



Pacific Book Review

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Soraya: The Other Princess

Title: Soraya: The Other Princess

Author: Saber Azam

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Reviewed by: Aaron Washington

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Saber Azam takes the reader through life in Afghanistan and the country's culture, religion, and politics in *Soraya: The Other Princess*. Soraya Ludin, the daughter of Kabir Ludin, an Afghan scholar, politician, and diplomat, inspired this fictional story. Through Soraya, we see how hard Afghan women must work to achieve even a tiny amount of success. The author gives geographical and historical information about Afghanistan, its people, and the steps the country has taken over the years.

Curious from a young age, Soraya experimented with almost everything she came across. Her bold nature and loud personality made her both inquisitive and sharp. Having someone like Mr. Zamir Suri in her life was an advantage for Soraya, as she could learn a lot from him and even borrow some of his traits. This helped shape her morally, spiritually, and academically. The political lessons readers learn in this book are immense. The author writes about the Taliban and how the movement changed life in the country. Being controlled by an organization that believed in extreme ideologies was unfortunate.

Afghanis lived one day at a time, not knowing what the Taliban would plan next. Every day was a dark day. Saber Azam writes how the organization targeted victims, killed them, and disregarded the human rights of those who opposed them. Reading this book makes you understand that there are more marginalized communities in this part of the world than one can imagine. Some things that occur today have not changed since the 1950s and 1960s. Soraya observed how African Americans were treated as second-class citizens in the U.S. back in the 1960s. They struggled to get their freedom and be recognized as equals like every other citizen, a struggle they still fight for today. The Taliban made women and children suffer under their rule.

Life was not easy for young men either, as they participated in some inhuman activities, either under duress or as a result of brainwashing. Amidst all this, the women still tried to uphold family values and

protect their children. The Taliban have not ceased their terrorist activities completely. America recently signed a peace deal with the Taliban. This was in the hopes of marking the commencement of the end of its longest war. The author believes that with such a deal, the US may make Afghan authorities share power with the Taliban or even make the terrorist group take over, something that Saber Azam says may present major setbacks.

Soraya: The Other Princess is a literary gem that every woman with dreams should read. The stories of the women in the book give hope. We see how the struggle has helped women rise. To achieve the freedom some women have today, lives had to be sacrificed. Some of the stories are inspiring, while others are devastating. Reading about the clashes, fights for rights, tragedies, and loss of lives evokes strong emotions. Another major takeaway in the book is that liberation is not achieved in a day. It sometimes takes blood, tears, and the death of those you love to achieve the freedom you yearn for.