

Book Reviews

***Zulfikar Ali Bhutto: The Psychodynamics of his Rise and Fall* by Shamim Ahmad, published by Paramount Books (Pvt.) Ltd., Karachi, 2019, pages: 284, price: Pak rupees 695/-.**

Of all the leaders who came to rule Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto has been only second to the Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in terms of receiving attention from authors of different types—biographers, journalists, researchers, and professional historians. While many prime ministers of the country have remained in oblivion even though some of them deserved to be studied seriously given their contribution to the country's political development, Bhutto was regularly made the subject of studies both within the country and abroad. A number of Ph.D theses have been done on him and his rule. The number of books written by various authors expressing different shades of opinion are simply uncountable. Being the founder of the nation, Jinnah was treated by and large, over an extended period of the country's history, and by a majority of writers, as a national hero whose role in history was highlighted in the manner in which the nationalist historians write about the national heroes. It was much later that Pakistani historians took to writing more professionally about the Father of the Nation. Quite interestingly, the Jinnah that emerged from these objective histories proved to be a more original and powerful historical figure as compared with his previous representation as a straightjacketed national hero. As compared to him, Bhutto became the subject of objective historical works right from the beginning. Of course, there have been books of hagiography written in his honor, but these are mainly from the pen of people belonging to his own political party or the ones who were overly inspired by his charisma. Then there are numerous books written by his diehard opponents, who leave no stone unturned in demolishing his image. Despite the diverse writings about him, ranging from one extreme to another, it is good, from the point of view of historical political writings on Pakistan, that with the

passage of time good and reasonably objective works are coming to the fore on Bhutto.

In the analysis of Bhutto, a good number of authors have referred to the contradictions in his personality and politics. It is also interesting that with respect to him the Pakistani society also seems to be divided along two tendencies of what Feroz Ahmed described as Bhutto phobia and Bhutto mania. Feroz Ahmed and many others relate the contradictions in Bhutto with the ones of the society he belonged to, but many others do so in isolation from the society. Most of the works on Bhutto deal with his psychological makeup only as one part of his overall political personality, and as one of the many factors which led him to do what he did in his long political career. Salman Taseer, for example, discusses Bhutto's political career in detail and in doing so also touches upon his psychological traits in brief. Stanley Wolpert also devotes space to Bhutto's psychological makeup. But the book under review is solely devoted to the psycho analysis of Pakistan's first elected prime minister who made important imprints on the country's history and, who, at the end of the day, met an unfortunate fate when he was hanged by a military ruler through a court's decision, which was later condemned by the world as a judicial murder. How Bhutto emerged on the political scene of the country? What ambitions he had cultivated in himself? How he made inroads in the centers of power within the country? How he became a popular leader? What program he offered to the people? What expectations people had from him? And how he fared once he came into power? All these aspects have been scrutinized by the author, Shamim Ahmad, from the perspective of Bhutto's psychological makeup. The author's findings are not only interesting but are also at times quite revealing.

The author's sources are multifarious. Since he has looked into the theoretical literature as well in order to build a thematic background for his research, he has made use of writings of some of the most prominent psychologists and authors like Sigmund Freud (1857-1939), Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), and numerous others. He also refers to psychological formulations like 'Phaeton Complex', 'Bipolar Disorder', 'Narcissism', 'Sycophancy', etc. Some of Bhutto's psychological traits have been explained along these psychological syndromes, at times successfully but at others not quite appropriately.

The author approaches Bhutto's personality with reference to at least four indicators: Bhutto's heroes, his choice of books, his parents, and his being a person who was quite in haste. Bhutto's heroes have remained a subject of study for other writers as well. Oriana Fallaci, famous Italian journalist and novelist, precisely asked him about his

heroes. She reminded him that he had been a reader of books about Mussolini, Hitler, and Napoleon. To this Bhutto added the names of De Gaulle, Churchill, and Stalin. But then Bhutto also mentioned that: 'to read about a person doesn't mean to make him your hero. I have had some heroes. Yes, but when I was a student. Heroes, you know are like chewing gum—they get chewed, spit out, changed, as you like, especially, when you are young'. He further said: 'if you care to know whom I have chewed the longest, here they are: Genghis Khan, Alexander, Hannibal, and Napoleon. Napoleon most of all' (p.62). After narrating all this, the author discusses the personality and career of Napoleon, in order to draw parallels between his and Bhutto's political characters. He specifically highlights Napoleon's urge to promote himself as a revolutionary, his accomplishments in the realms other than military conquests, his belief in supreme power and his being indefatigable. The author thinks that Bhutto shared all these traits. But one question that he raises himself and doesn't answer convincingly is: as to why, in contrast to Napoleon, Bhutto upheld the rights of the downtrodden and also claimed himself to be a democrat. The answer that he provides is simply this: 'The only conclusion that we can draw is that these claims, ostensibly, were a ploy to win over the masses' (p.69). This conclusion seems to be over simplistic and for this to be concluded perhaps the author did not need to go into the background of Napoleon and draw parallels between him and Bhutto. He could have simply said that Bhutto made use of popular slogans to win over the masses. In fact, it seems that Bhutto's inspiration from Napoleon had been true but the two differed characteristically in that, while Napoleon drew his support from the military, Bhutto did not hail from that institution. Given the dichotomy of a martial state and a society of millions of poor, for a politician who was ambitious to play a memorable role in history and wanted to make his name for all times to come, the choice was quite clear. Populism came to Bhutto as the natural choice which he made use of quite efficiently, though by no means accruing all the desired results.

Among his sources of inspiration there has been mentioned a number of books which Bhutto read very carefully. On one occasion his father, Sir Shahnawaz Bhutto, a powerful feudal of Sindh, presented him the five-volume set of William Sloane's biography of Napoleon. He had been fond of biographies of rulers and generals, and also spent time reading ideological writings as well. Bhutto was himself a prolific writer who wrote a number of books. Some of these were written at times when he was extremely busy. His writings also demonstrate that he drew a lot from the books he had read. Unfortunately, the author doesn't do much justice to this aspect, and does not explain what the longing of books and

spending of days and nights in reading them suggest about Bhutto. To mention a couple of powerful leaders of history and their biographies as his source of inspiration seems to be a bit simplistic in approach and does not do justice to the person in question, who read hundreds of books other than the ones chosen by the author to reach a conclusion about him.

In order to ascertain the psychological makeup of Bhutto, the author, like many others, especially talks about Bhutto's parents, his powerful feudal father and his mother who came from a very ordinary background. He explains that Bhutto's mother, a convert from Hinduism to Islam, had been the second wife of Sir Shahnawaz Bhutto. She was never accepted by the feudal family of her husband and lived with the stigma of her humble birth. Her giving birth to a male child, Zulfikar, did enhance her prestige but by only a few notches. The author observes that 'the Bhuttos never forgot nor let her forget her plebeian origin...'. The young Zulfikar, 'precocious and sensitive as he was, felt the pangs of his clan's hostility towards his mother, and her suffering left an indelible and lasting mark on his character. He assimilated the love for the poor and his egalitarian attitude from his mother. Yet he remained a feudal under the influence of the towering personality of his father'. This explanation of Bhutto's personality has been endorsed by many other writers and quite convincingly explains the dichotomy of two very opposite and contradictory strands of his politics: his sympathy for the poor and his arrogance vis-à-vis his opponents. But when the author of the book under review, also cites this contradictions of Bhutto's parental background, one is intrigued by the question that why at another place, while building an analogy between Bhutto and Napoleon, and addressing the issue as to how against the latter's dictatorship, Bhutto chose the democratic path, giving voice to the poor, he had concluded that Bhutto's democratic claims 'were a ploy to win over the masses' (p.69). One may say that if his sympathy for the poor was the result of his being the son of the poor mother, it could not be a ploy, and if it was a ploy then the conclusion about his drawing his aspirations for the poor from his maternal background is not justified.

The author also approaches Bhutto's personality from the point of view of his socio-political and economic policies. He discusses in detail the economy of the country during Bhutto's era, his land reforms, and nationalization of industrial and financial sectors, the education reforms, the initiatives in the health sector, the labor reforms, and the establishment of numerous cultural institutions. The author holds that Bhutto did all this in a small span of time as he was in great haste. This haste has been discussed by him in a separate chapter where he suggests that Bhutto wanted to achieve the maximum that he could because he

thought that Pakistan's traditional establishment would not allow him much time to do what he wanted to. The author quotes Yahya Bakhtiar as saying that, in one of Bhutto's meetings with the Chinese Prime Minister Zhou En Lai, the latter asked Bhutto why he was in such a hurry about his reforms. To this Bhutto said: 'do you realize that perhaps the army will not give me a chance to consolidate my position? So, I have to rush in a hurry to do something for my people' (p.139). The author seems to draw a mistaken conclusion from this when he says that Bhutto's statement is an evidence of the dichotomy of his character. 'He was apprehensive of the army', the author observes, 'yet he loved the pomp and show associated with the armed forces, manifested an egoistic and haughty behavior, idolized historical figures, the majority of whom were dictators....'. He further observes that 'ambivalence is defined as: 'the coexistence in one person of two opposing emotions, desires, beliefs, or behavioral tendencies directed towards the same instinctual object especially love and hate' (p.139). Here, it seems that the author makes too much of Bhutto's liking of military men's biographies which may not definitely be rooted in a desire to be one, for none of Bhutto's numerous biographers had ever detected that Bhutto had in his childhood or in his youthful days aspired to become a soldier. As against this, it has been written by many authors that Bhutto always wanted to have a place in history. It seems that his reading of the military biographies and books about wars was more for the purpose of understanding the institution. Contrary to what the author tries to suggest by way of Bhutto's being influenced by the pomp and show of the military institution, Bhutto is on record saying on a number of occasions how much he cared for creating a niche for himself in the annals of history. Talking to Oriana Fallaci, he had categorically stated that he would like to die at the hands of the military rather than history.

While tracing the psychological makeup of Bhutto's political personality, the author develops an interesting and convincing analogy between him and Prometheus, a character of Greek mythology, who stole the divine fire from heaven and handed it over to the reckless hands of man. He was punished by the Greek gods who chained him to a rock where an eagle fed each day on his liver. The author suggests that in order to make Pakistan a nuclear power Bhutto established an atomic plant, antagonizing the western powers particularly the United States. The author observes that though he himself takes a different position on nuclear arsenal throughout the world yet despite his being a peace lover he commends Bhutto's courage and foresight in enabling Pakistan to withstand the nuclear blackmail of the neighboring and hostile India. So it seems that Bhutto being a Prometheus paid the dividend in the form of

strong defense of his country but at the cost of his presenting himself to the ‘Greek gods’ eagle who did not wait long in ‘eating his liver’.

The book under review, as a whole, is an interesting and intelligent work which gives insight in the contradictions of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who, almost four decades after his death at the gallows, not only lives in the politics of Pakistan but has remained a persistent figure of enquiry for the historians. The book will be counted as a useful addition in the literature on Bhutto.

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***Judgment of History* by Mubarak Ali, published by Badalti Dunya Publications, Islamabad, 2019, pages: 159, price: Pak rupees 400/-.**

Judgment of History is the latest book from the pen of Dr Mubarak Ali. As a prolific writer on historical themes, Ali has to his credit more than 80 books. Given the nature of his books and his popular approach in writing history, he has established for himself a unique identity as a public scholar. Ali made his mark on the academic horizon of Pakistan way back in the early 1980s when as a professor of history in the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, he started producing brief books and booklets on historical subjects. Due to his questioning of the fictitious history as well as given the provocative style of his writings, he could not find established publishers who could take the risk to publish his books. As a result of this he got the books printed in his own handwriting, which were sold on very nominal price. Soon he found a good readership which has increased with the passage of time. Now his books are published on good scale by recognized book sellers. In the last around four decades he has gained the reputation of a historian who writes for general readers, and writes in an unconventional way.

Looking back at Ali’s work, one can identify four major traits which have made him popular with political workers, students, and commoners throughout the country. First, he has deviated almost completely from the traditional historiography wherein the discipline of history has been devoted to describe and discuss the rulers — the monarchs, dynasties, generals, wars, etc. Even the freedom movement is discussed highlighting the role of the great leaders and their big adversaries. The high politics was shown to be the arena of big leaders contesting each other. The millions of ‘followers’ did not find place in

the pages of history. Similarly, regional sentiments and roles were also conveniently overlooked. Ali has challenged the limited scope of this historiography and has highlighted the importance of including the diverse segments of the society and their contribution to the evolution of history. He has highlighted that history can be constructed along a number of things. Thus, there can be histories of things, socio-cultural trends, habits, etc. Second, Ali has demonstrated a great deal of objectivity in his writings. He clearly distinguishes between the fact-based narratives and a historical fiction which creates heroes and paints the past as a glorious era without undertaking to look into the failures and contradictions of that period. Third, he has informed that history can be written from different points of view and varying perspectives. There can be a number of schools of thought and it is possible that each one of them has some validity and can offer substantial conclusions which could widen our horizon of historical understanding.

It is his belief in his particular concept of history and historiography that has motivated him to take to the discipline as a mission. To project an objective view of history and to challenge the existing and traditional moors of historiography, he has adopted different channels. Apart from writing books, he brings out a series under the title of *Tareekh*, which has so far published sixty issues. Under his leadership there has developed a group of young writers, many of them being historians, who together work in unison to give credence to their work as an integrated effort or a movement. Apart from all these, Ali writes regularly in the newspapers. After some time his newspaper writings also go into books. So far some twenty such books have seen the light of the day. The book under review also falls under this category. The significance of such books is this that these assemble scores of articles at one place and prevent them from being lost sight of while scattered in newspaper pages. Should such articles be taken seriously by those who are interested in history and historiography, and should historians spend their precious time in writing for the newspapers, to this we shall return. Here, it would be attempted to see what this particular book that we have before us offers through its brief chapters, each of which had formed a column of the newspaper, *The News*.

Comprising 40 brief articles, the book presents a big canvas with wide range of themes. These themes can be classified in three major areas. There are chapters on peoples' history, history of attitudes, protests, revenge, oratory, emotions, rituals, happiness, grief, etc. Then, there are pieces on how different historians treated history. One finds references to western historians like Arnold Toynbee and Spengler, as

well as the Indians like Shibli Nomani. Another set of articles comprises those which highlight the specific western and eastern themes.

One major feature of all these articles is that almost each of them carries some new information — new in the sense that it may not be there in the knowledge of general people who are fed on generalized, emotional and romanticized version of the past and the so-called heroes or the great individuals. For example, in an article about the era of Reformation in Europe, the author delves deeply in the role of Martin Luther but while discussing how he reformed Christianity and established Protestantism, he also mentions how during the revolt of the peasants in Germany, Martin Luther sided with the princes and the feudal lords who quelled the uprising with brute force.

Similarly, in an article about the historians who wrote about the history from peoples' perspective and included in their histories the role of common man in a given period of time, Ali brings in focus a number of western historians. One finds references to E.P Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), Chris Harman's *Peoples' History of the World* (1999), and Howard Zinn's *Peoples' History of the United States* (1980), and the contribution they made in the field of peoples' history. But quite interestingly, he indicates that K.M Ashraf wrote a peoples' history way back in 1935. Named as *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, the book endeavored to search into the everyday life of the people of India and gave idea about what the common people contributed to the society, its economy and the social life.

The article on Emperor Jahangir demystifies some of the commonly held misconceptions about him as a ruler and the manner in which he strategized his statecraft. There are a lot of fictitious stories suggesting him to be one who cared so much about justice to be given to his subjects. A writer of Shibli Nomani's stature also builds a very inflated image of Jahangir in one of his poems, *Adl-e-Jahangiri*. The author of the book under review recounts incidents which give a very different view of Jahangir. Ali tells us that the prime object of Jahangir, like his ancestors and successors, had been to ensure his strong control over the country for which all types of coercive means were adopted. And, in this respect, no discrimination was made between his close family members and those who challenged him from outside. Thus, Jahangir had Abul Fazal killed without any regard for what he had contributed to the Mughal Empire, particularly during the Akbar's rule. Similarly, when Jahangir's son revolted against him on the pretext of his belief that he was the rightful successor of his grandfather, and that his father was not qualified to replace Akbar, Jahangir lost no time in

quelling his son's revolt. He was punished for his wishful thinking with the sentence to death. Quite curiously one also finds in him a tendency of seeking pleasure from the pain inflicted on others. These 'others' included the animals as well. Ali narrates how in one of his excursions he saw an elephant falling in a ditch. The scene excited him so much that he ordered a number of elephants to be thrown in the ditch. Ali does not mind bringing to the fore the facts which may demolish and destroy the unrealistic and untrue images cultivated by the traditional historians who have been so fond of writing hagiography in the name of history.

The above are only some of the examples which may be sufficient to shed light on what 'sedition' Ali's brief articles commit. As these are quite brief they leave one with a lot of curiosity to know more about the themes which have been discussed by the author.

Here, one would like to return to the question as to what significance the historical articles, finding way in the newspapers, hold. And, also, why professional historians in the West as well as in our part of the world opted for writing in newspapers and in periodicals when they already had made their names through their researched works published in the form of books and research journals' articles. This question needs to be discussed particularly because one finds among the circles of certain historians a tendency to look at the historical writings in newspapers with an eye of contempt. Few historians also regard such writings as 'Journalistic', as if anything that comes through the channel of journalism is of lesser value. As a matter of fact the objectives of genuine historiography and objective journalism are the same and at times they are quite intertwined. The purpose of good journalism is to bring the possibly most accurate information to the readers; in the case of past events it is the occupation of the historians to dig out the facts in their possibly most accurate form. Therefore, both history and journalism have some common, and very important, bases.

The professional historians spend a lot of time in libraries and archives, and travel far off regions to gather their material. They employ modern tools of research in order to be able to reach the best possible conclusions. But most of their professional work is so ingrained in technicalities that it is mostly the trained and qualified historians, and students and researchers of history who can benefit from it in maximal manner. But should all this information be confined to the professionals? Certainly not. All good work, weather it is in the field of history, or for that matter, in any field, is the asset of all mankind. So it should be available for as many people as possible. Journalism provides that ladder making use of which the high-profile historians with their great historical studies and conclusions can step a few pedestals down and enable a wider

readership to have access to them. This ladder was used by a good number of historians in the past. More and more historians are using it in our times.

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***Pakistan Under Siege* by Masood H. Kizilbash, published by Royal Book Company, Karachi, 2017, pages: 288, price not mentioned.**

One thing that is noticeably unique in the case of books written on the post-Partition history and political development of Pakistan is that almost all of them begin with discussing not just the background in which the country came into being but also set before them the task to first settle the question about the rationale of the creation of Pakistan. It could be understandable in the works which got published soon after Partition or in the first decade or so after the realization of the country but the fact that even after seven decades of Independence, political works on Pakistan still find it necessary to first address the issue of the country's rationale, testifies to something more serious than to an urge to look at things in historical background. It would not be wrong to think that the question of the rationale of Pakistan's creation comes to the fore every now and then only because the real socio-economic and political factors which in fact shaped the emergence of the Muslim political separatism in India, have not been adequately acknowledged after Independence. The official narrative promoted by the successive governments and also accepted uncritically by a larger section of the intelligentsia has at best created wide segments of indoctrinated people, but has not been able to satisfy the thinking minds. It is the result of this ahistorical perception of the creation of Pakistan that every new writer either attempts to reinforce the official and conventional point of view or seeks to present a new one. As Pakistan has passed through a series of crises since her inception, and particularly in the last twenty to twenty five years the manner in which it found itself struggling against religious and sectarian extremism perpetrated in the name of religion, and the violence resulting in thousands of casualties, almost all studies on Pakistan begin with why and how the country came into existence. It is the rationale of the creation of Pakistan which has come to engage almost all contemporary writers attempting to understand the political malaise of the country. The book under review also does the same.

Pakistan Under Siege has been penned down by Masood H Kizilbash who has made a concerted effort to understand the political

developments in Pakistan with the help of the literature he has come across, and the observations he had had of the political crises of the country, some of which he had the opportunity to observe quite closely. The nature of the book and the background of the author who has taken to such writings after completing his long association with the civil service, would not justify us to see in this work a professional historian's approach or the use of tools of research which such historians employ as a general practice. This, however, does not lessen the importance of the book mainly because the author has something new and substantial to say and he has said it in a convincing manner. The book covers a long span of history beginning from the invasion of India by Britain, its passing through colonial phase, encompassing over 90 years, the type of contradictions which emerged during colonialism and how they shaped the diverse responses of the Indians. The author strongly follows the formulation that the British relied throughout their rule on a policy of divide and rule in order to ensure the continuity of the colonial subjugation of India. Needless to say that not all historians take it as the unquestionable reading of the colonial strategy. Certainly a divide and rule policy did have a role in different phases of the colonial rule but this was not the sole approach adopted by the British rulers. No one can deny the fact that the British had not only provided a unified administrative system in India but the creation of a massive infrastructure and introduction of new means of communication also had a unifying role in India. Not only this but the politico-administrative arrangements, too, paved the way for the rules of the game which were adhered to by the political elite belonging to different communities. The roots of Muslim separatism were laid after some of the politico-administrative measures allowed different communities, and particularly the political elite, to organize themselves separately and ask for their distinct demands and exclusive political spaces so that they could accrue maximum benefits from them.

The author's emphasis on divide and rule policy lands him in another 'conspiracy theory' according to which partition happened at a juncture when international politics was witnessing a shift of world hegemony from Great Britain to the United States. The author holds that the Atlantic Charter of 1941 paved the way for United States' emergence as a super-power and as a contender of global supremacy. He further holds that United States sought imminent dissolution of British empire and thought that it should happen in a manner so that it facilitated the United States' emergence as a super-power. This scheme of interpretation of partition does not conclusively explain the whole episode of the partition of India. How can one overlook the fact that after

the completion of the annexation of India in 1857, there had always been found very strong resentment of British rule. This reflected in periodical episodes of revolts taking place in different regions. Of course there had been phases of passivity and demoralization yet these phases had always been followed by more volatile and proactive phases of political movements. The beginning of the 20th century saw such events in quite succession. The Balkan wars, The Khilafat movement, the Quit India movement, Jallianwala Bagh, hectic political activity across the subcontinent, the revolutionary uprisings such as the Ghadar movement — these and other events that occurred one after another paint a picture of an India where resentment of British rule was increasing and the erosion of colonial authority was quite manifest. The World War II had made India quite vulnerable from the British point of view. So whatever political measures were taken in this background, whatever constitutional parlays were realized, whatever solutions were suggested to resolve the communal issue and what dynamics led to the partition of India, all these cannot be set aside so easily. The external factors did have a role; they may be taken as an important part of the story, but not as the whole story.

The writer is quite right in indicating that Jinnah's primary concern was to find the solution of the communal issue within united Indian framework but his successive efforts in this regard were frustrated by his opponents who never showed an inclination for making use of the possibilities of compromise which almost all formulae presented by Jinnah tended to carry. After having been completely marginalized Jinnah was left with no option but to go for partition. With the passage of time more and more historians are consenting to it.

The author also delves into great detail as to what has happened thereafter in Pakistan after independence. He thinks that Jinnah had a clear-cut liberal vision of Pakistan which he wanted to see as a modern democratic state. He did evoke religious sentiments for building a Muslim political platform but his intention was to benefit from the moral values of Islam for the construction of a modern political edifice of the state. It was deviation from Jinnah's path which created problems for Pakistan which has remained vulnerable so much so that it has come to be a 'state under siege'. According to the author, it was the feudal and the civil-military nexus which has ruled the country since Independence. It was this combination of power structure which isolated East Pakistan which eventually resulted in the dismemberment of the country. The author holds that there were certain principles which one can discern from Jinnah's vision. He calls them the pillars of the state. To him the first pillar was the realization of a modern state that could make its presence felt in the comity of nations. The second pillar was democracy

that ensures the sovereignty of the people through parliamentary institutions. It is here that he talks about the civil-military axis and its over-centralizing policies which damaged the cause of the consolidation of the nation. The third pillar was the need of land reforms and agricultural taxation which were not done sincerely, and if some of the measures were implemented, their benefits could not be transferred to the common people. The fourth pillar was the rule of law. Jinnah paid great importance to this element and it was this pillar that could never get strong foundations in the country. According to the author, the fifth pillar of the state had to be non-discrimination amongst the citizens. This, unfortunately, remained a slogan as all sorts of discriminations could be seen in the country, creating cleavages among different segments of the society. Here, while talking about the ethnic issues and discrimination against one or the other community the author does not hide his bias towards the migrants about whom he thinks that they had been subjected to severest of discrimination in Pakistan. This view may not be taken uncritically. There had been phases when the Mohajir elite was part of the power structure of the country and for a considerable period of time dominated the state institutions along with the elite from the Punjab. The sixth pillar, according to the author, is Urdu which he thinks should be the state language. Though he is quite brief while writing about the issue of the national language and does not shed light on how and why a language becomes the official language, who makes such decisions and what have other countries demonstrated through their examples in this regard. Such discussion could have shed light on the real thinking operating behind the language policy of the state in Pakistan.

The author devotes a chapter on the 'New Pakistan', a term coined after the dismemberment of the country in 1971. Again it is a very brief chapter in which the author shows his reservations about the policies adopted by the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He also criticizes the policies of General Zia ul Haq who accepted to make Pakistan a front-line state in the great game of the super powers thus weakening it from inside. While discussing the future of Pakistan the author once again goes back to his original approach to look at the domestic events and crises through the prism of external factors particularly the struggle for hegemony among the super-powers. He thinks that after the culmination of the Cold War Pakistan is no more as useful for the US and the West as it had been in the past. Moreover, Pakistan's enthusiasm in establishing closer relations with China and establishing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) through its land has also come to make the Americans hostile to Pakistan. How can Pakistan cope with this situation, where in Pakistan finds itself under

siege. The author thinks that ‘with centrifugal forces operating in full swing within and regional and international players at work to promote their national agendas in the region, there is serious skepticism that Pakistan can assert its national interests. This is only possible if national unity is forged under strong leadership’ (p. 216). Certainly, through national unity alone can the existential crisis of the country be resolved but one may indicate that this would require a complete overhauling of the state system, and reorientation of its socio-economic, foreign and security policies. If all these policies are grounded in the basic postulate that it is the people of the country who are sovereign only then a right and adequate engineering of the state institutions and their policies can be done. If this is done sooner than later Pakistan can come out from under the siege, and could embark upon the road to peace, progress and prosperity.

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***Widows and Daughters Gender, Kinship, and Power in South Asia* by Anna Suvorova, translated from Russian by Daniel Dynin, published by Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2019, pages: 304 (paperback), price: Pak rupees 1495/-.**

Dreaming to see a matriarchal society again, where women ruled and men were not challenging them out of any in-bred sense of male superiority, or a threat to the male self-respect, is not a distant cry. The book under review has a prolonged hint to this peaceful world. The book envisions evaluating rise of power of six female leaders to the top political positions, their performance, successes and failures and their reasons, as well. It also mentions a seventh woman who did not rise to formal power but she commanded great respect and potential to all that glory. The book as such is not seeped in any feminist spirit or mission to change the norms, yet it analyzes critically the political culture of South Asia as to its potential to let women operate freely and effectively as leaders and managers. Regarding gender, it is needless to say that political culture grows out of centuries old norms, having been brewed in the volatile pressure of change in the rush to catch up with the pace of globalization in all its dimensions.

In an attempt to discover a rule about as to how the females get to the position of high power and prestige in the South Asian cultures, having deep-seated patriarchal control in all spheres of life. Here six

women have set extraordinary examples in the modern times; for which the author Anna Suvorova discovers a 'traditional' rule that it is mainly the outcome of heritage. Lineage works superbly when one prominent leader (male) suffers, is eliminated by force, is dead or has been attempted to murder. Either widows or daughters are then given command of the party, and possible party leadership is also entrusted to them. Another associated question then springs up automatically that do women have to be deprived of one male relative inevitably to get to the top position, since without any such mishap, no other woman rose to that position? If it is the rule, it is highly atrocious, for both men and women. Does the political system operate only to eliminate a traditional superior power-holder, to let an inferior person in the hierarchy to grab power? Apparently that is very logical, that in the presence of a more fitting person less fitting cannot enjoy power, yet why this pattern has added female gender as a significant characteristic of a male inheritor? Moreover, does it prove the rule of inferiority of women as they are replacement of a male only when a better male is not available, so inevitably they take the seat for a while? It also happened that after the down fall of female power-holders again the power went to a male, not necessarily on inheritance basis, but mostly by a complex interplay of forces having both democratic and undemocratic credentials. Such questions still remain unanswered. A few more questions can be put to the author of the book under review, yet this book review must mention what questions are posed and what answers have been put forward. One main question the book has apparently pursued is that: 'how these seven women have managed to take power and how they have been able to exploit to their benefit the traditions of sexuality, motherhood, and kinship in South Asia?'

The top six women of South Asia included chronologically, Siri Bandaranaike, Indira Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto, Sheikh Hasina Wajed, Begum Khaleda Zia, and Chandrika Kumaratunga. Suvorova finds a similar condition among the six cases as the, 'South Asian societies chose women leaders only in times of crisis' which included murder of husband, father, or death of someone at the helm of affairs. Benazir was chosen through people's vote, after the accidental death of dictator General Zia-ul-Haq, but because of her father's legendary extinction by a disputed court case, and also because she embodied the hope for the democratic process to revive. Indira was elected after the death of Prime Minister Shastri, who had succeeded her father. Khaleda Zia rose after resignation of dictator Ershad. It was the time when possible inheriting men had gone offstage. Moreover, these women were put to run the government and discharge duties on trial basis mostly because they were not expecting or were not prepared to take up such duties. And see,

Benazir was murdered when it was sure she would win the election on merit. Democracy had a weird interaction with these women, and the author asserts that: ‘power is inevitably bound up with suffering for South Asian women’ (p. 262). She adds that power is given to these women as a ‘compensation’ for their sufferings and tribulations. So, for them, power is packed with sacrifice and miseries: ‘it is no trick of fate but a kind of ill fortune’ (p. 263). This tragedy, according to the author, also intertwined with allocation of power is characteristic of the patriarchal political culture of South Asia. Hence it is another maligned feature she has pointed out. This is proved by continuation of discrimination and humiliation of all other women simultaneously. So such top leader women could not add to overall empowerment of the women population of their countries as was expected. This also proves their ‘failure’; for if compared with men rulers, who introduced emancipatory laws and policies, such women could not venture any considerable innovation, let alone any single revolutionary action. What Suvorova discovers, she finds it matching it with other professions where women enjoy power, such as of writing, because there, too, women are restricted. To prove this one can see writers of national and local languages of Pakistan, who daringly could not express their revolutionary views or could not introduce such revolutionary characters, and if they did, they were termed as ‘shameless’, ‘vulgar’, and ‘masculine’; meaning less of a normal woman who has to accept the traditional standards of morality—being humble, naïve, obedient, complying, altruistic, suffering with patience, and promoting the male relatives in their successful careers. Interestingly whenever such few bold female characters or roles were portrayed, filmed and presented, they only gave enjoyment and recreation, but could not put a dent into the male chauvinistic culture, which, unfortunately has been promoted by women as well, because women get benefits out of it.

The ‘classical patriarchy’, entrenched in the society, operates in all religious groups of the region, the author explains. It does not allow equal access to public sphere, so women are expected to remain confined to the private sphere of household, sexuality and motherhood. Such crude, rude and outrageous situations have been faced by these women leaders in their political life, too; the book contains its examples as well. Despite such complaints, these women leaders also played as a functionary of the patriarchal system, behaving like masculine persons, staying away from feminist mindset. Benazir Bhutto had even defied her party manifesto that promised repealing of discriminatory laws in Pakistan (e.g., Hudood Ordinance introduced by General Zia in 1979.) In their personal lives as well, these women had made compromises with

the patriarchal culture, since it does not allow a woman to rent a flat on her responsibility alone, or allow marriage by her own choice, so they set certain role models, but not of a perfect quality.

Suvorova highlights that motherhood role is a highly sanctified, glorified and revered role in all South Asian religions, so it helped these women to gain acceptability. For instance Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Khaleda Zia, and Chandrika Kumaratunga took benefit of their status as 'widow mother' in elections. The attributes of a traditional mother added to their capacity and hopes of people that they would deliver selflessly, caringly, and altruistically.

One exception to the rule of being 'widow or daughter' of a slain or departed male leader has been Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah of Pakistan who happened to be a sister of the Founder of the Nation, Muhammad Al Jinnah. In fact he neither left behind a widow, nor a daughter who could be accepted by the nation, since he himself had 'abandoned' her from the privileges of being his daughter in his own life. The choice was clear; the only female who had stood by him whole life, in the long struggle for independence and even after that she continued pressing for his ideals to be realized by Jinnah's successors. A strong woman, with very clear vision and mission for the nation he had built, stood as a comrade to other leaders of the struggle. Even Islamist parties supported her, whereas long after her contesting elections against a general, the same Islamists opposed Benazir's rise to prime minister. It was a game of 'convenience', when they needed to support her, they did not hesitate, and when they were not feeling any strong opposition, they obstructed Benazir's way through using religious arguments. They kept exploiting their own potential in two opposite ways. Interestingly, Fatima Jinnah was unmarried, having no children but was given the title of 'Madr-e-Millat' (mother of the nation), a unique honor, and the spirit of struggle for independence was alive in the society till the 1960s. The dictator's machinery failed her, as history goes, otherwise Pakistan could have set a great record in the history of region as well as the world. Suvorova comments on her case as: '... motherhood has value first and foremost as a patriarchal symbol rather than a 'biological state'. She adds that Fatima's story [of 'failure'] reveals that pedigree, kinship and blood ties are more important than gender or family status. Here, this point is not convincing enough. By the late 1960s, the brief 20 years history of Pakistan had never seen free play of democratic forces. Furthermore, the conspiracies and blunders of the civil-military nexus, for perpetuating their own gains, and by 'humiliating' the popular vote, due to their inherent dislike for the 'civilian' choice, and believing in the colonial metaphoric mentality, considering 'the society is not yet fit for

democracy', all were operating against a great politician of the country. Had Pakistan been allowed treading on the democratic path unobstructed, after two decades, the results of such elections would have been encouraging to the aspirations of common folks of Pakistan, and not to the chosen few who had been suffocating growth of democracy with full force. The author seems to have not gone thoroughly through the history of Pakistan at least, while drawing such a conclusion.

Suvorova has also discussed the concept of 'charismatic' leadership in South Asia, at length. She delves into the psychological concepts, mythical beliefs, fortunes, God Almighty or god's will to handle things as popular belief, such as plane crash of Zia, or Hasina being saved while her family was murdered in Dacca, etc. With such 'evidences of supernatural interferences', found in these top women's biographies, Suvorova refers to as a proof as they were saved from many attacks, whereas she knows that Benazir and Indira were also finally killed. However, she points out that these leaders faced overthrowing of their government, and resignation due to very common charges of corruption, and judicial ordeals, negating the very concept of 'charisma', also confirming that for women, charisma does not operate the way it does for men in a patriarchal system. A lengthy debate around the role of charisma and performance of these women leaders as managers culminates at the point that these women could not establish themselves as good heads of government or state, because military revolted against them, or their party indulged in infighting and fragmentation while they were in power, all such factors alluding to the conclusion that they could not fight on all fronts appropriately.

Comparing with strong ladies like Margaret Thatcher (UK) and Golda Meir (Israel), the author asserts that they rose to power on their personal merit and not through the crutches of family or charisma. As such were not the conditions in South Asia, the seven women leaders, however, struggled, took benefit of existing values, and tried to prove their 'merit among the prevalent political culture' this is what the author concludes, as a way of homage to the great women. Not discouraged by the fateful end of Benazir and Indira, she writes: 'these women leaders will come down in history and narratives as charismatic heroines who established the contemporary Asian matriarchy'.

In this sense, it is a conclusion drawn by an analyst, who is less a historian or political scientist, but basically more a person from the field of humanities, writing on Urdu Masnavis, saints and sufi culture, and theatre, city, etc. She could not give any coherent theoretical framework to analyze a crucial topic, having relation with all humanity living in the region. She did not even wrap feminist ideals around such women, despite discussing patriarchy, rather putting all blame on it. Feminist

ideology has paved way in the region, and it has ancient roots in the philosophy, mythology, culture and religions, yet the author could not pin point it. Nonetheless she has given a panoramic view of South Asian history to mention the powerful women who rose to power through various means, while the modern day women are left with fewer ones. The heroines who fought for their own power, or welfare and honour of their community, religious /ethnic /nationalist group, principality, kingdom or a faction of rebels against the all-powerful colonial rulers from Great Britain. The only principle that women were regarded highly as mothers did not apply to all these women. Women made their way in ancient, medieval and modern times, and no doubt spirit of time changes, new challenges emerge, but one thing must be accepted, as a rule that South Asian culture or society, due to its broad range of inheritance, and multiple systems of 'faith', has not been outright against women's leadership. All three greatest religions followed here have seen their women followers getting to the top, and no such bloodshed was seen. Masses in the modern times following them quite independently affirm this assertion more vividly. Even matriarchy, or a wish for it, cannot explain this. In fact the subject is really a complex one.

The author has delved into the psychology of these leaders as well, and by doing so, she has shown successfully how a writer with a different context and approach would see the six women top leaders of South Asia, by showing these women's personal emotions on their experiences and travails, or their feeling on being grilled for being a woman, and taking a good stock of their lives compromising with patriarchy to get ahead. This is all what a common woman has to deal with in everyday life in South Asia. Suvorova's conclusions apply more broadly on common women as well, and this is a notable worth of her analysis. Be it a political elite family, a middle class enlightened family having brilliant aspirations for its daughters, or a poor family desperate to utilize its women's income, all have certain defining and confining corollaries for daughters—to allow something on acceptance of certain limiting conditions, inevitably imposed by the 'outgrown' patriarchy. By chance, we have come to know through this book that this 'outgrown' patriarchy has suffered at the hands of these courageous women leaders, who did a 'real revolution in the public consciousness' by changing the minds of hundreds of millions of voters in four extremely backward countries of the world, at least in terms of political culture. And a big trail of courage now follows them!

***The Twilight Years: A Collection of Literary Articles and Reviews* by Ishrat Roomani, published by Paishraft International, Karachi, 2018, Pak rupees 500/-.**

The ‘*twilight years*’, represents to most prominent critics, the culmination of a long and productive career of the author, Mr Ishrat Roomani. The author, Ishrat Roomani, had had an illustrious career in the area of literary criticism and is also a noted critic of Urdu literature. He has also taken currently produced English literature of Pakistan as one of the foci of his study and critical interest. Mr Roomani is a practicing poet of Urdu and English as well. A list of his creative and critical writings are given on the dust cover of the book which indicates his wide-ranging interests. These cover poetry and prose, criticism, fiction and literary studies and a history of literary movements in Urdu. The versatile author is familiar with the nuances and requirements governing original writings of a literary nature. As such, the reading public and the practitioners of creative writing are grateful to him for his erudite exposition of the nature and impulses in current literature. The present collection is in English but its focus is chiefly on the literature produced in Pakistan. It contains a critical assessment of the important prose writers, poets and critics of this country. Among the vast array of talented and capable persons who are thus treated, we may note the following: Farhan Raza, Husain Anjum, Qaiser Saleem, Dr Mohammad Mohsin, Dr Manazir Ashiq, Prof. Waris Iqbal [whom I directed to the house of Mr Roomani], Qamar Ahmed Usmani, Jazib Qureishi, Adeb Sohail, Mazhar Jamil, Ghalib Irfan, Saba Ikram, Masrur Javed, Anwar Alavi, Khalid Irfan, Firasat Rizvi, Javed Manzar, Talat Farooqi, Halima Khatoon and others of note. We observe the long list of prominent writers who engaged Ishrat Roomani’s critical attention. The canvas is broad-ranging and covers the different aspects of Urdu literature in all its diverse manifestations.

A separate section gives an extensive study of the poetry of Feza Azami who is a poet of philosophical depth, elegant style and persistent optimism. Under the title ‘galaxy of scholars’, Ishrat Roomani has written a sketch of four generations of English teachers of the subcontinent. This is indeed a unique achievement and I am grateful to Ishrat Roomani for writing descriptive and biographical essays on this linkage of four English scholars belonging to my family and for his kind and generous comments about myself.

It is necessary for critics of Urdu literature to be familiar with the new trends in English and European literature and analyse such

trends with reference to their native literature and study the impact of such influences. This task Ishrat Roomani has fulfilled with knowledge, understanding and sympathy.

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