

**TAHMIMA ANAM**

**"Fresh, funny, brave, savage, smart."**

**—KAMILA SHAMSIE**

**THE  
STARTUP  
WIFE**

A NOVEL

**READING GROUP GUIDE**

This reading group guide for **THE STARTUP WIFE** includes an introduction and topics and questions for discussion. The suggested questions are intended to help your reading group find new and interesting angles and topics for your discussion.

We hope that these ideas will enrich your conversation and increase your enjoyment of the book.



## INTRODUCTION

Brilliant coder Asha Ray has her future all mapped out when a chance meeting and whirlwind romance with her high-school crush, Cyrus, changes everything.

Dreaming big, together with their friend Jules they come up with a radical idea: to build a social media platform that could bring meaning and connection to millions of lives through personalized rituals. While Asha creates an ingenious algorithm, Cyrus's charismatic appeal throws him into the spotlight. When their app becomes a sensation, Asha is suddenly invisible in the company's boardroom, where decisions are being made without her.

Will her own technology—with all its possibilities—mean the end of her relationship? *The Startup Wife* is a blistering novel about what happens when love, work, and ambition collide.

# TOPICS & QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1.** In Chapter One, “Cyrus Jones and the Magic Funeral,” Asha describes Cyrus as “mostly human, a little bit cartoon, a tiny bit ghost” (page 33). Having finished the book, what do you think of Cyrus as a character? Have you met anyone like him in real life?
- 2.** Think back to your high school crush(es). Do you recall that first feeling of attraction? How would you react if you happened upon that person now?
- 3.** What does Asha’s relationship with her older sister Mira bring to story? How does she add to your understanding of Asha as a person?
- 4.** Jules is a source of support—both emotional and financial—for Cyrus and Asha. What other roles does he play in the novel?
- 5.** Recall the manifesto Cyrus writes in Chapter Three, “We are equal partners and make all decisions together. We don’t spy on anyone. We don’t sell our souls (we don’t sell anything)” (page 61). Did you predict any of these points might falter? Were you correct?
- 6.** Consider what kind of workplace Utopia is. Would you enjoy working there? What elements of the Utopia workplace would you like to see in your current work situation?
- 7.** At the end of Chapter Five, Asha thinks about the cultural differences between her and Cyrus, contemplating his “whiteness” (page 102). To what extent do you think their differences affect their understanding of each other? Have you had to think about cultural differences in a similar way?

- 8.** Besides WAI, several other app ideas are mentioned in the novel: Consentify, LoneStar, Buttery, Flitter, and so on. Discuss your favorite startup idea in the book or any other start up ideas you have.
- 9.** Asha, Cyrus, and Jules must delve into all the logistical aspects of starting and growing a business, from assembling the right team to sourcing funding. What seem to be the biggest challenges to starting a business?
- 10.** The novel deals with themes of gender dynamics and white male privilege. At what points can you see these dynamics at play and how do the characters respond to them?
- 11.** If you were Asha's friend or family member, how would you react to her relationship with Cyrus? Would you have warned her or supported her? What does or doesn't seem to work about their marriage?
- 12.** Whenever Cyrus feels overwhelmed, like on the anniversary of his mother's death or after arguing with Jules and Asha, he tends to disappear. Why do you think this is his coping mechanism, and what consequences does it have on his relationship with Asha?
- 13.** What did you make of Cyrus' apology and surprise announcement in Chapter Fifteen?
- 14.** In the end, Asha admits to herself that she gave Cyrus power over her. How much do you agree with Asha's assessment of what went wrong?
- 15.** How do you feel about Asha's overall growth and her willingness to fix what's broken at WAI? Is it fair for the responsibility of rebuilding to fall on her?