



The Folded Earth: A Novel

By Anuradha Roy

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From the widely acclaimed author of *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*, a powerful and triumphantly beautiful novel set in contemporary India, about a young woman forging a new life in the foothills of the Himalayas.

LOONGLISTED FOR THE 2011 MAN ASIAN LITERARY PRIZE

SHORTLISTED FOR *THE HINDU* LITERARY PRIZE FOR BEST FICTION 2011

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. 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.

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Editorial Review

Review

Winner of The Economist Crossword Fiction Award 2011

"How does a writer compete against the media's invasion of public discourse in all its chattering, hectoring, commercially packaged format. One way could be by creating a small, inviolable space in which to observe and record all the subterranean upheavals to create those moments of clarity that we value as literature. The small diamond that we have unearthed and enjoyed is called *The Folded Earth*." (The Economist Crossword Fiction Award Committee)

International Praise for *The Folded Earth*:

"[Roy's] narrative is poised and her language precise and poetic, without being flamboyant . . . a story about love and hate, continuity and change, loss and grief in a convincing and memorable setting."

—*The Independent*

"Anuradha's ability to seamlessly place the private lives of her characters within a larger socio-political setting is what she carries into her second book [as well] . . . at the end of *The Folded Earth* you feel a firm belief in the redemptive qualities of life and love." (*Elle*)

"A gently perceptive story, half comic and half poignant, of a woman's struggle to forget her sorrows in new surroundings."

—*The Sunday Times*

"Tight with life. . . Roy's attention to individual words pays off as she conveys the full texture of experiences. . . . Even minor characters are evoked with inventive idiosyncrasy." (*Daily Mail*)

"*The Folded Earth* is pure pleasure, that old fashioned sort of novel in which one can immerse oneself; an absolute treat."

—*Business World*

"Eminently readable, a literary novel that feels timeless and authentic." (*DNA*)

"Roy has an admirably restrained style and her novel offers a vivid evocation of North India. She conjures up striking images with the lightest of touches."

—*The Tatler*

"A jewel of a story." (*The Deccan Herald*)

"[A] deeply unsettling but beautiful novel . . . utterly enrapturing. . . . As always, Roy's writing remains gently poignant and metaphoric throughout, every vignette and scenario she constructs feels multilayered and deeply meaningful."

—*For Books' Sake*

"A perfect treat . . . Roy brings her characters vividly and amusingly to life." (*Country and Town House Magazine*)

“There is a gentle perfection to the way Roy writes. . . . A beautiful love story. . . . about people who love and long—impossibly?—and love again.”

—*The Hindu*

“Anuradha Roy’s second novel demands that the reader pause, slow down, savour this work. . . . I hear echoes of Anita Brookner and Edna O’Brien and other writers like them as Roy brings Maya and her travails to life.” (*Biblio*)

“A book you will hold close to your heart long after the last page is turned.” —*First City Magazine*

Praise for *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* by Anuradha Roy:

“Every once in a great while, a novel comes along to remind you why you rummage through shelves in the first place. . . . [A]s you slip into the book’s pages, you sense you are entering a singular creation. . . . And then, suddenly, you are swept away. . . . This, you think, is the feeling you had as you read *Great Expectations* or *Sophie’s Choice* or *The Kite Runner*. This is why you read fiction at all.” (*The Washington Post*)

“Roy’s prose does not hit a single wrong note: its restrained beauty sings off the page.” —Neel Mukherjee, *Time Magazine*

“Refreshing. . . . [Roy] defines her characters quickly and skillfully, she has a keen eye for landscape, and she knows how private lives can suggest the larger shape of the public world.” —*The New York Times*

“Set in mid-twentieth-century India, this debut novel spans generations and political upheavals, [chronicling] both the strength of domestic bonds and the wounds that parents and children, and husbands and wives, inflict on each other.” —*The New Yorker*

“Epic. . . . [a] gorgeous, sweeping novel.” —*Ms Magazine*

“Impressive. . . . With her rich imagination, vivid descriptions, and skillful handling of events. . . . Roy weaves a tapestry of family life in India. . . . the story and characters stay with the reader for a long time. Roy is a writer to watch.” —*The Seattle Times*

“Roy’s prose soars with a lyricism that can take your breath away. . . . From her whirlwind opening sentences, readers know they’re in for a ride.” —*Star Tribune* (Minneapolis)

“A novel to convince us that boldly drawn sagas with larger-than-life characters are still possible in a relentlessly postmodern world. . . . A sprawling epic of love, class and ambition.” —*Denver Post*

“An incandescently evocative debut novel filled with wrenching tragedy as well as abiding passion.” —*Booklist*

“[Roy] is a fabulous storyteller with a true gift for transporting the reader right into the heat, smells, and sights of India. . . . a poetic novel easily read again and again. A complete success and an excellent choice for a discussion group.” —*Library Journal*

“Roy’s impressive American debut. . . the sounds, smells, and feel of Bengal come vividly to life. Cultures may differ, but longing and love are universal.” —*Publishers Weekly*

"In *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*, Anuradha Roy bravely explores love, the caste system, and familial lines in a vivid portrait of war-stricken twentieth-century India. This absorbing story defies prediction. Roy's grace and mesmerizing language stayed with me long after I closed the book." —Katie Crouch, author of *Girls in Trucks*

"A novel of beauty, poignancy, and gut-churning suspense. . . . A lyrical love letter to India's past—an India of innocent child brides and jasmine-scented summer evenings. . . . Poetic and evocative, Roy's writing is a joy." —*Financial Times*

"Deftly and sensitively narrated."—*The Independent*

"A story to lose yourself in. . . . Anuradha Roy is a wonderful writer. . . . this tale of three generations of an Indian family, set over the span of the 20th century, is brilliantly told [and] intensely moving." —*Sunday Express*

"Roy's novel is engaging from start to finish and difficult to put down."—*The Sunday Sun*

"Recalls classics from *Great Expectations* to *The Cherry Orchard*. . . . Roy's prose is luscious yet economical. Capturing the rhythms of life in rural backwater and big city alike, she strings together jewel-like episodes. . . . giving her story the quality of something remembered." —*The National Newspaper*

"Now here is a perfect monsoon read: an exquisitely-written first novel that flows limpid and elegiac. . . . you might find yourself unbearably moved by her delicate probing of the fragility of love and longing."—*India Today*

About the Author

Anuradha Roy is the author of *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*, which has been published in sixteen countries and named by *World Literature Today* as one of the sixty most essential books on modern India. She lives in India.

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one

The girl came at the same hour, summer or winter. Every morning, I heard her approach. Plastic slippers, the clink of steel on stone. And then her footsteps, receding. That morning she was earlier. The whistling thrushes had barely cleared their throats, and the rifle range across the valley had not yet sounded its bugles. And, unlike every other day, I did not hear her leave after she had set down my daily canister of milk.

She did not knock or call out. She was waiting. All went quiet in the blueness before sunlight. Then the soothing early morning mutterings of the neighborhood began: axes struck wood, dogs tried out their voices, a rooster crowed, wood-smoke crept in through my open window. My eyelids dipped again and I burrowed deeper into my blanket. I woke only when I heard the General walking his dog, reproaching it for its habitual disobedience, as if after all these years it still baffled him. "What is the reason, Bozo?" he said, in his loud voice. "Bozo, what is the reason?" He went past every morning at about six thirty, which meant that I was going to be late unless I ran all the way.

I scrambled around, trying to organize myself—make coffee, find the clothes I would wear to work, gather the account books I needed to take with me—and the milk for my coffee billowed and foamed out of the pan and over the stove before I could reach it. The mess would have to wait. I picked up things, gulping my coffee in between. It was only when I was lacing my shoes, crouched one-legged by the front door, that I saw her out

of the corner of an eye: Charu, waiting for me still, drawing circles at the foot of the steps with a bare toe.

Charu, a village girl just over seventeen, lived next door. She had every hill person's high cheekbones and skin, glazed pink with sunburn. She would forget to comb her hair till late in the day, letting it hang down her shoulders in two disheveled braids. Like most hill people, she was not tall, and from the back she could be mistaken for a child, thin and small-boned. She wore hand-me-down salwar kameezes too big for her, and in place of a diamond she had a tiny silver stud in her nose. All the same, she exuded the reserve and beauty of a princess of Nepal—even if it took her only a second to slide back into the awkward teenager I knew. Now, when she saw I was about to come out, she stood up in a hurry, stubbing her toe against a brick. She tried to smile through the pain as she mouthed an inaudible “namaste” to me.

I realized then why she had waited so long for me. I ran back upstairs and picked up a letter that had come yesterday. It was addressed to me, but when I opened it, I had found it was for Charu. I stuffed it into my pocket and stepped out of the front door.

My garden was just an unkempt patch of hillside, but it rippled with wildflowers on this blue and gold morning. Teacup-sized lilies charged out of rocks and drifting scraps of paper turned into white butterflies when they came closer. Everything smelled damp, cool, and fresh from the light rain that had fallen at dawn, the first after many hot days. I felt myself slowing down, the hurry draining away. I was late anyway. What difference did a few more minutes make? I picked a plum and ate it, I admired the butterflies, I chatted of this and that with Charu.

I said nothing of the letter. I felt a perverse curiosity about how she would tell me what she wanted. More than once, I heard her draw breath to speak, but she either thought better of it or came up with, “It has rained after three weeks dry.” And then, “The monkeys ate all the peaches on our tree.”

I took pity on her and produced the letter from my pocket. It had my address and name, written in Hindi in a large, childish hand.

“Do you want me to read it for you?” I said.

“Yes, alright,” she said. She began to fiddle with a rose, as if the letter were not important, yet darted glances in its direction when she thought I was not looking. Her face was transformed by relief and happiness. “My friend Charu,” the letter said:

How are you? How is your family? I hope all are well. I am well. Today is my tenth day in Delhi. From the first day I looked for a post office to buy an inland letter. It is hard to find places here. It is a very big city. It has many cars, autorickshaws, buses. Sometimes there are elephants on the street. This city is so crowded that my eyes cannot go beyond the next house. I feel as if I cannot breathe. It smells bad. I remember the smells of the hills. Like when the grass is cut. You cannot hear any birds here, or cows or goats. But the room Sahib has given me is good. It is above the garage for the car. It faces the street. When I am alone at the end of the day's cooking, I can look out at everything. I get more money now. I am saving for my sister's dowry and to pay off my father's loan. Then I can do my heart's desire. Send me a print of your palm in reply. That will be enough for me. I will write again.

Your friend.

“Who is it from?” I asked Charu. “Do you know someone in Delhi, or is this a mistake?”

“It’s from a friend,” she said. She would not meet my eyes. “A girl. Her name is Sunita.” She hesitated before adding: “I told her to send my letters to you because—the postman knows your house better.” She turned away. She must have known how transparent was her lie.

I handed her the letter. She snatched it and was halfway up the slope leading from my house to hers before I had closed my fist. “I thought I taught you to say thank you,” I called after her. She paused. The breeze ?uttered through her dupatta as she stood there, irresolute, then ran down the slope back to me. She spoke so quickly her words ran into each other: “If I bring you extra milk every day . . . will you teach me how to read and write?”

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ronald Finch:

Have you spare time for the day? What do you do when you have much more or little spare time? That's why, you can choose the suitable activity regarding spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a stroll, shopping, or went to the particular Mall. How about open or maybe read a book eligible The Folded Earth: A Novel? Maybe it is for being best activity for you. You realize beside you can spend your time using your favorite's book, you can wiser than before. Do you agree with the opinion or you have various other opinion?

Connie Bannister:

In this 21st one hundred year, people become competitive in each way. By being competitive currently, people have do something to make these people survives, being in the middle of the actual crowded place and notice through surrounding. One thing that sometimes many people have underestimated the item for a while is reading. Yep, by reading a guide your ability to survive increase then having chance to stay than other is high. In your case who want to start reading some sort of book, we give you this specific The Folded Earth: A Novel book as beginner and daily reading publication. Why, because this book is usually more than just a book.

William Stewart:

Is it a person who having spare time then spend it whole day simply by watching television programs or just telling lies on the bed? Do you need something new? This The Folded Earth: A Novel can be the answer, oh how comes? A fresh book you know. You are and so out of date, spending your extra time by reading in this brand new era is common not a nerd activity. So what these books have than the others?

Brandon Justice:

As we know that book is essential thing to add our information for everything. By a guide we can know everything we want. A book is a set of written, printed, illustrated or maybe blank sheet. Every year seemed to be exactly added. This publication The Folded Earth: A Novel was filled regarding science. Spend your

time to add your knowledge about your science competence. Some people has diverse feel when they reading any book. If you know how big good thing about a book, you can experience enjoy to read a publication. In the modern era like now, many ways to get book you wanted.

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