chandramouli

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Lose yourself in Maya, the divine game of the Goddess!

She is the Mother Goddess, Mahamaya the enchantress, the supreme consciousness, the pure source from which all creation emerges and to whom all must eventually return. As Usas, the enchanting goddess of the dawn, she is loved passionately and hated fiercely, leading to a horrific tragedy. As Durga, the invincible warrior, she defeats the savage Mahishasura, whom none of the male gods could vanquish. As Kali, the fearsome dark goddess, she delights in chaos. Yet she is also Shakti, beloved of all, who, when united with Shiva, restores balance to the universe.

In this captivating narrative, explore the contrasting facets of the sacred feminine; experience her awesome power, forged on the flames of love and hate; and watch her teach the male-dominated pantheon a lesson in compassion. Witty, engaging and thought-provoking, Shakti: The Feminine Divine will force readers to re-evaluate everything they know about the gods and goddesses and inspire all to embrace the Shakti within.

One of the few explorations of the story of the Mother Goddess, Shakti Retold in modern language, this book humanizes the gods

Witty and laced with sarcasm, it is a refreshing change from the heavy language of mythological texts

Draws analogies with the modern-day situation of women and contains a powerful message of woman empowerment

Shakti: The Divine Feminine Details

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From Reader Review Shakti: The Divine Feminine for online ebook

Vishnu Chevli says

"Shakti - The Divine Feminine" by Anuja Chandramouli is the masterpiece of the mythological saga on the female goddess. I would say it is a literary treasure, which proves Anuja's prowess as the wordsmith.

"Shakti" brings completely different paradigm of Hindu mythology to readers. In India, Mother Goddess (we may call her Jagdamba, Amba, Aadhya-Shakti, Prakriti) is worshiped as the divine force that fuels the world. But in general, women were never considered equal to men. Anuja has taken this fact to show if this inequality applied Goddess Shakti, how she would respond. The main protagonist is Shakti and her various forms (Ushas, Durga & Kali). Main antagonists are Indra & Indra's wife Sachi.

Being the king of Devas, Indra wanted unparalleled fame after three principal male Gods. But Shakti was a female Goddess eons and eons elder than Indra, and she was revered as mother Goddess. This fact was unbearable for Indra and his wife. Apart from their jealousy towards Shakti, Indra always remained fearful towards people who he seems can outsmart him. His greed towards his throne of Deva made him blind to true justice. His actions always ended up creating bigger ripples that required Shakti's interventions. His male ego kept on getting hurt every time she intervened.

I would say this is a serious read. People who like to read thriller sagas won't like this book. You have to give the effort to understand each characters thought process. Anuja has given enough emphasis on the psychological role of each character in detailed.

Shreya Vaid says

"The Goddess belongs to everybody, and cannot be claimed by anybody, regardless of whom they might be. All such attempts will be met with a prompt rebuff."- Vishnu to Brahma over why Shakti cannot be just Brahma's

Shakti- The Divine Feminine by Anuja Chandramouli is a part fiction part mythology story about the Mother Goddess, Shakti. Shakti, whose numerous forms we pray to; Kali as the Destroyer, Durga as the power source, Saraswati for Education. The story of Shakti starts with Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh, who wanted Shakti to be their other half. But Shakti was a Goddess who could not be owned by anyone. Therefore, she chose Mahesh or Shiva, with whom she could create the world and also restore it's balance as well.

During the story of Shakti, we come across numerous forms of Goddess. Usas, the Goddess of Dawn who was wronged by Brahma who took away her virtue. She runs away from the Land of Gods and takes form of Durga, who teaches a lesson to Brahma for his wrong doings. Then Indra, who is always insecure about his title as the King of Gods, kills his so called enemy brutally. One by one, Indra keeps on eliminating his enemies on the words of his cunning wife, Sachidevi. Once such murder led to the rise of Mahishasur, who was born to kill Indra with a boon that he will be able to rule all three worlds one day and will never die from the hands of a man. Once again, Durga rises to kill Mahishasur.

After eliminating Mahishasur, the mortals and immortals started praying frantically to Durga and formed a sort of cult which became an eye sore for jealous Indra. He then creates a master plan to eliminate all Durga's

followers. Drowned in his ego and insecurities, a killing spree takes place by Indra where no woman was spared. Each and every woman was killed, brutally raped to show them their place as child bearers and husband followers. Rules of the land were rewritten to show the women their right place. And then, again to restore woman's right place in the world, Kali is born.

All in all, the book is a good read. We loved the fresh take on Gods and Shakti. What was surprising to read the way Creators of the world fought over petty issues of women and insecurities. Sachidevi influencing her husband Indra to kill all his enemies, even though they were not the real enemy. Brahma, a lust crazed lover, always repeating his mistakes and Shiva, the too righteous God. It was amusing to see Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh in such an Avatar. We also loved all forms of Shakti, the way they fought and debated over women issues in the male dominated world. We loved the way the story was formed, each chapter like beads in a rosary. The flow of story line was great and kept us mostly engaged in the book.

What we didn't like in the book was the language. It was as if Anuja has deliberately included tough words in each and every sentence which honestly might turn out to be road block for many readers. Shakti could also have used a little less pages. From the Mahishasur's part, the book was a little dragged that might hamper engagement of readers. Anuja could have easily saved about 30-40 pages. At some parts, a lot of emphasis has been paid on the Indra and Sachidevi's planning and plotting, which hid the main focus point, Shakti. Instead, Anuja could have covered other forms of Shakti as well.

Overall, the book is a good read. I recommend it to people who love the genre of mythological fiction. You will definitely love the new side of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh, who are acting like us mortals in the book.

Avanthika says

I read this book long ago, just got the time to reread it and post my opinion. The mahamaya, supreme enchantress, plays varied roles in the lives of various people. She is Shiva's intoxication and Mahishasur's bereavement. She is the most loved and worst abused woman in the world. All her forms, dimensions and incarnations suggests only one thing about her, which happens to be her dynamism against transgression. Be it timid Usas or ferocious Kali or vibrant Durga, the variations that Anuja has brought forth in defining the divine supreme Shakthi is very interesting and precise. As Vishu rightly says, Goddess belongs to everyone and no one can have a claim over her.

The book was too good, but got a little draggy at the end. Overall a decent book to fall in love with. :)

Anil Swarup says

An unusual tale narrated in an unusual manner. What else do you expect when the Gods are at war with each other. The book that delves more into the devious character of Indra is engrossing only in parts.

Sahil Pradhan says

one can say that among the top authors who write books in complex vocabulary and language.....anuja chandramouli tops.

shakti is yet another mythological retelling of anuja chandramouli intrigue woven with the threads of pure

mythology, philosophy and deep and complex explanation.

the idea of sachi and indra as greedy and evil minded is just amazing.....potraying different phases of shakti and the last chapter of shiva and shakti is even amazing.

anuja has done a fabulous job in writing and picking up the thoughts and instances and explaining them but for the language is very tough and the explanation too long.....
overall a good read.

Lyn says

Shakti: The Divine Feminine by Anuja Chandamouli, is a 2015 publication focused on the feminine deity, a force of passion that can be accessible to all.

As a man reading this, and a Western man at that, I had to open my mind to ideas I had only a prior flirting awareness. Chandamouli has crafted this as a theological, spiritual narrative and I was reminded of Norman Mailer's evocative *Ancient Evenings*, his historical fictional treatise on Egyptian mythology. Chandamouli explores Indian and Hindu myth with a fresh eye for detail and a storyteller's talent.

The reader is introduced to Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, and Shakti. The author has researched her subject well and this novel is a wealth of information. But more than just an encyclopedia of Hindu knowledge, Chandamouli is a talented writer and makes this story come alive. Like Mailer's Egyptian story, Chandamouli creates a historic depth for the pantheon and the reader is guided on a tour of the religion. The author tells of legends within legends and adds specificity to her design.

Interesting, well written and also entertaining.

Rituranjan Gogoi says

A feminist text, and, it is obvious in the title. It is a fresh start for me to read Anuja's fiction, after I was disappointed by her saga on Arjuna. This book is not perfect in terms of the narrative and its engagement with the story, but, it has originality which shines in the themes the author is trying to tackle. People belonging to Gender Studies can take up this book for their research projects, if they wish so.

Hindu mythology has always dwelled on the idea of the Human Body, and its core essence - the Purusha and the Prakriti. Anuja's book deftly handles this issue with an encompassing liberal and humanitarian outlook. The theme of androgyny, the ardhnanariswar is explored in relation to the process of creation and its endless cycles as depicted in the mythological texts. This book might be an eye opener for the ones who are yet to come into the terms of the LGBTQ in the country, the gender prejudices, and Gender itself being a socially, culturally, and a politically constructed medium to suit the purposes of Power.

Anuja creates some flawed and original characters here, even the great Trinity is not an exception in her story. Shakti, the Goddess, is the representation of women in all her aspects and forms. The Mother, the wife,

the daughter, the sister, the warrior, the avenger, all these essences are part of a woman in her core. I was moved by many of the events in the story...such as the rape of the radiant Usha by Brahma, and her plight which I could relate to the crimes that is happening against women in the country, and the process of victimization. Indra represents the regressive patriarchy that refuses to grant women the privileges apart from the ones dictated by the Vedic norms. Vishnu represents the healing balance between the two extremes of the imbalanced dichotomy, Shiva is the Change, and Brahma the alpha-male with a penchant for dominance.

The story isn't that engaging regarding the plot construction and the pacing. At places, it appeared to be forced wherein there are long internal monologues, or asides. At times, it felt that I was reading a feminist discourse on power and equality. But, I liked the way that the author has subverted some of the tropes and decided to tell the other side of the story. Such was the matter with Durga and Mahisashura, which made me think again of the narratives that have been venerated throughout the ages. And, such was the matter with the story of Vrita, which I believe will be a slap on the faces of those revelling themselves in the glory of a dichotomized gender spectrum. The story of Vrita is a hope for the LGBTQ community, which celebrates the beauty of sexuality without any adherence to the biased norms of patriarchy. This book is a strong message to everyone in the society that the rules need to be broken, the rules that prevents from showing and knowing who we are, that prevents from any change which isn't forthcoming with this in Power. This book is an air of freedom in the radical atmosphere that's prevailing in India in the name of Hindutva and the crap.

This book has given me the depth to analyse the narratives of our culture and religion in a new way. There is realism here, perhaps too much, but, in context to the times and scenario that's going on I felt it appropriate. As a novel, it has its faults. The story with its multiple layers failed to rise over its realism. There is very little imagination at play here. The novel is more of a critique attacking the dogma, the intolerance, and the gender-conflict that has been going throughout the times. But, it has its own merits.

Namratha says

Audacious, tongue-in-cheek, bold and whip smart.

This book which mostly feels like a vociferous feminist manifesto, combines mythology and fiction to present the supreme Shakti in a whole new light.

She breaks pithy minds with a complete refusal to adhere to conventions, shatters celestial glass ceilings with relish, saves the day many MANY times and is still subject to chauvinism, cruelty, humiliation, condemnation and self-doubt.

And yet.....the Goddess prevails.

Vikas Datta says

Brilliant evocation of the primal legend in a contemporary idiom.. the parallels with the present are intricately interleaved and seem so obvious that it characterises an imagination and story-telling skills of the highest order.. Will look forward to the author's next work

Bookish Indulgences with b00k r3vi3ws says

Shakti – the Divine Feminine is Anuja Chandramouli's third book. Her first book Arjuna had caught my attention and the second book Kamadeva was wonderful. As such it was a no brainer that I would pick her third book up without second thoughts.

In this installment, the author narrates the story, or rather the stories of Shakti, the mother goddess in all her forms. Starting with the story of Usas, the author goes on to paint the many lives of Shakti in brilliant and vivid colours. Lord Indra and his wife Sachi play the part of the antagonist and while I was a bit surprised with this take at the beginning, it soon started to make sense. There are a lot of shades and hues to each character and the story is one heck of a roller coaster journey. What remains constant is Shakti's relationship with the Holy Trinity providing some resemblance of stability.

If I have to point out one thing that I did not like about the book or felt was the only weak link in the book was the author's focus on Indra & his wife's life. There are places in the book when it was almost difficult to remember that Shakti is the protagonist and not them. Other than that I enjoyed reading this book immensely. The author, who was quite good to begin with, seems to only grow with each book. Her language is grand and has mesmerizing moments. But the best part about her narration is that it is almost impossible to figure out which part of her book is fictional. It is easy to get lost in the book and forget that it is after all a work of fiction.

Another shining element of the book is the fact how relevant it is in today's world while talking about Indian mythology. Many aspects of the book really resonated with me and I would recommend this book to not only women but also to men – to read it and to try and understand how relevant it is.

Shrilaxmi says

I recieved a free copy of this book from the author.

This book certainly was interesting. It made me see the gods in a different light with all their shortcomings and the mistakes they make - it's almost like they are humans. It is impossible to tell what is true and what isn't. It was interesting to see Indra and Sachi play the villains. It was kind of disturbing how sexist they were. The protagonists are Shakti and her different forms - Usas, the goddess of dawn who is treated unjustly and reinvents herself as Durga, the powerful woman who ends up saving the gods from the effects of Indra's dumbness and Kali, (my personal favourite) the badass heroine who makes sexist Indra and his friends see the error of their ways . Although the prose isn't very simple, the story sure is captivating.

Abhinav Shrivastava says

When I saw the cover of the book and the title I was very intrigued (more than I was with her previous book Kamadeva). But unfortunately this turned out to be a big let down. The female character Shakti is probably the most revered and considered most powerful in Hindu mythology. And I was very much interested to find out what new author brings to this character as she has a flair of treating these mythological characters differently then what we have been reading about them since ages.

Complete review on my blog:
<https://thebookthisweek.wordpress.com...>

Sakshi Nanda says

What has Anuja done? She has held a mirror skywards, erasing lines of holy-unholy, divine-mortal and man-god in order to make contemporary 'the numerological nightmare that was the divine pantheon'. How? By bringing to the discussion table, through the events in the book, gender issues, ideas of morality, of justice and rigid conventions by, ahem, making use of 'all the devas who had allowed their consciences to snooze for so long'.

Unlike her previous book *Kamadeva the God of Desire*, this book is not a subaltern "mythology told from below" in a slap-n-stick satirical story meant to make you laugh, uncomfortably. 'Shakti's power as a book lies in its unashamed exposure of the gods' chauvinism and patriarchy, intelligently created scenes of dialogue provoking gender discourses and the striking way in which the 'divine feminine' rises. What finally emerges is Anuja's, and perhaps our own, sense of an Ideal of living. This is packed in visually entertaining epical scenes reminding you of Homeric battles, heart-wrenching voices of women violated and power-packed spectacles of the innate ability of the feminine – not just divine, do note, but of the human kind too.

You will close the book on the very note that it began with. There is no way of knowing what was real and what wasn't in the events of this story. Sachi, Indra's wife, says 'there is no history, only stories. And the beautiful thing about stories is that they can always be rewritten to suit the need of the hour'. Anuja Chandramouli has done exactly that, and in that act of hers created an alternative epic (or an alternative to epics!) containing all that 'has gotten lost from the collective consciousnesses' and not been included in books by the 'members of the Vedic brotherhood'. What remains without doubt is this –

'There would always be the need for a resourceful goddess, who could survive against the odds, learn from her mistakes and evolve with the passing of the ages.'

A formidable book that first exposes and then inspires thought about our reality, albeit through the Heavens above.

[Read the full review here - <http://www.sakshinanda.com/2016/01/sh...>]

Jairam Mohan says

Probably one of the best books that I have read this year. Here's hoping more men read and understand this book for what it truly is – a commentary of the times we live in today in India rather than just another mythological retelling of tales we probably already know.

Detailed review put up at <https://mahabore.wordpress.com/2015/1...>

Sheetal Maurya - Godse (Halo of Books) says

This book starts with the emergence of Shakti; the Prakriti who is the womb of the three worlds, without her, the world can't exist. The author has started the story with the controversial mythology story where Lord Brahma gets attracted to his daughter.

Usas, goddess of dawn who is an avatar of Shakti was molested by Lord Brahma insulted by Indra ran away and takes the form of goddess Durga.

Indra, the king of heaven is always insecure and is triggered by his cunning wife Sachi. She is the one who hates Shakti and always make a plan to put down her. To protect his throne Indra kills many of the innocents thus Mahisasur born with an aim to kill Indra. He creates havoc and none of the gods able to kill him. Finally, the avatar of Shakti kills him. The story further moves to the Indra, his wife Sachi and the formation of goddess kali.

This is a captivating read which you can finish in 3 sitting. This book talks about the importance of feminine even in the godly affair. The imagination of the author is appreciable. The relation of a trinity and Shakti is a beautiful aspect of this book. I loved the chapter Shakti and Shiva. The book talks about various things like gender discrimination, molestation, jealousy, the insecurity which is also applicable in the life of mortals. The only thing which I don't like is the more coverage to Indra and Sachi. I would have loved to read more about Shakti. I would like to dedicate one star to the awesome book cover it is really eye catching. If you love mythology then you should pick this book. Recommended reading!!
