

AN ATTENTION SEEKER MAKES A DUMB MOVIE AND WE SELF-DESTRUCT. BRILLIANT!

PAPERI

20 

~~SEMI-FAST~~
HOTTEST
PAKISTANI MEN

FALL
FOR
FASHION

PAK Rs 495
UK £ 5.00
US \$ 4.50

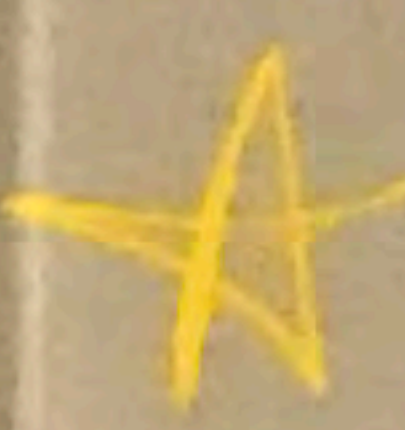


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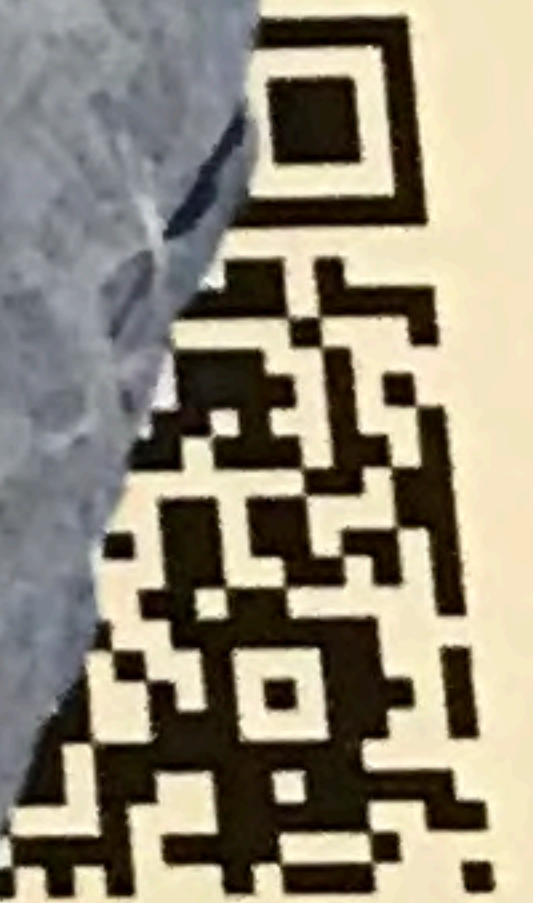
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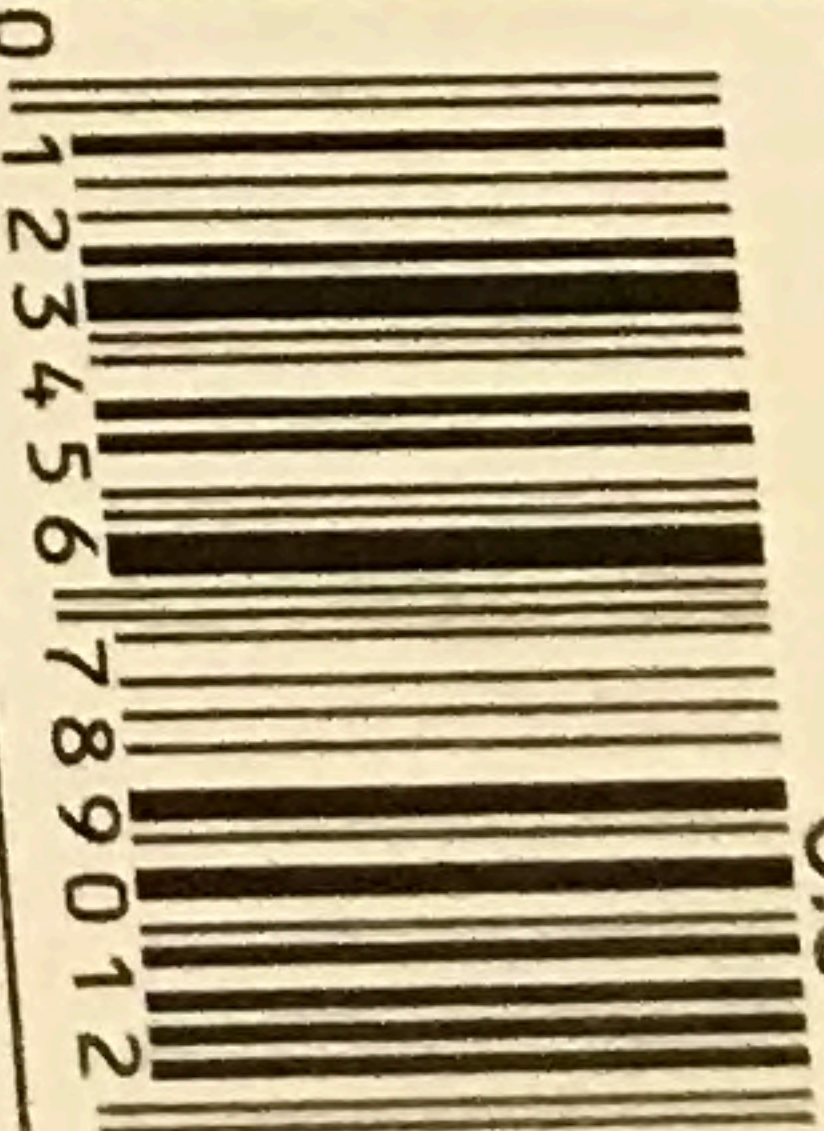
ALI ZAFAR
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Editor's Letter



Dear Readers,

It's fall and we are looking ahead to a season of weddings. The joy and festivity of the wedding season is one of the best things about Pakistan and we are excited to bring you our top five collections from PFDC L'Oreal Paris Bridal Week. Of course, weddings take place all year round. We present some fun ones that took place over the past few months to give you a taste of what's in store next issue.

Looking back, it was a hellishly hot summer and it is great to get away for a while when the heat crawls under your skin. Isfandiyar Zaman takes us on a trip to Las Vegas (pages 182-183) and we tell you why you should consider Abu Dhabi as your next travel destination (pages 186-187).

Intolerance and ill treatment of others is something we frown upon and try to highlight in some way or the other in *Paper*. This intolerance that has blinded us to one of the true heroes and role models this country has ever produced is unfathomable. This issue, Zarrar Said takes an in-depth look at Dr Abdus Salam and his achievements. His low status in our national consciousness is a constant source of humiliation.

We are all sick of the base narrative, hurtful propaganda and downright lies that our current news media throws at us. But is the media all to blame? Rameeza Nizami reminds us that our remote controls are in our own hands and we can choose what we watch. Rather than complaining, depriving tawdry talk shows of viewers is the best way to improve the quality of news reporting. Check out 'Have I Got News For You' on (pages 132-133).

It's always good to see talented Pakistanis making their mark abroad. We are proud to have Ali Zafar on our cover, a star both locally and now, internationally. Despite the 50-degree summer heat during our shoot in Lahore, he remained a class act who charmed us with his wit and talent. Meher Tareen tells us what it's like to be Ali Zafar on (pages 140-148).

Speaking of hot men, we decided to bring you our list of the hottest men in Pakistan in this issue. We thought it would be easy, but we quickly realised that there are a lot of good looking and smart men in Pakistan and to narrow them down to 20 was quite a task. Still, it was a lot of fun and we hope you enjoy it as much as we enjoyed putting it together (pages 152-165).

As always, our fashion pages bring you the best in trends on and off the runway. We love seeing people who are dressed well and are always on the lookout for originality and style, so check out who made it to our style pages this issue. Our editorial shoot 'Fall For Fashion' should be your guide for the next few months (pages 124-131). We also feature Misha Lakhani, the new designer who has launched her label with a bang, in 'Quirky, Sexy, Cool' (pages 166-172).

We look forward to your feedback on Twitter and Facebook. Please feel free to contact us on papermagazine2010@gmail.com or samina@paper.com.pk.

Samina Khan

the TRANS



SHARMEEN OBAID CHINYO WRITES ABOUT HER EXPERIENCES AND INTERACTIONS WITH THE MARGINALISED TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY WHILE MAKING HER DOCUMENTARY, *TRANSGENDER: PAKISTAN'S OPEN SECRET*.

GENDER

NARRATIVE



by SHARMEEN OBAID CHINYOY

by ZAHRA JEWANJEE

CHAHAT ONCE TOLD ME THAT SHE WOULD BE WILLING TO BE REBORN AS A DOG IF IT MEANT THAT SHE WOULD BE ABLE TO BE CLOSE TO HER MOTHER

Transgender, an umbrella term that encompasses all that cannot be bracketed off into male and female, remains a misunderstood and stereotyped community in Pakistan. For most, their existence is seen as a matter of shame and disgrace. Traditionally hailed as bearers of well wishes during times of celebration, the transgender community faces rising cultural irrelevance, forcing them to resort to alternative forms of earning a living. Robbed of a life of normalcy they are forced to resort to high-risk and taboo means of earning a livelihood. This reinforces their negative image in the eyes of those that enjoy the luxury of fitting into the gender binary.

In 2011, I set out to make a documentary about the transgender community in Karachi. *Transgender: Pakistan's Open Secret* featured three people who represented the diversity of the transgender experience. Maggie, a prostitute by night and aspiring airhostess by day, told the story that we are most familiar with; shunned by her family, Maggie began working the streets of Karachi in order to make a living. However, her story did not end there - Maggie saw prostitution as a temporary solution to her financial woes. Weary of the physical and emotional toll of her profession, she aspired to be Pakistan's first transgender hostess, yet was unable to convince any airline to take her intentions seriously.

Sharing similarities with Maggie's background, Sana was a dancer by profession. Sana and Maggie had both encountered sexual exploitation and rape in their careers, and these instances had left them emotionally and physically scarred. Eager to transition into a more socially acceptable field, Sana sought employment as a tax collector. She joined a group of transgenders who would visit income tax defaulters. Using their theatrical performances as a method of shaming the defaulter, Sana's team enjoyed overwhelming success and were proud of their work.

In stark contrast to Maggie and Sana's experience, Chahat was a beggar who lived in abject poverty and remained fearful of her *guru*. She longed to be reunited with her family, yet knew that they would never take her back. Chahat once told me that she would be willing to be reborn as a dog if it meant that she would be able to be close to her mother. She had tried to find more lucrative and sustainable forms of employment, yet was unable to do so because of her ap-

pearance. Chahat led a lonely life and battled depression regularly.

As a documentary filmmaker and journalist, my desires to make a film about transgenders stemmed from a need to accurately portray an often misunderstood and shunned community. Given unprecedented and unabashed access, our cameras captured the intricacies of the community, and the alternative ways in which they organise themselves. Known as *gurus*, experienced and older transgenders take on inexperienced and newer transgenders, referred to as *chelas*. The *guru* is responsible for their *chela*; they teach them the ways of the community and train them in their chosen career path. In exchange, *gurus* exert control over their *chelas* and take a large portion of their earnings as payment for their guidance. In many cases, such as with Chahat, *chelas* experience strained relations with their *gurus* while in others they are seen as valued mentors and are bestowed with respect and adulation. The *chela* is bound to her *guru* and may be fined or even physically punished for an error. While an authority does not enforce the system, it is practiced religiously by the transgender community and is marked by intricate initiation ceremonies and rituals.

During filming, it became apparent that there was no such thing as the quintessential 'transgender experience'; the community was vibrant, complex and transcendent. Existing on the fringes was a group of people who shared with the rest of Pakistan in emotion and outlook. Just like any other community, they were perpetually renegotiating their place and their future - and changing themselves to adapt to their circumstances. Their lives were spent in the pursuit of belonging, evolving and becoming; their narratives were dotted with love, laughter, loss, success and failure - just like yours or mine.

During one of our interviews, Maggie told me that she was born as a man but had the soul of a woman, and that she wished that others would see her like she saw herself. When we would shoot in public spaces, Maggie and her friends faced a constant barrage of ridicule and humiliation. It has been said that the best way to judge a nation is by the lives of those who are the most disadvantaged. If seen in this way, we, as a nation, have failed those who are the most vulnerable. The transgender community is currently involved in a civil rights battle, and although they are seeing promising developments in being recognised as equal citizens, they continue to be marginalised in our educational and economic systems. It is time that we, as a nation, disregard what are nothing more than surface differences, and push ourselves to begin a dialogue with people who, in many ways, are just like the rest of us. ■

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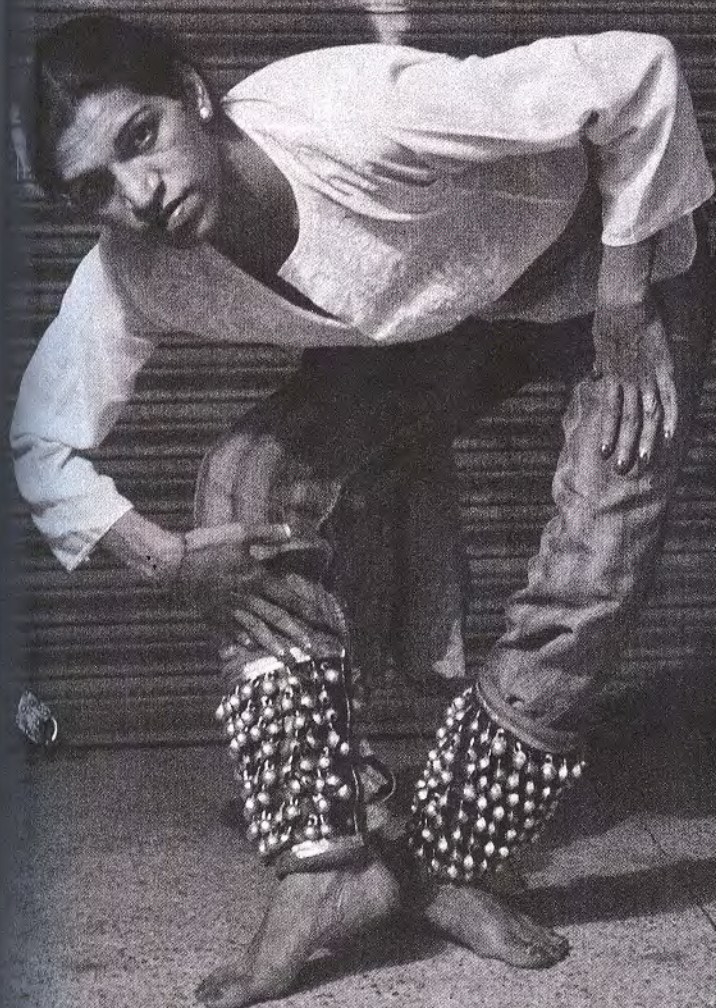
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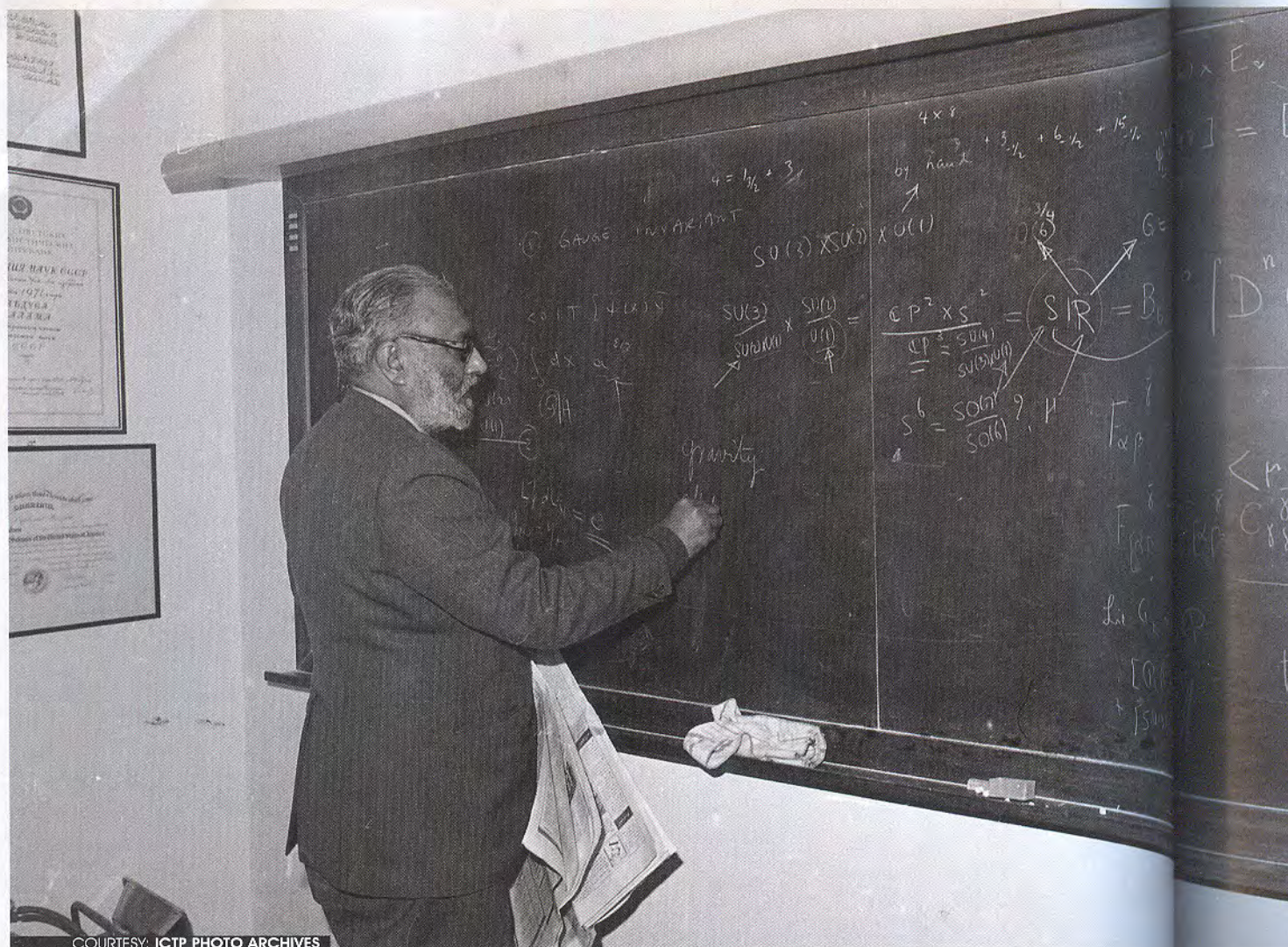
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**ROBBED OF A LIFE OF
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COURTESY: ICTP PHOTO ARCHIVES

THE

SHUNNED HERO

BY ZARRAR SAID

ZARRAR SAID SHEDS LIGHT ON DR. ABDUS SALAM'S FASCINATING STORY THAT SHOULD BE AN INSPIRATION FOR A MISLED NATION THAT NEEDS TO LEARN FROM HIS GREATNESS RATHER THAN SPREADING UNFOUNDED HATRED AGAINST THIS ICON OF BRILLIANCE AND PATRIOTISM.

Similar to Einstein, Abdus Salam did not speak till after he was 15-months-old. His concerned father took him to a religious scholar who prophesised that the boy would one day speak so loudly, that the whole world would listen. Abdus Salam's tale is one of fortuitous incidents, which carved out a path for intellectual brilliance. It is also due to these coincidences that Salam further developed his deep-rooted belief in God and found the Supreme Being to be ever present in his work. He practiced his

devotion through the medium of science. It is this stern private devotion, which, sadly in 1974, was tarnished and the stains of his excommunication became even more visible after his death. Salam's story is one of true inspiration but is laced with a Shakespearean tragedy. A tragedy which is often kept from the people of Pakistan. A tragedy so deeply scarring that it left Salam severely wounded till the day he died.

Abdus Salam was born into an underprivileged family in Brit

ish India in 1926. His father, Muhammad Hussein, was convinced that his son would fulfill his foretold prophecy of greatness. He introduced young Salam to poetry, literature and mathematics at an early age. While other children were learning to count to 10, Salam was memorising the multiplication table for 50.

Salam was given a small corner of his father's house to do his daily studying under candlelight. The first coincidental accidents in Salam's life took place in 1938 when his father tried to enroll him in Central Model School in Lahore for Muslim boys. Salam's credentials were beyond any comparison but the headmaster rejected his case on the grounds that Salam would be unable to cope with the affluent city boys due to his rural upbringing. Crestfallen, Hussein enrolled his son in the predominantly-Hindu Government Intermediate College in Jhang. It is there that Salam was introduced to an array of disciplines. He was familiarised with

nuclear, magnetic and electric energies. He was only shown a magnet - for other scientific equipment, he was told he would have to travel to Lahore. It would take many more years till Salam saw his first light bulb at the age of 15, a year before he published his first journal.

Consequently, Salam exceeded all expectations by placing first in the Matriculation examinations and was welcomed on the streets of Jhang by Hindu merchants who had received the joyous news before the child had himself. The hero of Jhang was awarded a scholarship by an Ahmadi group, which allowed for him to attend Government College in Lahore. There, he majored in mathematics primarily to sharpen his skills to prepare for the Indian Civil Service exam, which was his father's aspiration. A further concurrence was that due to World War II, the ICS exam had been postponed and Salam could not sit for it until after the war. Bewildered, Salam decided to make use of this time by pursuing his studies at the University of Cambridge. If it weren't for a third unlikely incident, Salam would never have had the money to attend Cambridge. Through India's Small Peasants' Welfare Fund, Salam was eligible to receive a scholarship to pursue his career in mathematics. Five scholarships were offered that year and four of the people were declared ineligible. Salam benefitted a great deal from this as after the completion of his degree, he was allowed to stay on for a year to do research. It is there that Salam managed to stumble upon theoretical and particle physics. For

Salam, there was no turning back. Salam used the additional funds to conduct lab experiments all year. Salam was also the last person to receive the scholarship as it was abolished the following year.

Incident after incident, Abdus Salam's career was carved into a gilded pathway. It is no shock that he paid huge credit to God whom he believed was responsible for this unlikely journey. Needless to say, Salam was devoutly religious. He refused the opportunity to buy a house in a posh London suburb and instead located his family to Putney so he could be close to a mosque. Salam also led Friday prayers in his self-founded International Center for Theoretical Physics, which would come as a surprise to many students of physics. Upon meeting Einstein for the first time, Salam spent the entire evening convincing Einstein of the concept of unity in Islam. Unlike his fellow Nobel laureate and staunch atheist, Steven Weinberg, Salam, in the world of physics was an outlier - he was a believer. Salam made a point to discuss the compatibility of spirituality and science and even in his Nobel acceptance speech, quoted from the Quran and boldly mentioned that "the creation of physics is the shared heritage of all mankind. East and West, North and South have equally participated in it". It is due to his passion for unison that he developed the groundbreaking unification of energies, a direct result of his hypothesis that elementary particles are no more than diverse aspects of a single primary force. There were two passions in Salam's life; one was to understand physical reality

through physics and the other was to put Islamic civilisation back on top in the world of science and technology. Sadly, only one of those passions were fulfilled in his lifetime.

Along with his piousness, Salam had an undying fondness for Pakistan. Till the day he died, he held a Pakistani passport despite receiving offers from various countries that were willing to naturalise him. Indira Gandhi too offered him the Indian nationality along with the riches of recognition. He kindly refused. Salam, despite reaching great heights in the West, decided to devote his life to his country even after winning the Nobel Prize in Physics. Salam was appointed advisor to president Ayub Khan and his successor

Yahya Khan; he was focused on developing nuclear energy and technology for cheap power sources. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's idea of nuclear energy, however, was unequivocally different. The same accidental incidents that guided him to success slowly pushed him towards his demise. Salam was painfully assigned to various antipathetic roles, one being the Punjab University's football coach.

After the circumcision of Pakistan in 1971, Bhutto steered the country in a direction which irked Salam. Interests in nuclear energies were diverted to developing the nuclear bomb - which Salam wanted no part of - and Bhutto simultaneously began a movement of appeasement with the Arab states. In 1974, Bhutto congregated, in Islamabad, the leaders of the Islamic world. This totalitarian private club consisted of leaders such as Arafat, Qaddafi, King Faisal, Sadat of Egypt and Assad of Syria. To pay his membership dues and to assure the leaders of his fortitude, Bhutto went on to Islamise Pakistan. Alcohol was banned, Quran and Arabic teachings were ramped up and Hajj

TILL THE DAY HE DIED, HE HELD A PAKISTANI PASSPORT DESPITE RECEIVING OFFERS FROM VARIOUS COUNTRIES THAT WERE WILLING TO NATURALISE HIM.

"WE, THE PRESENT GENERATION, SEEM TO HAVE INHERITED A HOUSE WHICH HAS NO WINDOWS, AND ITS WALLS ARE VERY HIGH - THIS IS THE SET OF CONCEPTS WITH WHICH WE HAVE BEEN BLESSED - AND IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO KNOW WHETHER WE HAVE INHERITED A HOUSE OR A PRISON." - PROFESSOR ABDUS SALAM.

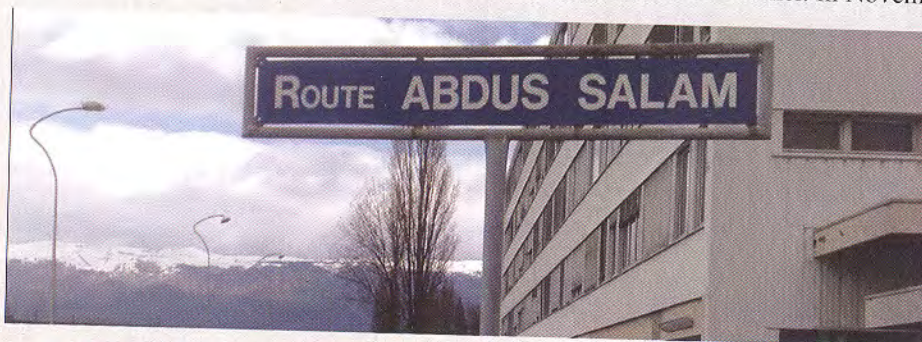
pilgrimages were increased by state sponsorship. Bhutto drove the final nail in the coffin by excommunicating the Ahmadi sect; officially declaring them 'Non-Muslims' and heretics. On the day, Salam woefully wrote in his diary, "Declared non-Muslim, cannot cope." Instant riots erupted in the country targeting Ahmadis, including the ransacking of Salam's family-owned pharmacy in Multan. Salam instantly tendered his resignation and his last ties to Pakistan were forcefully severed. Salam was propelled to fortify his beliefs. He grew a beard and adorned the forename Muhammad. Prevalent persecutions of Ahmadis continued under Zia-ul-Haq's Sharia-inspired rule where each adult Ahmadi was forced to sign written declarations that their leader Ghulam Ahmad is 'an imposter' and all Ahmadis are 'non-Muslims'.

he refused to share his recognition with any country other than Pakistan. No matter what people say, "It is my country," he said. He recounted an incident where after receiving the Nobel Prize he was invited by president Zia-ul-Haq. Salam asked him if he had invited him: as a Jhangi, a Pakistani or a Punjabi? He asked the president why, in a country of Muslims, his people were made second-class citizens. Famously, Zia replied to Salam that Salam himself was a better Muslim than he. Salam fought two wars towards the end of his life; one against the establishment and one against PSP - regretfully, he lost both. He was sure that his life was transient and a preparation for the afterlife. He wanted to be buried in Rabwah alongside his father. In November 1996, Salam's body was flown to Pakistan

where thousands of well-wishers attended his funeral. Sadly, the only ranked government official present was a local superintendent of the Punjab Police. On his tombstone was prescribed, "Abdus Salam, the First Muslim Nobel Laureate". His grave was later violated by scornful vandals who chiselled away the word "Muslim".

It is exhilarating to find that the ground work laid by Dr. Salam led to the discovery of the Higgs-Boson particle via the Particle Accelerator - the accelerator he inaugurated with his colleagues in 1964. The series of accidental coincidences and the miracles that decorated Salam's journey

were truly fascinating but similar circumstances emotionally tortured him later on in his life. His brilliance lay in his resistance to relinquish his quest for knowledge. He understood that civilisations that turned away from science deteriorated while those that empowered it flourished. In a world where true heroes of intellectual endeavours are often overpowered by the celebration of mediocrity, Salam's story screams out to be heard. It howls in the empty hallways of national history from which it is being eliminated. Salam's Pakistan was amputated while he was a teenager and further fractured into two when he was a promising academic. His Pakistan was then collared and chained to the hooks of betrayal. She was younger than him and had wrongfully accused him of heresy. She considered his contributions a blemish instead of her pride and expunged his name from every school book she owned. Salam's Pakistan refused to name even a street in his honour while other countries garnished their roads with his name. His Pakistan was unfaithful, while he loved her till his dying days. Even though he lies peacefully in a dustbed, in a cemetery where people constantly fling trash and human feces to pay their respects to their Ahmadi brethren, Salam continues to give to his Pakistan more than she ever gave to him. ■



A STREET IN CERN, SWITZERLAND: SALAM'S PAKISTAN REFUSED TO NAME EVEN A STREET IN HIS HONOUR WHILE OTHER COUNTRIES GARNISHED THEIR ROADS WITH HIS NAME.

lims'. However, Salam never gave up on his home country and clutched onto its memories till his last days when he was diagnosed with Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP); leaving him a prisoner in his own body. The disease made him fall regularly to the point that he was made to live in a padded room. On many occasions, perturbing fits would leave him wounded. Yet, he hoped to seek refuge in his country before dying. Travelling to Pakistan in extreme illness yielded him nothing as prime minister Benazir Bhutto promised to meet him but left him stranded and heartbroken in his hotel room at the last minute after reconfirming with her advisors - the honouring of Salam would have meant the defamation of Pakistan. It is a matter of great national shame when an icon of brilliance and patriotism is dishonoured and put to disgrace as a casualty of conflicted interests.

During his last years, Salam's life became increasingly painful for himself and people who loved him. In an extremely emotional interview given to a Canadian radio channel, Salam begins, in Urdu, his explanation for holding onto his Pakistani citizenship. He kindly asks the interviewer if he could switch to Punjabi since Urdu was "really difficult" for him. Salam replied that he could not imagine taking another citizenship because



THE MAN BEHIND THE CANVAS

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Unver Shafi Khan always knew he wanted to paint. Born in 1961 in Karachi, he graduated with a degree in English Literature from Kenyon College, USA, and returned to Pakistan to paint during the oppressive Zia era that devastated the arts in Pakistan. Meher Tareen met the brilliant figural painter to learn more about his fascinating journey.

ou returned to Pakistan to paint at a time when Zia had trampled the arts and the media. How difficult was it to start your career as an artist during that period?

In hindsight, the Zia years proved to be a hothouse for a lot of work that broke new ground in music, literature and the visual arts. That's not to say Pakistan felt like a wasteland for expression of any kind. At that time, to say one's ambition was to be an artist most often met with ridicule. I remember people walking away having heard this as if one had just said that one had AIDS or that one was stark raving mad.

When did you sell your first painting?

The first painting I ever sold was in my last year at college though I did have a piece stolen, which was part of my senior thesis. This was quite shocking in a small liberal arts college in the US. Back in Karachi, I set up my first studio in my great-grandmother's house near Jinnah's mausoleum. I started painting and selling work from these premises. I also hand-painted *shalwar kameezes* for Maryam Khaleeli amongst other crazy things I did to continue painting.

I had my first show in 1986 at the Indus Gallery run by the venerable Ali Imam. This is where I met Dr. Akbar Naqvi and Francis Newton Souza and over the years, maintained a bond with all of them. It is in 1991 that I started painting full time (chucked my job in advertising), just before my mother passed away. Assorted solo and group shows, local and international, have followed and I am very lucky to say that I continue to paint. Painters, to be specific, usually live long and colourful lives (literally and otherwise) if they don't succumb to alcohol, drugs or don't commit suicide.

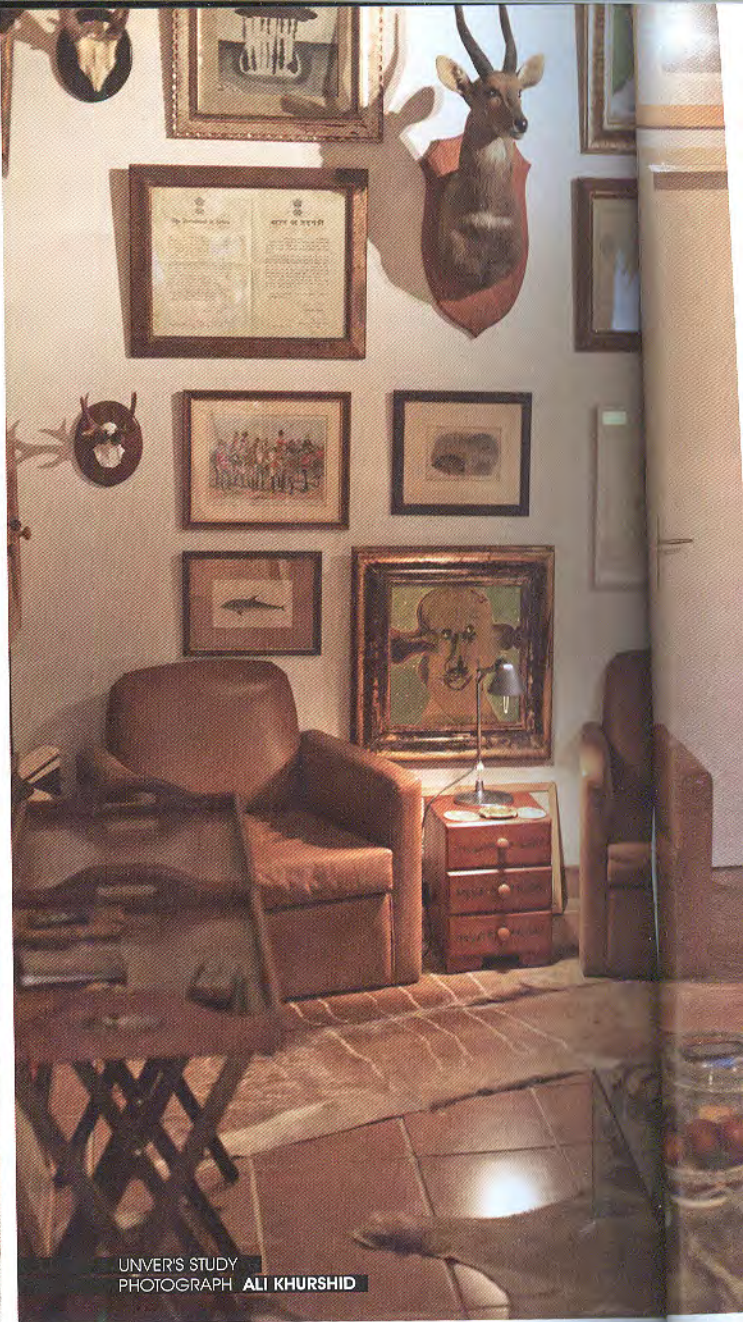
What inspires you?

I always painted as a child and through school. I won the junior art prize in Karachi Grammar School, much to my old friend Sherry Rehman's surprise as she thought she was in line for it. I am happy to say today she has a great collection of contemporary Pakistani art. W.B. Yeats sums it up nicely when it comes to inspiration: "... the abstract joy/the half-read wisdom of demonic images/suffice the ageing man as once the boy." So it was no surprise to me that I found myself in the art building in my first semester in college.

You know, it's the other side that we do not communicate with, which I have always found intriguing - the silent but powerful side of ourselves, our psyches. I would not paint if I had nothing to say through colour and form. Dr. Naqvi expresses this paradigm well using the traditional



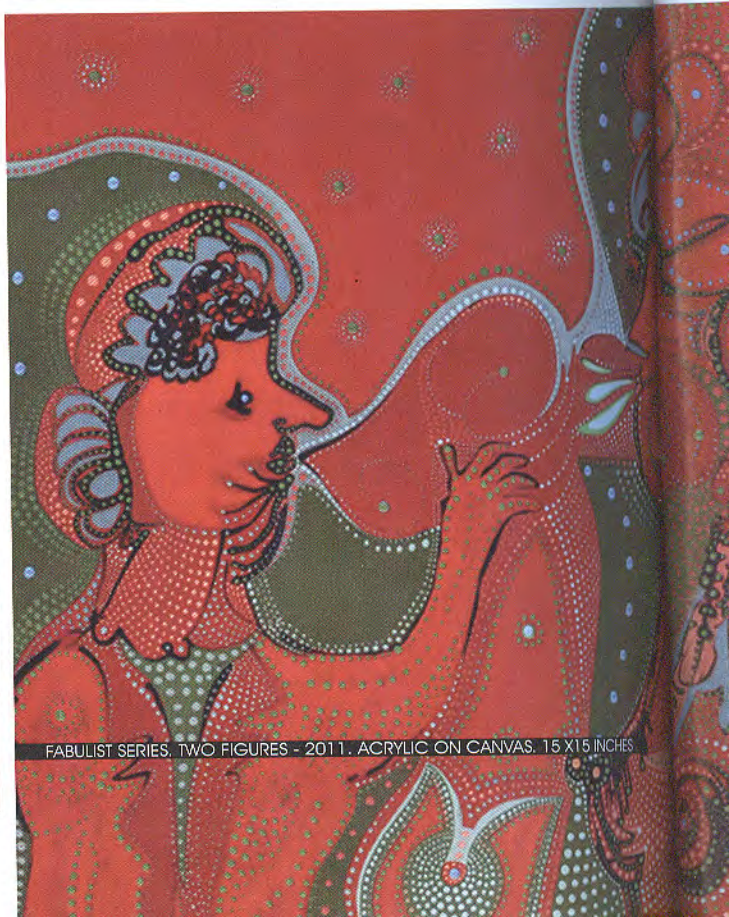
PHOTOGRAPH ALI KHURSHID



UNVER'S STUDY
PHOTOGRAPH ALI KHURSHID



PAINT AND BRUSHES IN UNVER'S STUDIO



FABULIST SERIES, TWO FIGURES - 2011. ACRYLIC ON CANVAS. 15 X 15 INCHES

dichotomy of 'zahir' and 'baatin' - the visual and obvious as opposed to the inward and hidden.

Your signature large landscapes in oil have become more sensual. Was the change in style inspired by your ex-wife, Tanya, as a classic case of art imitating life?

Tanya was my wife and the girl I loved. To the degree that love inspires one, yes, she had everything to do with the subject matter of my work. To have someone share one's creative process so closely is magic. I always loved showing her the new work and valued her reaction.

Were you searching for more serenity in your life and expressing that through your paintings?

Yeah, I would say it was all of that. You can take that and run with it. It's about finding oneself. Also one's relationship with any medium keeps changing (much like with people) and in that journey, one keeps trying to find a new way to express ideas. When one works with materials used in a traditional painting of any kind, it is fun to be challenged by new brushes, new pigments, new paper or canvas. This can change the practical application of paint which has immense significance as it is both a cerebral and a physical act.

Others are welcome to laud the romance of juvenilia but after years of working, I am now more conscious than ever of how I have worked and am now working and personally, that leads to a never-felt-before resonance. And that's part of the journey. That's part of the joy and part of the tragedy! That's really the key.

How was the period in your life when you and Tanya decided to divorce? Did that reflect in your work?

Any relationship of many years takes its time to unravel and distorts one's self. For me, the years leading up to divorce were as confusing and painful as the freedom of the years that have followed. And, of course, I believe that everything is autobiographical and we are always the sum of our experiences.

The Fabulist series touches upon this point in a drama of sexual and emotional dissonance. Dissonance (like in the valency of Uranium) often leads to discovery. I think in this series of paintings, I catalogued everything I was going through at the time that revealed pain and humour. Yet Tanya and I remain friends. I feel it's important to forget all the bad things and remember the good. We remain on good terms and that's the way to go forward.

Tanya kept your name even after the divorce and remains Tanya Shafi Khan. How do you feel about that?

I take it as a compliment and I would like to say that Tanya was so gracious with what little one had. The keeping of the name is actually a funny story. We had a common lawyer, which was very cool. We did like an *eenie meenie* with the work and had nothing to litigate over, thanks to her. The lawyer said there is only one issue, if you would like to keep his name legally, you have to ask his permission...we both laughed!

You saw the fashion world up close with Tanya. What are your views?

I admire style. As for fashion, Jean-Luc Godard wrote, "Never mistake the power of fashion-for its sake, ideas - like women - will disfigure themselves." Having said that, I think the fashion world and the art world are not that removed from each other.

Anyway, is designing *hijaabs* fashion? Maybe I can do hand-painted *burqas* 25 years on.

How do you price your pieces?

It's a process that evolves. To begin with, one has to produce work. Selling work gives one the luxury of being able to carry on making work. Actual pricing is relative as so much of it is luck, manipulation and marketing. I have always focused on making work rather than selling it. In life, there are many easier and more lucrative ways of making money. The recent foray into digital prints with a top print studio in the UK is a way of making work more accessible aside from being so much fun. Not everyone can buy an original painting or get to see all the work I make.

It is said that you are an expert at spotting fake paintings, is that true?

I certainly think I can, to a great degree, do so of the artists I admire in Pakistan - Sadequain, Souza, Ahmed Parvez, Chughtai to name a few that have gone. The inundation of fakes is, by the way, a compelling argument for buying contemporary art. I recommend going to artists that one knows or whose work one likes, to buy their work from them directly. I say this with a nod to some gallery owners and respected collectors who rubber-stamp some blatant fakes of the above mentioned. It's tough to find an artist selling his own fakes if you get my drift.

Have you seen your own fakes?

I don't think I'm at a level to be worth it! On a funnier note, I often think maybe a forger finds it hard to copy the effect of my oil paintings. Some very respected people familiar with painting techniques have asked if I use the air-brush gun to create the extremely smooth and brushstroke-less effect in the current oils. Equally, I humour myself by imagining a forger sitting in front of one of my Fabulist series acrylic paintings and thinking '**** this! Putting down these endless dots in mad sequence is no way to earn cash.'

Who are some of the international painters you admire?

Many. A visit to my study will be self-revelatory.

What about Pakistani artists?

Again, there are many both living and dead, and from the other side of the border as well! There is no such thing as Pakistani art without a sense of where we have come from. But if the history of a nation is left in the hands of the establishment, one would think God created Pakistan overnight and culture is only about religion.

What do you feel about the new emerging talent in Pakistan?

I think no one can deny the fact that contemporary Pakistani artists, musicians, writers and suicide bombers command a global audience. We are a very talented nation (50% under the age of 25) with some grave misdirection.

What are your political views?

By and large: armed forces = institutionalised corruption. Bureaucracy = yes sir, no sir, all bags full sir. Politicians = rape and pillage till the army moves in. I pray we can get someone who is not corrupt, who is not a hypocrite. ■

[TIME OUT]

IN OVER A DECADE, MUSHARRAF ALI FAROOQI HAS AUTHORED VARIOUS CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED NOVELS AND CHILDREN'S BOOKS AND TRANSLATED CLASSICAL URDU PROSE. HAILING FROM KARACHI AND DIVIDING HIS TIME BETWEEN CANADA AND PAKISTAN, MUSHARRAF ALI FAROOQI IS WELL ESTABLISHED IN INTERNATIONAL LITERARY CIRCLES AND HAS GAINED RENOWN LOCALLY WITH HIS NOVEL, *BETWEEN CLAY AND DUST*. WITH AN UNAFFECTED PERSONA AND OVERFLOWING INTELLIGENCE AND WIT, MR. FAROOQI IS SURELY A MASTER IN THE ART OF STORYTELLING.

The art of storytelling

BY MARIAM SHAH

You said at the book launch at NCA that writers these days are more interested in making statements rather than telling good stories. This novel is set not in present times or post-9/11 but post-Partition, however, I do believe that it is relevant to these times as well.

MAF: Absolutely. This story is not about a particular time - it's about the exercise of choices and how we reach our decisions. Both Ustad Ramzi and Gohar Jan are given a set of choices and we sometimes overlook how difficult it is for old people to make difficult choices or changes in their lives. With Gohar Jan and Ustad Ramzi, there is compassion and mutual respect as artists. In present times, the *pahalwan* has become a caricature with a huge belly, taking drugs, etc. however, in the times of Gama Pahalwan, it was not like that and he was a true and great artist and similarly, with *tawaifs* as well, being a great singer or dancer was highly respected. But with the abolition of princely states post-Partition, the sponsorship for these professions ended as they were patronised by the *nawabs* and the *maharajas* who used to pay for their training, expenses and upkeep.

There was no use of italics for words in Urdu such as *akhara*, *tawaif*, *kotha*, etc. and no glossary at the end either - how come?

MAF: I didn't care whether this novel was going to be published in the West or not, but it could not be condescending towards this culture. The italics are not there for a specific reason - an *akhara* is an *akhara* and it's not outwardly in this context. I didn't want there to be an element of foreignness.

What's your favourite character?

MAF: *Mai kyoum bataoon*? Gulab Deen is my favourite character. He is an agent of change and we all like agents of change!

No, seriously...

MAF: The favourite character is, of course, Ustad Ramzi. He is the protagonist of the story and the whole story is because of him.

You were a journalist in Karachi and moved to Toronto in the 1990s. Tell us about your career.

MAF: When my wife and I moved to Toronto, I used to work in the kitchen at fast food restaurants such as Pizza Hut, Harvey's, McDonalds and Taco Bell because as an engineering dropout, I did not have a proper degree and couldn't get a job in journalism. So during the time until I got my passport, I had decided that I would work in the mornings and in the evenings, I would read, write and work on my novel and that's what I did. My novel finished in 1998. I submitted it to 20 agents, a few wrote back. I chose one and got published. *Salar Jang's Passion* was printed in 2000 in England and India.

It was as simple as that? And then you went on to children's books?

MAF: Yes, it was! When I started writing, I wanted to be a writer for kids - I hate adults. For me, the greatest achievement a writer can have is to have a picture book and that's what I love. So, when I was in Karachi and working at *The News*, I'd started writing short

ables and fairy tales. So, when I had around 10 of them together, I thought *ab toh hum writer bunn gaye!* I put them in an envelope and sent them out to all the major names in publishing in the US and UK. I got one rejection letter after the other, however, when Penguin replied, with a rejection they also mentioned that no publisher accepted anything directly from an author and one has to come through an agent to even be considered. So, by the time I was in Toronto and ready to get published, I knew the way to go about it.

Do you have children?

MAF: No. We used to have a cat. It passed away a few years back.

How many hours a day do you spend writing?

MAF: It used to be like that in the early years. I would write a few hours daily but after a while, you are constantly working. There's really never a time when I'm not writing. Even if I'm reading or going somewhere or sitting here speaking to you, this is all part of my life as a writer and the profession takes over your life after a while.

Coming to your work as a translator, where you have and are in the process of translating epic Urdu classics, what difficulties do you face in that aspect? Please also tell us about the Urdu Project.

MAF: While translating *Dastan-e Amir Hamza*, I had to face a lot of difficulty finding good Urdu dictionaries that could explain certain words I could not understand, and I couldn't find those words in most dictionaries. I would find one word in one dictionary, and for another word, I'd have to refer to another dictionary. I have Pakistan's biggest collection of dictionaries that includes Urdu, Persian and Arabic dictionaries. So I know exactly how tough it is, which is why I thought about creating a resource base that will make the work of other translators easier. We will hopefully be releasing an Urdu thesaurus later this year or early next year under the Urdu Project. It will also be available online for free.

How long did it take you to translate *The Adventures of Amir Hamza*?

MAF: *Dastan-e Amir Hamza* was the first classic *dastan* that was translated into English. It took me about seven years.

How much patience does one need for that?

MAF: Tons - but it was also a matter of not having the resources to do something at a stretch. It's not like when you get a grant or sponsorship and you're just sitting from morning till evening. I was working and I was doing my own writing, had responsibilities at home, etc. *Between Clay and Dust* got finished over a period of 10 years.

Most of your books have been published in India. Why is that?

MAF: The Indian publishing industry is very established and highly professional. *Pakistan mai saray chor baithay hain*. If you take your book to someone to get it published here, they will take money from you for publishing it and then mess up the distribution and the publicity - so there's no comparison. The publishing industry in India is like the industry in the West - with all the safeguards - and you have copywriters, proofreaders, editors and publishers who actually know what the hell publishing is. You can't just have printing presses and shops and call it an industry.

Have you been approached to make *Between Clay and Dust* into a movie?

MAF: Yes, there have been many offers.

Will it be an Indian movie?

MAF: What's wrong with that?

Obviously, you're open to the idea and you are working on it?

MAF: Yes, but I'm not working on it. It will be out of my hands if a movie needs to be made, but I'll be happy to have a movie made out of it. Who wouldn't be happy?

Would you like to star in it?

MAF: Yeah, as Ustad Ramzi. Or maybe Tamami. No, Gohar Jan!

Who would you actually like to star as?

MAF: Gulab Deen.

Naseeruddin Shah could be your Ustad Ramzi. He has praised the book as well. Who would you like to play Ustad Ramzi?

MAF: I can't comment on this... How about Amrish Puri as Ustad Ramzi? *Chalay ga?*

You are quite critical on the quality of criticism a writer receives and you urge people not to write like their contemporaries. Why is that?

MAF: Flattery kills you and makes you completely blind. I tell people not to write in competition of their contemporaries - always write in competition with the masters. If you're competing with your contemporaries who are at the bottom of the pit, there's no hope as they themselves are struggling - what can you learn from them?

What are your views on the trend in our society where people have stopped speaking in Urdu and converse entirely in English? Urdu is not 'cool' enough anymore, it seems.

MAF: This stems from an inferiority complex, and being ashamed of your own language is like being ashamed of your mother. It's a malaise, a mental disease. When you go abroad, it is your core cultural self and what you can tell them about your world and your language that makes you interesting. Everyone has seen Disney films in their childhood and eaten KFC. If you are not connected with your culture, what is it that makes you interesting?

Any regrets in life?

MAF: Many. Enough. People always ask, how are you doing? Are you happy? I tell them that if a person is not happy, they should die. What's keeping you from hanging yourself? If you're alive, then you must be happy to be alive, or you're still finding it bearable. Whoever is alive is happy, that's my answer.

Do you enjoy these PR exercises with book launches, interviews and the like?

MAF: This is all part of my job as a writer. There are some people who make faces and complain about it, but *dil mai barray laddoo phoot rahay hotay hain*. Everyone loves exposure, who doesn't? And as a writer, it's my desire to have as wide an audience as possible.

When you are writing a book, do you feel a sense of responsibility to convey a particular message?

MAF: I don't write to teach - it's not didactic, it is to explore. You can write a story in different ways, one is for enjoyment. It is a very human thing to seek enjoyment from literature but then there are certain books that are very close to you which are very personal, like this book (*Between Clay and Dust*). It took me so long to write it because I didn't want to rush it or get anything wrong. They say that reading literature makes you a good human and a complete person. But if you read the story of Tarzan, how does that make you a complete person? For me, the one function that literature does perform is that it makes you more conscious of the delicacy of human relationships and how vulnerable we are as human beings to different influences and gestures. So if you read a lot of literature, you become more aware of the complexities of these situations and you become more sensitive and more attuned towards the other person's feelings and thoughts. You also begin to become more forgiving of others and become aware of your own feelings.

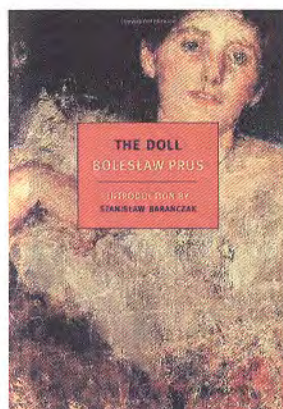
Rabbit Rap, the illustrated novel by Musharraf Ali Farooqi and Michelle Farooqi, was released in August 2012 to critical acclaim, followed by his third children's book *Tik Tik: The Master of Time* in October 2012. ■

MY LIFE IN BOOKS

BY MUSHARRAF ALI FAROOQI



The books that have had a profound impact on Musharraf Ali Farooqi's life and writing.

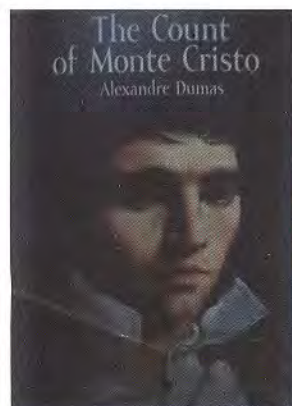


THE DOLL

BY BOLESŁAW PRUS

This Polish novel explores the contours of obsessive love. I read this novel some 15 years ago and was immediately gripped by the powerful

storytelling. It can teach you everything you want to know about capricious beloveds.

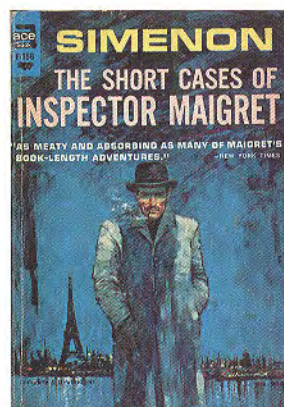


THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

BY ALEXANDRE DUMAS

It is one of my favourite novels. A page-turner and a fantastic study of a mind obsessed with revenge. Dumas based

this novel on the true story of a man who set out to avenge himself. It is about a thousand pages in length and at the end, I desperately wished there were another thousand pages to read.

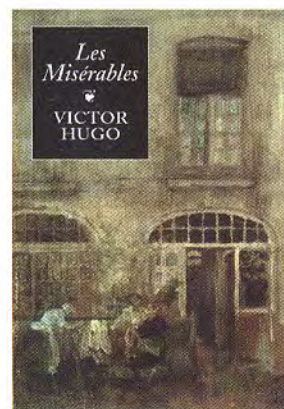


THE COMPLETE INSPECTOR MAIGRET MYSTERIES

BY GEORGES SIMENON

These short detective novels will one day be remembered as some of the greatest literary masterpieces written in the 20th century. Inspector Maigret, the protagonist of many of

Simenon's novels, has a profound knowledge of the human soul, and it is this knowledge, more than any detective techniques that allow him to get to the bottom of most mysteries.

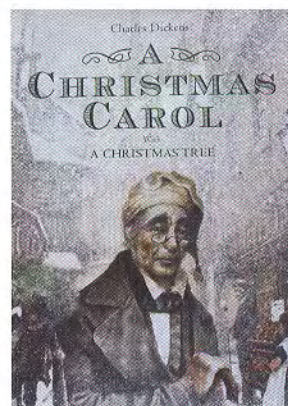


LES MISÉRABLES

BY VICTOR HUGO

Some sprawling novels by great masters can teach us a lot about the need of having absolute command over one's material before one sits down to write a novel. This book is the haunting tale of a man's struggle for redemption, honour and dignity. A long read but one that

is totally engrossing. In the hero Jean Valjean, and the villain Javert, Hugo has written perhaps the most moving and cruel struggle for redemption in literary history. It remains the most unforgettable novel I have ever read.



THE COMPLETE WORKS OF CHARLES DICKENS

CHARLES DICKENS

One of the reasons why we find a lot of bad writing around these days is that reading Dickens has gone out of fashion. There is a

world in Dickens that exists nowhere else in literature. Just a mere brush with this world can teach us what truly great writing means. The mere consciousness of Dickens's works can sometimes help the creation of good writing.

Dear so-called Muslims,

Of course we love Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and we are all furious and deeply hurt when someone insults him but the Quran itself records instances where every prophet faced the worst kind of ridicule. It has happened many times in the past and it will happen again in the future. The idiots behind the movie said it would expose Islam as a violent religion. Now, they are pointing to the riots as proof. We need to stop playing in the hands of those who seek to discredit our religion.



The sad truth is that there are ongoing wars. Drone attacks, bombs, bullets, death, torture and interrogations all in the name of protection of free speech and liberties including through arresting and killing people for what they say and think, while on the receiving end of this are people whose lands are rich in resources and who are being tagged as terrorists. Everything the warmongers say is upheld as freedom of speech, everything that is said as a protest to war and occupation is denounced as terrorism and crime. This is what it is all about: profit, not the Prophet. Why then are we so easily instigated to self-destruct?

The manner in which we reacted to a ridiculous YouTube video which was clearly designed to do mischief, was appalling. We need to internalise one very important point: the Prophet is neither in need of our love nor our protection because he is the Prophet of God and has God's love and protection. Rioting and vandalism in the name of a "Love the Prophet" day is as insulting to the Prophet as any attempt to vilify him. We should love the Prophet everyday and learn from how he conducted his life. It is us, the so-called faithful, who are in need of God's love and protection. In our actions, we should ask ourselves whether we live with the grace, intelligence, patience and humility which the Prophet exemplified.

Are we building a Pakistan where in our daily conduct we practice social protection based on law and jurisprudence for all of our fellow citizens? Are we progressive in our thinking so that we practice learning from others, respecting the knowledge and ideas of others? Do we practice the protection of equality, do we protect and provide work and social and economic opportunities for all? Or at least most? If people do come out in anger and are easily paid or incited to do violence, it is because their own experience of disempowerment and poverty confirms that they do not yet live in such a state.

Those who incited violence on September 21, 2012 (including the Federal Minister of Railways who irresponsibly called for the murder of the filmmaker), should hang their heads in shame. The cowardice displayed by the supposedly secular and liberal PPP government was disgraceful as it pandered to the rage. Governments are supposed to protest at international forums, not encourage bloodshed on the streets. It is despicable that these rioters incited and supported by *mullahs*, most of whom are uneducated about their religion and its messenger, have managed to cause so much damage as the day of rage swallowed more than 20 lives and billions worth of property damage - not to mention the harm it has

caused to the perception of Islam worldwide.

And to make matters worse, the brutal attack on Malala Yousafzai, a 14-year-old child, was one of the darkest days in our history. Is this Islam? Would the Prophet approve of shooting an innocent child in the head? And for what? Only because she wanted an education and was advocating for it. This barbaric behaviour by supposed Muslims is the real insult to our religion.

Justice against murder and mayhem must prevail. This cynical use of sentiment for criminal acts must be faced with firm resolve. Pakistan cannot be held hostage by gangs of marauding thugs who conduct crime in the name of religion. Pakistan must not be given up to the minority of intolerants. Pakistan must not become a place where the few intolerant are protected and shielded while tolerance is destroyed. This will be the real tragedy. Wake the hell up!

YOURS SINCERELY,

PAPER
MAGAZINE