

# The Parcel

ANOSH IRANI



## BOOK DETAILS

Format: Paperback

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## AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Anosh Irani was born in Bombay, and is the author of several critically acclaimed novels, including the bestselling *The Cripple and His Talismans*. He also wrote the award-winning play *Bombay Black*. His work has been translated into eleven languages. He lives in Vancouver.

*'There is a term for me in almost every Indian language. I am reviled and revered, deemed to have been blessed, and cursed, with sacred powers.'*

In the swollen and crumbling red-light district of Kamathipura, at the heart of Bombay, Madhu is given a difficult and potentially lucrative task by her housemother — to prepare a newly arrived 'parcel' for its opening.

Madhu's home is Hijra House, one of the last bastions in the land war slowly consuming the area, as property developers vie for land, desperate to make way for their empty grey monoliths. It is here that 'hijras' — eunuchs, people of the third sex, 'neither here nor there' — ply their trade. Now forty and with her looks and spirit waning, Madhu struggles with the task she has been given, confronted by memories of her past, of how she was rejected by her family — and by how she longs, secretly, to go back to them. Everything is dissolving within and around her. Then, as the land war comes to a head, and with her housemother coming under pressure by the hijra elders to sell their home, Madhu realises she must do something to save herself.

*The Parcel* is the masterful new novel from acclaimed author Anosh Irani, and is a savage and beautifully rendered story about community, belonging, and the cheapness of human life.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Though it feels like a different world, the area of Mumbai in which the book is based, Kamathipura, is real. Discuss how the author creates the feeling of the area and its characters.
2. A large part of the book focusses on transgender and how the community reacts to the hijra. Discuss how gender identity is represented in the book.

## REVIEWS

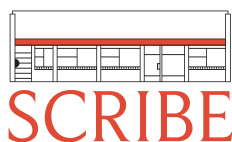
‘Immersive and devastating, *The Parcel* is a searing tale of personal transformation amid toxic patriarchy. Madhu is at once pathetic and honourable, despicable and mighty — and imbued with such complexity, Irani brings dignity to all the transgender sex-workers of India.’

**RAJITH SAVANADASA, AUTHOR OF *RUINS***

‘*The Parcel* is a magnificent novel, with powerfully imagined characters who yanked me into their lives from the first page and would not let go of me until the last. It is bold, bawdy, tender, funny, sorrowful, all that life is made up of, and when I did reach the end I felt abandoned.’ **ANITA RAU BADAMI, AUTHOR OF *THE HERO’S WALK***

‘Harrowing, enraging, unexpectedly humorous, and also profoundly sad, *The Parcel* is a haunting work of fiction that illuminates the ways in which history, both political and personal, pervades the present day.’  
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3. How does Madhu’s family life influence her decision to leave home?
4. Discuss how the role of ‘mother’ is played out in the different relationships in the book — both biological and metaphorical.
5. Why do you think Madhu watches her family from the bridge? How did you feel about her interaction with her mother?
6. What is the significance of The Parcel losing her name and past?
7. Ultimately, Madhu grooms young girls to be raped. Did you feel any sympathy for her throughout the book as events unfolded?
8. Gurumai’s death had an enormous impact on the women of Hijra House. Discuss the betrayal that led to it, and Madhu’s reaction to this.
9. The author does not shy away from depicting some brutal acts of violence in the book (rape, castration, beating, forced drug use, etc.) — discuss your reaction to this. Was it hard to read these depictions? Do you think it was necessary to depict such scenes so honestly?
10. Why do you think Madhu could not move to the country with Gajja and live a peaceful life? Do you think Madhu deserved a happy ending? Why/why not?



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