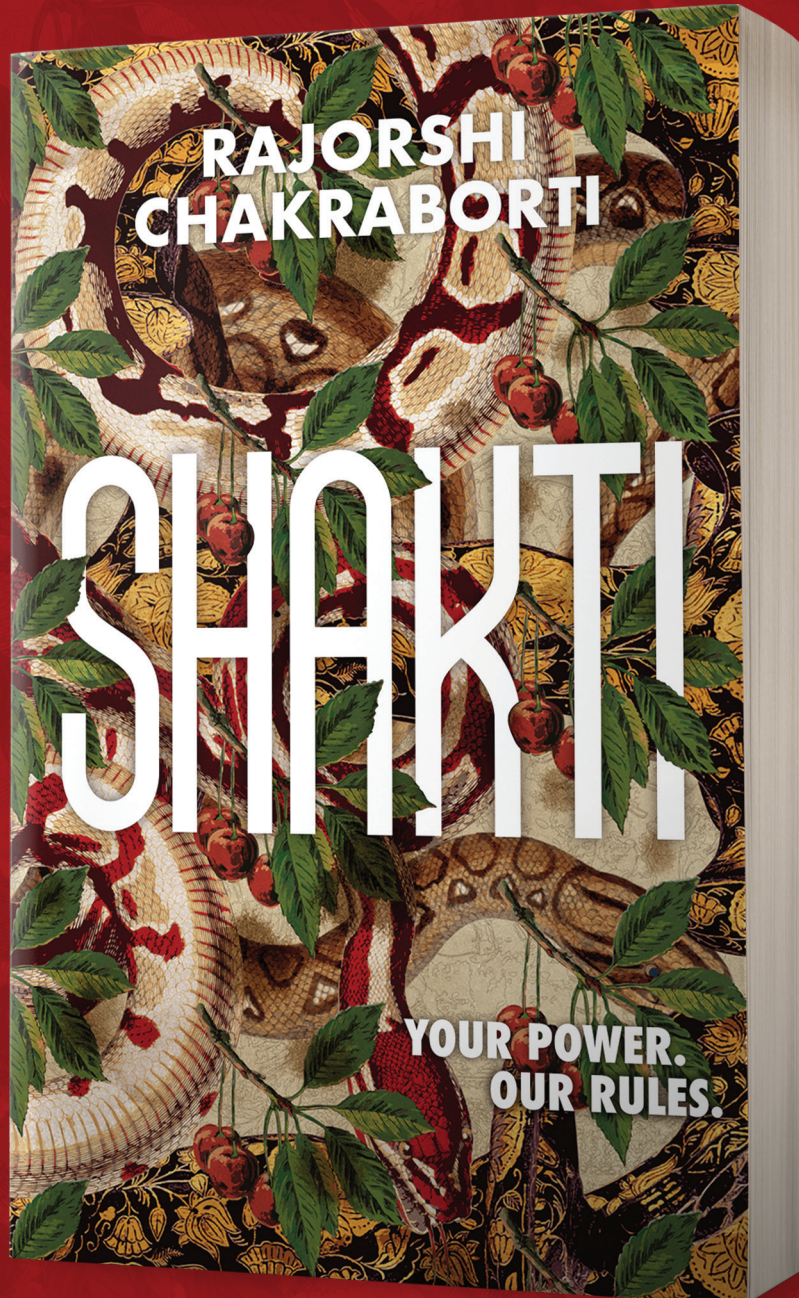




BOOK CLUB CONVERSATION STARTERS



A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR FOR BOOK CLUBS

To share a very personal reaction with you, I remain deeply fond and proud of each of my books, but *Shakti*, my seventh book, is the novel I feel I was building up my entire career to write. The one in which I believe I've achieved the most so far, by which I mean synthesising the most number of elements that I care about within one story. It's a book that gives me a tingle every time I hold a copy, just from knowing that I wrote it!

But equally, *Shakti* was written with the reader's pleasure in mind, to grip, enchant and engage readers from the first page to the last, hopefully on several levels at once. Thank you so much for giving it your attention! Above all, I hope it was a great read.

Here are some questions I thought might be interesting to discuss afterwards, if you're reading it with friends.

- 1** If you're reading *Shakti* in New Zealand or Australia, and don't have a personal connection to India, were you still able to enter and engage with its world?
- 2** I guess it's the first question asked in a different way - did certain themes and politics represented in the book feel like they have resonances beyond India as well? Did they remind you of any other countries or present-day political realities?
- 3** I'm a male writer, and this was my first book narrated entirely by a female protagonist, and in fact largely centring on female protagonists. I guess I'm curious about whether these characters rang true, especially for women readers.
- 4** What else did you feel about the women in the book? And relatedly, the politics of gender that it depicts?
- 5** Did you like the magical/supernatural elements in the novel? In your view, did they add or take away from your feelings about its truthfulness?
- 6** Alongside your thoughts on its themes and techniques, I care very much about whether the characters in *Shakti* moved you - in their different predicaments and how they grappled with them?

ABOUT THE BOOK

This brilliant, wacky new novel, by one of New Zealand's exceptional talents, is an intriguing insight into political manipulation. It is an electrifying and sensational story of standing up for what is right, despite numerous temptations, in a world going horribly wrong. This is an epic drama – a sort of cross between Salman Rushdie and Haruki Murakami – where psychic-warfare, nefarious deities, rightwing regimes, internecine attacks and the vicissitudes of life in a hectic city collide.

Raj says in an interview with the New Indian Express “besides it being the story of the struggle to overcome the challenges and temptations thrown at three women by the givers of the mysterious Shaktis, the book is very much a story written post #MeToo. I wanted to honour the courage of the many women worldwide and in India who have done, and sacrificed, so much to transform our understanding of how patriarchal systems work.”

ABOUT RAJ



Rajorshi Chakraborti is an Indian-born novelist, essayist and short story writer. He was born in 1977 in Calcutta, and grew up there and in Mumbai. He has also lived and studied in Canada, England and Scotland, and now lives with his family in Wellington. Rajorshi is the author of six novels and a collection of short fiction. *The Man Who Would Not See* was longlisted in the fiction section of the 2019 Ockham Awards, and was critically acclaimed (“compelling” The Dominion Post / “an absorbing, gripping read” NZ Listener). Author photo – credit Sasha Calhoun

AUTHORS WHO INSPIRE RAJ

Franz Kafka, Haruki Murakami, Muriel Spark, Milan Kundera

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