Five Faces of Eve

SYEDA SHAMIN MORTADA

ONE of the most popular book stores in the city, Words and Pages, and the creative publishing house, writers.ink, jointly hosted the launch of a book on poems, called Five Faces of Eve. The poems in this collection, brings forward the different forms of womanhood; starting from a girl, to a lover, then a wife, a mother and most importantly, the woman herself. The poems have significant reflections of what the women in our society experience and how they are viewed, regardless of their age or social background. Eve's Song for instance, describes the situation best - "When they made me/They broke off one rib Ever since I keep trying to break free/From the rest/Of the cage... Vermillion brands/On my forehead/Or bruises in shades/Of black or red/You have given me/A rib for sure But you have never failed/To ensure/What was made from it/Is branded yours"!



Dr. Razia Khan with Rumana Siddique.

The poet Rumana Siddique transfers her personal experience, observations, feelings, thoughts, ups and downs, and the things that affect her life into concrete forms of literary art. Some of her works are autobiographical. She plays with words to succinctly demonstrate what women go through in the different stages of life. The sharp and sleek observations in the poems make them sound very modern, witty yet poignant. The spontaneity is palpable all throughout the collection.

Rumana is preoccupied by love, which she sees as mysterious and paradoxical. In Loving You Paradoxically she says: "I love you because/You drive me crazy Because/You keep me sane. /I love you because/You give me, pleasure/Because You cause me pain./I love you because/You give me meaning/Because You render me inane ------". She also draws a vivid picture of the role of women as wives. In Our Story, she says, "Let our story not be told On paper/Leave it on lips/To tell and retell In all the ways/We know." The poet also describes the celebration of Motherhood and the euphoria a child can bring to the mother. In one of her poem she says - "I have not seen Heaven/But I smelt it/In the hidden folds/Of your wrinkly skin". Each poem in the book has been dealt with a lot of insight and compassion; at times the tone is filled with irony and sadness while at other times it is playful. In some of the poems a striking mix of humour and tears.

Literary stalwarts like Dr. Razia Khan, former Dhaka University head of the English Department, a poet and writer herself and Dr. Nuzhat Amin, Professor of the English Department, Dhaka University, graced the occasion as the Chief Guests. Both of them deeply appreciated the talent of the poet. Dr. Razia Khan commented on the depth, clarity and genuineness of the poems and thought that the poems were a modern representation of classical themes while Dr. Nuzhat Amin talked about the concrete forms of the poems and the rare qualities of the poet. Dr. Khan's personal favourite, is the poem titled: The Passionate Philanderer to His Would-be Wife: "...Come live with me and be my wife/And I will all the efforts make/A secure life and compass-like.../Our home will be my final dock You all my states, all your princes/I My throne will be our cosy hearth/And just as I promised my love You will have gained paradise on earth."

The launching ceremony was also attended by other literary figures, family members and colleagues of the author, as well as her well wishers and friends.

The poems of Rumana Siddique have echoes of Elliot, Frost, Milton and such classical poets. The 80-page book is complemented by some excellent paintings of women, done by wellknown artists such as Farida Zaman, Nazlee Laila Mansur, Jyoustna Habib and Nasreen Begum. The beautiful illustrations have surely given a new and refreshing look to the book. Though this is her first volume of poetry, Rumana has been writing since childhood and selections of her poems have already been published in various national dailies and literary magazines. The poet is currently settled in Dhaka and teaches at the Department of English, in Dhaka University.