

RE-READING

Travels through the Mandela mind

Helal Mohammed Khan analyses the life of the greatest man in these times

STRUGGLE, power and vision. All three waited to be combined by one man. And that brought the South Africans their freedom, and to the world an apartheid-free existence...

swim in the clear, cold streams, and to catch fish with twine and sharpened bits of wire. Then you carry yourself into some tenderly romantic ventures. Why not? Mandela did!

The subsequent parts (two and three) discover Mandela in Johannesburg, his thoughts now shaping into a fresh political mindset. Out of the rubble of apartheid, you see the rise of a leader destined to lead his people from behind bars...



a new independent South African nation. You will find its clauses, with their universal appeal, outclass parallel works like the American Declaration of Independence...

Your disgust of apartheid turns into sheer horror when Mandela unravels (in parts five to seven) how barbarous 'government machineries' (include the darkest laws) are applied to forcefully silence the anti-apartheid movement.

In describing the movement, Mandela never misses out the sacrifices and contributions of like-minded and sympathetic whites. The selflessness of Bram Fischer, Mandela's lawyer and friend, will touch you to say the least.

Moved by his 'total sacrifice' for a noble cause, you also see a Mandela yearning for a family life. "Time may seem to stand still for those of us in prison, but it did not halt for those outside", writes the off-rooted man...

evaluate his own life...Had I made the right choice in putting the people's welfare even before that of my own family?" You are not surprised to hear it from a man with a political career of fifty years. And just in case you look askance at the exhaustive list of the book's 'dedications' not making any mention of Mandela's wives, you end up charmed as Mandela's memoir never falls short of crediting his success to the love, care and sacrifices of his wives and children.

The latter chapters describe Robben Island. This is the island-prison where Mandela stayed for the greater period of his captivity (it was later listed as a UNESCO heritage). Ah, there are the unending sorrows, eternal hopelessness and the occasional joys of prison life!

Then there is also the other side of the Mandela coin. Mandela justifies (in chapter eight) the violent struggle by MK, the military wing of the ANC of which Mandela himself was the leader. Referring to MK's May 1983 car bombings which left nineteen people dead and two hundred plus injured...

In the concluding parts, Mandela deliberates on how flexibility of political ideals displayed by politicians on both sides of the struggle brought a peace for all in South Africa. There was always light at the end of the tunnel, and the journey was difficult to say the least.

The Mandela memoir thus turns out to be a pathfinder for peace in any part of the world.

The deep impression that it creates every time I turn over its pages has an effect of healing in itself. As I take leave of you today, please allow me to remind you of the disputed cartoon that made headlines in July. It featured Mandela's 'dead body', with several other living South African leaders staring at the dissected corpse of their 'father of the nation', as if wondering what all really consisted of a Mandela. As for me, I really wish I knew what unearthly elements in a human being make a legend of him.

Helal Mohammed Khan is a postgraduate (MA) in English from National University. E-mail: helalimohammedkhan@gmail.com

Romeo and Juliet redux

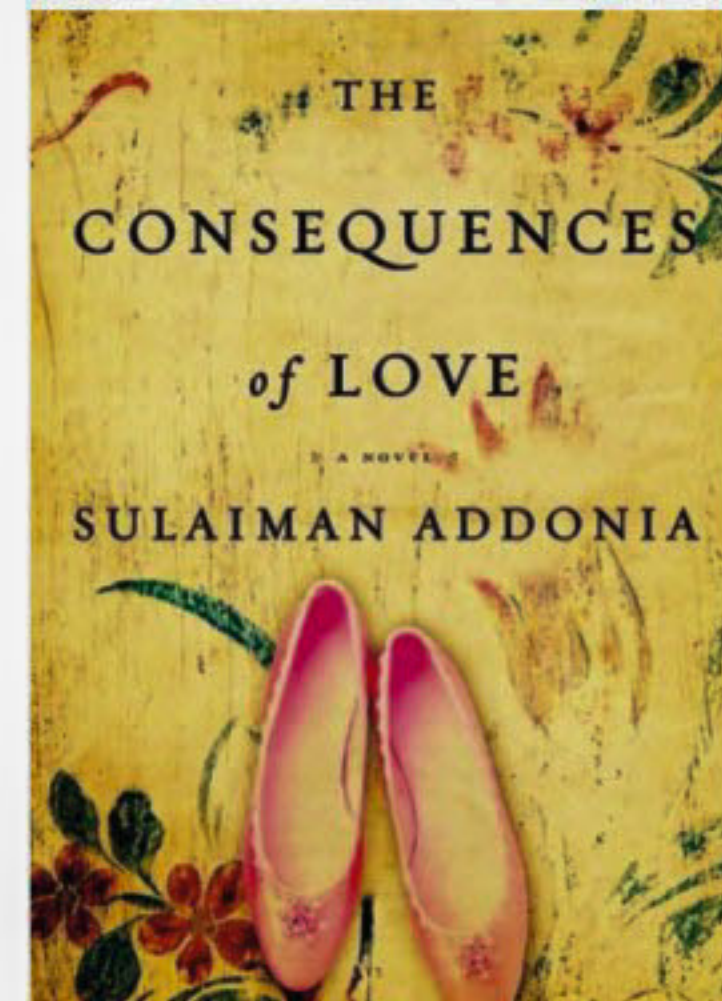
Charles R. Larson dwells on a twice-escaping writer

HOW many times has the Romeo and Juliet story been retold? Having asked that question, I'm not certain that Eritrean writer Sulaiman Addonia had Shakespeare in mind when he wrote his evocative story of two star-crossed lovers, not in Eritrea but in Saudi Arabia. However, the publishers of 'The Consequences of Love' highlight the connection to a story that depicts the near impossibility of love in such a stultifying and repressive country.

might conclude that homosexual sex is preferable to heterosexual sex. There are even cafes with rooms set off for men (of all ages) to have sex together.

Naser and his younger brother, Ibrahim, were sent out of Eritrea by their mother, who feared that they would be killed during the war with Ethiopia. After a brief period of time in Sudan they were sent on to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to be taken care of by their mother's brother. The boys are ten and thirteen, respectively, when they meet their uncle. He turns out to be not much of a protector; in fact he uses Naser to pay off his obligation to his kafeel, or sponsor, which every non-Saudi has to have in order to reside in the country.

By the time of the rape, Naser has already observed the hypocrisy surrounding him no matter where he goes and what he observes. The country's religious police are everywhere, like maggots living off the flesh of the young and the innocent. If the police catch a young man and a woman together, the couple can be carted off and imprisoned, flogged, even stoned to death or beheaded.



The Consequences of Love Sulaiman Addonia Random House

in the absence of female glamour, boys like you are the perfect substitute. Why hide your attractiveness and your tender physique like a veiled woman? You are the closest my customers have to a beautiful and sensual person roaming freely in their world.

Worse, men constantly abuse younger men and boys up until the time of their marriages. So ubiquitous is this practice that one

drops a note on the ground near him is wrapped in an abaya; all Naser can see are the slits that reveal her eyes. She might be ugly or, worse, she might be a man dressed like a woman so that the religious police can trap him.

The machinations needed to resolve this mystery are as inventive and elaborate as those that Shakespeare used in Romeo and Juliet. That said, it should also be stated that Addonia's novel is a clever and imaginative as it is critical of Saudi hypocritical morality. Once communication between Naser and Fiore begins, the suspense is ratcheted up and this astonishingly beautiful tale works its way to what can only be described as a breathless conclusion as events and their consequences become bleaker and bleaker.

Sulaiman Addonia is the lucky one. The jacket on the book says that like his main character he fled Ethiopia following the 'Om Hajar massacre in 1976,' then went to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia but, later, with his brother "successfully sought asylum in the U.K. as underage immigrants." So he escaped twice, one might say. And then he wrote this sensuous account of love in an inhumane country.

Charles R. Larson is Professor of Literature at American University in Washington DC

The many strands of experience

Subrata Kumar Das discovers love, war and misery

IMDADUL Haq Milon, who has played a vital role in inculcating reading habits among Bangladeshis, is hardly considered for his serious works. He is mostly evaluated as a writer of popular fiction. We generally do not remember that Milon is a writer of Noorjahan (1st vol 1995, 2nd vol 2002), Bhumiputro (1985) or Jabojjibon (first published in Journal 1976, in book form in 1990).

the Pakistan army, just as Lalul was caught by the same army in 1971. Let us go through the description of the day they fall into Pakistani hands:

Tughlaq, 1964, is the second Kannada play, translated into English by Karnad. It is now recognized as a classic. The tale is about the dreams and aspirations of an over-ambitious, virtuous king. Karnad engages history and mythology to tackle contemporary themes. The play is an allegory on the Nehruvian era. In contemporary political situations, Tughlaqi is a Hindi proverb.

'Khorshed said: 'Now is the main job. We've to swim across the canal. Do it in your own way. If you don't want to get your clothes wet, take them off. No need to be shy.'

What a sorry saga that even the female members of the team did not hesitate to disrobe themselves. They just took their saris and

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Jibonpur Imdadul Haq Milon Ananyo, Dhaka

blouses off in their hands and, holding them high, began to wade through the water. Nothing different happened to me either. ... We did put on our clothes back on when we reached the other side of the canal. The search lights were rolling over us. Instantly we lay down as we had earlier. When the search lights went over, we got up. At that moment a tiger-like voice shouted, 'Halt!'

It is at this point that Milon delineates the matter of how the protagonist had become the captive of the Pakistan army during the War of Liberation. The single story of Lalul and his associates as they make their hazardous trip toward Pakistan could have sufficed. But the writer has simply added more meat to the tale. During the time the current storyline runs, he very frequently switches back to the incidents that occurred during the Liberation War time and even in the protagonist's early days.

Lalul is an unemployed young man in Dhaka. With the help of his elder brother he makes some attempts to build a career for himself, but being unsuccessful time and again, he decides to leave the country. That leads to the plan to leave for Dubai through Pakistan. He comes in contact with people who trade in human traffic with Pakistan. Thus the novel actually delineates the tragic situation of contemporary Bangladesh society as well as their hopelessness in the early days of the eighties of the last century.

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Lalul was not a freedom fighter in that active sense of the meaning. The truth is that because he looked skinny, his commander did not give him a combat role on the battlefield. He was engaged in collecting information for the Mukti Bahini. More than that, one day he tried to flee to join the war from which he had so long restrained himself thinking about the helplessness of his mother. In flashbacks Lalul not only talks about his Muktijuddho

Old allegories to explain new times

Farida Shaikh spots meaning in drama

BALI, The Sacrifice, has a unique place in the field of Indian drama. The play projects belief in God, in Hinduism, and Jainism --- one belief whose rituals revolve round blood and the other that abhors killing and blood. Beyond the literal lies the more profound meaning, that violence is an integral part of human existence and that the moral dilemma encountered on account of violence is part of everyday life.

and goes around asking people, 'Will you take my old age?' No one accepts him except his son Puru. This is a play dealing with personal responsibility and has been compared by some critics to Sophocles' Antigone and after the image of an Alienated Modern Man.

The story line is beautiful, like a fairy-tale! The king and the queen both love each other very much. The king, out of love for his queen, has become a believer in Jainism. Jains are against all kinds of bloodshed and violence. However, the king discovers that his queen has betrayed him. So to ward off the evil consequences of the queen's unfaithfulness, the king and the queen together have to make a sacrifice, Bali, to the blood thirsty Hindu gods.

The Dreams of Tipu Sultan and Bali The Sacrifice by Girish Karnad

Girish Karnad is internationally known as a playwright and filmmaker. Most of his works are based on explorations into folklore, mythology and history as means of tackling contemporary scenes. His works are anchored

The queen, nevertheless, is innocent. She is not sorry for or ashamed of her action, for what happened was without her will and it was beautiful! Moreover, the king and the queen are 'coupled in the eyes of God...fire as the witness...bound together in vow.p.113. By performing



The Dreams of Tipu Sultan and Bali The Sacrifice by Girish Karnad Oxford India Paperbacks

the sacrifice together, the queen, as wife, becomes guilty of adultery. This is a moral dilemma for the queen. To counter the wrath of the gods the king resorts to substituting a cockerel made of dough to serve as a mock ritual for the Bali. There is no blood, but the purpose of sacrifice, killing a living bird with real red blood, is there. This gives rise to a Catch 22-like situation. The inanimate substitution does not cancel the intent of the action and is just a cover up for the guilty person and the invisible blood.

Girish Karnad is an icon of contemporary Indian drama, similar to Vijay Tendulkar and Babul Sirkar. His dream was to write in English like Shakespeare, like T.S.Eliot. He is an outstanding film director and actor; connected to Television Institute of India; Sangeet Natak Akademi and Director, the Nehru Centre, London. He has been much honoured --- with the Padma Bhushan and the prestigious Jnanpith Award.

Wiping away of religious rites creates a social vacuum, and mere substitution may not necessarily be the moral solution. Just as during his birth the king, while still connected to his mother's placenta, was drowned in blood, now his wife, by substituting the cockerel made of dough is 'drowning him in guilt'. So notes the king's mother. She continues, emphatically, that 'the only relationship in the world which does not wither and fade away is that of hate.' P.115

Karnad is a versatile genius. His latest, Wedding Album, 2008, compares the past and the present bridal couples. Previously, couples met for the first time on their wedding day. That has now been substituted by many, many e-mails, SMSes, phone calls, tapes and scanned images. Yet, as he notes, one element of the plot remains unchanged: the couple agree to step into unknown, uncharted territory--- each other. And this is revealing of contemporary India and beyond--- Bangladesh too!

The low caste ugly mahout, who is supposedly involved with the queen, suggests his own punishment to the king --- hang a dough image of him by the tree. And the crass humour is that if dough cockerel is fit for the gods, then why not dough man fit for the king? However, would a dough man satisfy the queen? The man is innocent; he is doing his work regarding the animal, in this case an elephant. The queen desires the company of

Karnad, when just twenty three years' old, wrote his first play, Yayati in 1961, in his adopted language Kannada. Yayati is a king who in the prime of his life is cursed to old age

in history, marked by great plots, consistent characters, precise speeches combined with lyrics and witty dialogue. An instance '...But do you know you can love a city like a woman?' When Yudhishtira tells Draupadi in the Mahabharata that he has lost her in the game of dice, she asks: 'Whom did you lose first, yourself or me?' it is a continuation of the queen's story in Bali when she questions performing sacrifice together and to be regarded as being guilty of adultery.

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Farida Shaikh is a critic and is involved with The Reading Circle (TRC).

Subrata Kumar Das is a teacher and writer.