

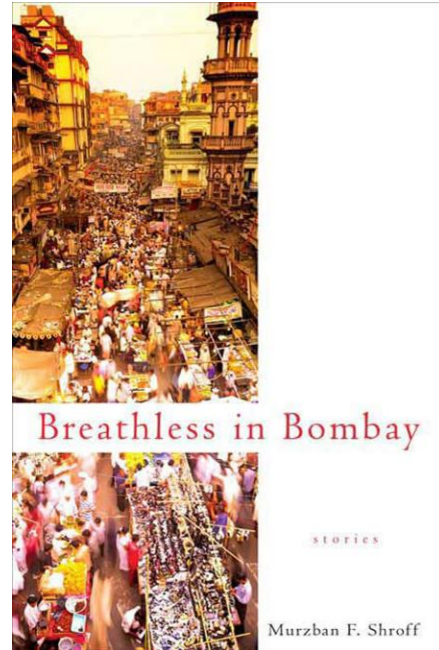
# READING GROUP GUIDE

## Breathless in Bombay

By Murzban F. Shroff

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### About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *Breathless in Bombay* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *Breathless in Bombay*.

### About the Book

*Breathless in Bombay* is a concept collection of 14 stories set in contemporary Bombay, featuring a wide range of beautifully painted characters in fascinating situations: From the laundrywallah's water shortage problems and fear of displacement, to the efforts of a taxi driver to exploit the tricks of his trade and make ends meet, to the heart-warming relationship of a carriage driver and his horse in the light of an increasingly automotive world, each of these stories is richly crafted and smartly arranged in front of the grand chaotic backdrop of life that is Bombay. Shroff's love for his hometown shines through, but so does his deep understanding of its challenges and problems. The reader is afforded an insider's view of this pulsating, vibrant city and comes to care for the characters presented through these stories. Shroff is definitely a writer to watch, as he tackles his first full-length fiction project.

### About the Author

Murzban F. Shroff is a Bombay-born writer. His stories have been published in over 20 literary journals in the U.S., including the *Gettysburg Review*, the *Louisville Review*, the *Minnesota Review*, and the *Southwest Review*. He has received two Pushcart nominations.



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## Discussion Questions

1. How has the book changed your understanding of Bombay? Does it make you want to visit?
2. Who are the characters you felt most drawn to? For what reasons were you drawn to them?
3. If you were residing in Bombay, how would you—as a responsible citizen—go about addressing these issues: unplanned development, corruption, encroachment, poverty, and class divide? If you were to start a nonprofit organization, which cause would you take up?
4. What role has the author intended for the women in the work? Please discuss in relation to Ritika in *Breathless in Bombay*, Silla Mullafiroze in *The Great Divide*, the three ladies in *A Different Bhel*, Shyla in *Haraami*, Kaveri in *The Maalishwalla*, and Vicki in *Traffic*. Which of the women captures the true essence of the Indian woman?
5. With temptation having set in at the ghat, what do you think happened to Mataprasad after the end of Dhobi Ghat?
6. Do you think Bheem Singh from *The Maalishwalla* returned to his village? Bearing in mind that going against tradition was to invite the wrath of the entire village, what course of action would you advise for Bheem Singh in his marriage?
7. Do you feel trading off his sense of ethics makes Chacha in *The Queen Guards Her Own* any less heroic?
8. Which portions of the work did you find most shocking, touching, humorous, and/or thought-provoking?
9. Did Madhulikar Srini in *Babu Barrah Takka* take the bribe eventually? If you were in his shoes, what would you do? How would you justify your actions to your wife and your to-be-married daughter?
10. Does the author's approach to his work remind you of any American author, past or present?
11. By the author's own admission, his work has one overriding goal—to sensitize the haves to the have-nots. Has he succeeded in his purpose? What feelings does the book leave you with?

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