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Book Review

ONCE THE BIRDS FLY

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By Huma Adnan, Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, United States, 2017. Pp. 212, ISBN 9780997982428. USD 12.99.

Once the birds fly is a book by a novice writer, Huma Adnan. What makes it worth scrutiny is not because it is written by a novice writer rather by the fact that it is written by a lady from Quetta, this book is unique in itself, by bringing in different elements of such wonder together. Huma, who is married, is currently settled in Dubai, UAE. She teaches at Zabeel International Institute of Management & Technology. She has done her BS in English partly from SBK Women's University, Quetta and partly from Fatima Jinnah Women's College Rawalpindi. Although, the story is of a non-effeminate girl the writer is strongly moving around the notion of feminism. Known as the mountain girl among her circles the writer has few other books as well, which include a collection of Poems called Hymns of a Mountain Girl and Versus From East. Her works are a rich addition to English Literature generally and South Asian Literature particularly.

Once the birds fly represents every unloved, crushed seedling and struggling soul who has survived miracles. It is a story of a girl, named *Pari*, who has seen struggles only. Her effeminate part is not highlighted anywhere in the story, which is why you do not get a fairy tale like a figure of a female protagonist, yet what is in front of you is a girl, who with the passage of time transforms into an emblem of strength. She resembles the Fish of Elizabeth Bishop (1978) who is "battered and venerable and homely" (l. 8-9), due to the wounds and scars but she wore them like "medals with their ribbons frayed and wavering" (p. 59), which is why she was liberated from these shackles by the presence of a one in million friends, Amir, who turned into an unconventional

husband. Amir is quite an unusual hero in an otherwise realistic story of *Pari*. He is everything which a man of today is not. It might be possible that either the writer is quite optimistic in selecting her hero, or it reflects the presence of such a male in her life. Whatever it is, his presence brings joy to every woman, including *Pari*, who are unfit in Man's world.

The cover page of the novel reflects a woman having two quite paradoxical shades; the story is quite similar to that image. *Pari* is sunk in two extremes, her story reflects being tied in two chains, there are times when she wants to let go of one part and move to the other one free, but she fails to do so. She feels guilty for leaving her dead father in bed, but he makes her feel worthless even after his death, thus liberating her from the guilt. She leaves *Faiz* but it is evident that *Faiz'* love for her was an escape. The writer seems struck in these extremes too which at times hinder her expression when her characters, particularly *Pari*, try to break away from the shackles.

Overall, this piece of work is not only limited to inspire the amateur writers but is an insight into some major theories catching the contemporary critics and researchers. It revolves around the current wave of feminism, where the females are not represented, rather they speak for themselves. Apart from feminism, the story also encompasses an insight into the class system of a capitalist social system, where feminist Marxists can feed their palates with the thoughts and ideas. Moreover, two other strong theories evident or rather peeking implicitly through the story of *Pari* are postcolonialism and diasporic literature.

Once The Birds Fly embody the archetypal image of the human instinct of flying. It goes back to the image of

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Icarus back in earlier eras and is brought forth with the image of *Pari*, displaced in the male dominance atmosphere of her family and then later in the capital city, Islamabad. Her final destination Dubai, which also does not give her protection during her first visit. However, she keeps on flying and she does find an abode in the same city after some years, which becomes a witness in writing down the chronicles of her success. It is quite a success for a novice writer to produce such a piece of art in the existing chronicles of Pakistani Literature in English but one can see glimpses of some syntactic errors in her work which is due to English

being the second or third language of the writer, but it does not undermine the laurels of the writer. It further highlights the uniqueness of South Asian Writers and their contribution to language and Literature of English. The novel *Once The Birds Fly* is an interesting addition to the prospering literature of South Asian among English writers. The mountain girl of Quetta will definitely add more mesmerizing pieces of literature to the rosary of South Asian Literature.

References

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