



**BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1** *The Rules of Arrangement* is written as a stream of consciousness narrative with irreverence sprinkled through. Zoya's internal dialogue comes from not being able to express herself in a deeply traditional society.

Have you ever been impertinent about something that was considered sacrosanct? How did it make you feel to say or think it?
- 2** What did you think about the arranged marriage rules and Punjabi family tidbits sprinkled throughout the book? How similar or different are they to your culture or families?
- 3** The relentless noise and movement of Mumbai is a metaphor for society which comes at you from all sides, telling you what to do, when to do it, how to do it, if you're doing it right. What other metaphors can be applied to this story or any of its characters?
- 4** Zoya is dark-skinned in a culture that prizes fair skin tones. Her self-doubt makes her accept Lalit's proposal. How do you think her insecurity affected other areas of her life and choices? Have you ever "settled" for a situation which played to your doubts about yourself?
- 5** Struggling with weight is a common pain point for women across the board, as we see with Zoya, Sheila Bua, and Tanya. Have you ever looked at a younger picture of yourself and wondered why you worried about your weight when you looked perfectly fine? How did that make you feel? What is your relationship to weight and how does that affect who you are?
- 6** Zoya is being "made to want" a marriage because that is the norm in her culture. Were you made to want something because that was the thing to be done? What did you do about it?

- 7** Sheila Bua is an almost larger-than-life character and her story runs parallel to Zoya's. Have you known someone like her in your life? What was your attitude towards them? Did it change? What drove that change?
- 8** This story is about a younger woman understanding the choices made by an older woman and what makes the aunt who she is. Ultimately it is a story about women supporting each other. Has an older person's story made you wonder who they were when young, their dreams, and the choices they had to make?
- 9** In the end, Zoya chooses herself over a man and over tradition. What did you think about her decision? Do most of us have the courage to choose ourselves and our personal growth while under pressure from society to do the opposite?
- 10** How do you think Zoya's relationships will evolve with Sheila Bua? What do you think happened after Zoya reached New York? Do you think Sheila Bua became a full time artist after the ending? How do you think her family would react if she continued painting nudes?
- 11** The book begins and ends with the ritual of oiling Zoya's hair. Zoya doesn't realize that the oil helps her hair frizz less. What are some of the must-do rituals in your culture or family that you rebelled against, but found to your consternation, that they were helpful after all?
- 12** Food plays a big part in Zoya and Arnav's relationship. What is your perception of Indian food, and did it change after reading the book? Of all the Indian food mentioned in the book, what would you like to eat the most?



Born and brought up in Mumbai, India, **Anisha Bhatia** now lives in San Diego, California with her husband and their two children. She loves tea, biryani, books and beaches, not necessarily in that order. *The Rules of Arrangement* is her first novel.

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“With writing that is witty and accessible, Bhatia tells an entertaining and delightful story about breaking tradition, creating your own path, and standing your ground.”

—Jane Igharo, author of  
*Ties That Tether*

"A heartwarming story of self-discovery filled with deep emotion. Hilarious and relatable, the effervescent main character captured my heart from the first page and wouldn't let go. I can't wait for Anisha's next book!"

—Sara Desai, author of  
*The Dating Plan*