Emily Booth, "Entry on: The Star-Touched Queen (Series) by Roshani Chokshi ", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/602. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Roshani Chokshi

# The Star-Touched Queen (Series)

*United States*

TAGS: Demeter Hades Persephone Seasons Underworld






*We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.*

| General information | |
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| *Title of the work* | The Star-Touched Queen (Series) |
| *Country of the First Edition* | United States of America |
| *Country/countries of popularity* | Worldwide |
| *Original Language* | English |
| *First Edition Details* | Roshani Chokshi, *The Star-Touched Queen*. New York: St Martin's Griffin, 2016, 324 pp. |
| *ISBN* | 9781250085474 |
| *Awards* | 2017 – Locus Awards – Nominee;<br>2016 – Nebula Awards Nominee;<br>2016 – Barnes and Noble Best New Books of the Year;<br>2016 – Buzzfeed Best Books of the Year;<br>2016 – Andre Norton Award Nominee for Young Adult Science Fiction and Fantasy;<br>2016 – Goodreads Choice Award Nominee for Debut Goodreads Author. |
| *Genre* | Fantasy fiction, Fiction, Novels |
| *Target Audience* | Young adults |
| *Author of the Entry* | Emily Booth, University of Technology, Sydney, Emily.Booth@student.uts.edu.au |
| *Peer-reviewer of the Entry* | Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au<br>Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com |



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## Creators



**Roshani Chokshi , b. 1991**
**(Author)**

Roshani Chokshi is a New York Times best-selling author of Young Adult and Middle Grade fantasy fiction. Her works include the YA *Star-Touched* series (*The Star-Touched Queen* (2016), *The Crown of Wishes* (2017), the short story collection *Star-Touched Stories* (2018), and the novella *Death and Night* (2018)); and the Middle Grade *Pandava Quartet* series (*Aru Shah and the End of Time* (2018)). Her forthcoming YA, *The Gilded Wolves*, is the first part of a historical-fantasy adventure series.

Chokshi has Indian (father) and Filipino (mother) heritage, and was raised with fairytales from both cultures. She graduated from Emory University in 2013 with an English degree with an emphasis on Medieval English, and wrote her honours thesis on the role of 'the Otherworldly' on the hero's journey in Middle English Breton lais. In 2014, after she completed the first draft of *The Star-Touched Queen*, she began to study law at the University of Georgia, but took a break after one year. In December 2016, she officially withdrew from law school to write full-time.

Many of her works take influence from Hindu myths she was raised with, as well as classical and commercial fiction she has enjoyed. In particular, she cites the following Hindu myths as having influenced *The Star-Touched Queen*: Savitri and Satyavan, Shiva and Parvati, The Ramayana, Shakuntula, and Narasimha. Poetry has also strongly influenced her work, and she has been writing poems since she was 10.

Sources:

Publisher's profile (accessed: July 5, 2018).

Author's *Goodreads* profile (accessed: July 5, 2018).

Interview with Rick Riordan (accessed: August 1, 2018).



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Interview with Monica Lefton of *The Emory Wheel*, "The Experience After Emory: Roshani Chokshi" (accessed: August 1, 2018).

Interview with New Asian Writing (accessed: August 1, 2018).

Interview with Chokshi in which Hades and Persephone is cited as a primary inspiration for *The Star-Touched Queen*, (accessed: November 18, 2018).

Emory Electronic Theses and Dissertations (accessed: August 1, 2018).

Instagram post about law school (accessed: August 1, 2018).

Author's personal Blog (accessed: January 07, 2019).

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Bio prepared by Emily Booth, University of Technology, Sydney, Emily.Booth@student.uts.edu.au



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## Additional information

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| Translation | Turkish: *Yıldızlara Sarılı Kraliçe*, trans. Boran Evren, Yabancı Yayınları, 2017. |
| Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs | *The Crown of Wishes* (2017) – Companion novel.<br><br>*Star-Touched Stories* (2018) – Short story collection.<br><br>*Death and Night* (2018) – Novella. |

Summary

*The Star-Touched Queen* is a young adult romantic fantasy novel that follows 17-year old Princess Maya of the Bharata Dynasty through her marriage to the Lord of "death and destruction", and her subsequent quest to restore her fallen husband to his throne. The overarching plot mirrors the Persephone and Hades myth, while a modern update gives the Persephone figure of Maya agency and power, and transforms the Hades figure of Amar from a captor role to that of a liberator. Additionally, five different Hindu myths (Savitri and Satyavan, Shiva and Parvati, The Ramayana, Shakuntula, and Narasimha) contributed influences to the novel.

Part I: The Lost Princess

When the cursed Princess Maya accepts a marriage offer from a mysterious, unknown suitor, she is only thinking of escaping her father's political plan that would leave her dead. Amar, ruler of the Kingdom of Akaran and her new husband, takes her to her new home in the Underworld, pledging to answer all her questions on the night of the next full moon. Maya is fascinated and disturbed by Amar's sentient Palace, which changes its layout according to its own preference, and contains wondrous and dangerous rooms. Amar attempts to "train" Maya in her duties as his queen, including altering the threads of human fate on an enchanted tapestry. When she fails at this task, Maya wonders whether Amar manipulated her 'choice' to marry him using the tapestry, and she resolves to uncover Amar's secrets. Maya opens a burning door that had been following her, and discovers an enormous memory tree that grows luminescent memories instead of fruit – *her* memories, from a past life. One woman named



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Nritti is repeated in them: first, happy alongside Maya, and then alone in grief. Suspicious, Maya follows Amar to his work, and discovers she was never in "Akaran" – she has been in Naraka, the realm of the dead, and has married the Dharma Raja, the ruler of the dead and deliverer of justice in the afterlife.

Maya discovers an enchanted pool that allows souls to be reincarnated for their next life, with souls nearby undergoing various forms of torture to atone for their sins. Maya's father is among them and she learns that over 10 years have passed in the human world since she left. Maya next discovers Nritti trapped inside a mirror, and Nritti tells Maya that Amar searches for girls with terrible prophecies to kill in rituals that will increase his power. Nritti says she is an *apsara* (heavenly nymph) while Maya had been a forest *yakshini* (spirit) in her past life. Nritti convinces Maya to steal Amar's magical noose and "kill" the memory tree to set herself and many other girls free. Despite acknowledging that she has come to love Amar, Maya feels she cannot trust him, and does so – destroying Amar's power and kingdom, and revealing Nritti's evil plot. Maya remembers her past life as Night Incarnate, and the first time she fell in love with the Dharma Raja, but not how she came to be reincarnated as a princess of Bharata. Maya emerges from her vision to see that the kingdom of Naraka has been destroyed, and Amar is gone.

Part II: The Forgotten Queen

Maya awakens in the cremation grounds near Bharata, in the plain yellow clothes of a *sadhvi* woman – a wandering sage and member of the "living dead", due to owning nothing and belonging nowhere. Maya has a vision of the Chakara Forest where she first met Amar in her past life and resolves to find him there with the aid of a *pishacha* (flesh-eating demon horse) named Kamala. Maya visits present-day Bharata, intending to bury a necklace from her younger sister Gauri, but discovers that Gauri is still alive and being held captive by their older brother who now rules the kingdom. Maya meets her sister under the guise of offering advice as a *sadhvi*, and helps Gauri escape. In the forest, Maya sees Nritti persuade an amnesiac Amar to marry her, before teleporting them both to the Underworld. Maya quickly follows by creating a passage of her own, and Maya and Kamala discover Nritti preparing to release demons into the human world. Maya confronts Nritti, but though Maya wins the game of riddles they play, Amar does not recognise her. Maya is locked away, and when Amar visits her, she restores his memory of who she is, but Nritti kills



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him. Maya finds the enchanted tapestry Amar used to train her, and discovers her own thread and Nritti's are closely intertwined. Maya has a vision of how Nritti's anger began, and how she had stepped willingly into the reincarnation pool when her relationship with Amar was damaged, ending her life as Night Incarnate and bringing about her birth as Princess Maya. Maya's vision ends, and she forces apart the threads of her and Nritti's lives. Maya's magic is restored and she kisses Amar, bringing him back to life. Together, Maya and Amar overpower Nritti, encasing her in a translucent shell of ash. Amar is restored as King of the Underworld, with Maya as his Queen and equal.

## Analysis

*The Star-Touched Queen* is a work of fantasy genre fiction that is inspired by the classical Hades and Persephone myth, as stated by Chokshi. Its place in the YA fiction category gives the book an additional set of expectations to meet: that the plot will be fast-paced, that there will be an intense emotional arc, and that the protagonist will make mistakes because of inexperience or a lack of knowledge. *The Star-Touched Queen* is written with poetic prose and well-suited to readers who favour contemporary feminist retellings – particularly those found in the contemporary American YA market – however, fans of the original myths may be frustrated by the novel's pacing, which does not allow for a deep engagement with individual stories.

The Hades and Persephone myth provides the overarching structure of the story, and is most prominent in Part I of the narrative. Chokshi puts a feminist twist on the character of Persephone in the form of Maya, a bookish and rebellious 17-year-old, who chooses to marry Hades (Amar) rather than being abducted. Death is introduced when her father instructs her to commit suicide on her wedding day; however, Amar puts himself forward with the other potential grooms and Maya spontaneously marries him instead. In this way, Maya chooses her own life by choosing "death", and arrives in the underworld with Amar soon after, not as a victim but as a Queen-in-training. Maya is ironically the cause of Amar's death when she destroys the site of Amar's power, exiling his soul to the human world. As Maya affectionately calls Amar "*jaan*" (a term of endearment meaning "my life") this can also be interpreted as her having followed through with the suicide she avoided earlier in the novel, once again using Amar as a means of sparing herself direct harm. As the YA



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category necessitates a minimal role for parents or parental figures, to force the protagonist to embark on their own journey to adulthood, there is no separate Demeter figure present. However, Maya herself may be read as embodying aspects of Demeter, due to her search for her younger half-sister Gauri in Part II. Though Gauri is unaware of Maya's identity, Maya is able to orchestrate Gauri's freedom from the dying court ruled by their half-brother Skanda. Gauri's own journey takes place in the companion novel, *A Crown of Wishes*, set in the same world.

The seasonal imagery of spring/winter that features in the traditional Hades and Persephone myth as a metaphor for happiness/sadness is also reimagined as demonstrative of the protagonist's "coming of age" journey typically found within YA Fiction. Maya is raised by her father in a luxurious home with fertile gardens, and he provides her with access to knowledge in the form of stories, books, tutors, and permission to spy on his political meetings. However, Maya's upbringing lacks love and intimacy, contributing to the restlessness and powerlessness she feels. In contrast, the Underworld and Amar's palace is stark and severe; and knowledge is temporarily withheld by a curse that does not permit Amar to speak of his true identity. Yet Amar frequently proclaims his adoration for Maya, respects her physical boundaries, and is confident in her potential as a leader, granting her authority she could never have in the human world. While the human world may initially appear, on the surface, to embody the happiness of "springtime", the reality is an environment that considers Maya expendable, and offers her no chance to truly grow as a person. The harsher, "wintery" landscape of the Underworld is gradually transformed as Maya falls in love with Amar and discovers the strange, natural beauty of the kingdom, such as trees that produce edible jewels. Instead of the third party of Demeter being responsible for changes in the landscape, it is Persephone herself who is the site of change either "wilting" or "blooming" in response to the impact her environments (and their respective male guardians) have on her state of mind. This shifting of the site of change from the external seasonal world to Maya's internal world further ties *The Star-Touched Queen* to the YA Fiction category, in which the primary narrative focus is the journey from adolescence towards adulthood. Where the original myth provides a way of understanding the creation of seasons, Chokshi's novel gives insight into what is necessary for a young person to mature and flourish: emotional support and affection, rather than rigid expectations or



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| | material objects.<br><br>The object of the Memory Tree is reminiscent of the Biblical story of Adam and Eve, wherein Eve consumes an apple from the Tree of Knowledge that was forbidden by God, leading to the pair being cast out of Eden. Maya visits and "consumes" the memories "grown" on the Memory Tree against the will of Amar (the Lord of the Kingdom), leading to her distrust of Amar and their eventual exile from Naraka. The character of Nritti, who summons Maya to the tree, entices her with the hidden knowledge (literally in the form of the fruit that grown on the Memory Tree), and urges her to destroy the site of Amar's power, may also be interpreted as the Biblical snake. |
| Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts | Demeter Hades Persephone Seasons Underworld |
| Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture | Coming of age Diaspora Knowledge Love Sexuality |
| Addenda | Edition used for entry: Roshani Chokshi, *The Star-Touched Queen*, Sydney: Harlequin Mira, 2016, 345 pp. |



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