

Forgotten Faces

By Dr. Fouzia Saeed Publisher Lok Virsa, Islamabad

by

Dr. Shamim Zaidi

A beautiful book indeed the first comment on seeing the book which compels you to select it for your reading. The moment you start reading, you have embarked upon a journey holding hand of the author. It is not only a biography of Bali Jatti or prominent theater artists of that period simultaneously. It is not the documentation of theater world rather. It is a great collage of experience of tradition, glance at culture and witness of reality, opening a window to give a direction to our thoughts. Dr.Fouzia, takes you along from chapter to chapter and you see these characters, entertainers sometimes enjoying, sometimes facing hardships, at time busy in bargaining and negotiating. Dr.Fouzia has met these characters, she talked to them she lived with them and has painted the pictures of their world in words. The book is recommended reading for sentinel of art, cultural, historians and every one who seeks to ascertain a link with the artists who have lost their identities in the ruins of time. Ladies & Gentlemen, this topic is not widely searched and others have hardly ever tried to discover the beauty of this tradition and people connected with it, which despite all the sufferings they had to face, have tried to keep these traditions alive. This work can only be undertaken by someone who has love for the traditions and passion for their revival if not in practice at least in the form of a book. Only Dr. Fouzia a Ph.D from Minnessofa, but whole heartedly immersed with the artistic tradition of country could do it. May it be establishing SANJ or organizing first ever folk theater festival. As a true researcher and authentic folklorist, she used to mix up with these performers and result was the first ever book “Women in Folklore” followed by other best seller book “Tabo” a very bold effort and now we have “Forgotten Faces” in our hands.

This book is an authentic resource material for the researchers of Cultural Anthropology. Folk theater is an important segment of folk lore. Documentation of intangible heritage is a very difficult and technical art. This powerful folk tradition, transferred from generation to the next generation. Dr.Fouzia has very intelligently documented its when she talks about the children of folk theater artists.

Meanwhile, it is a worthwhile reference book for the students and researchers of Department of Gender Studies, of excellence for women studies and the women research and resource center.

Author, has very intelligently appraised the audience about the other side of all these glamorous characters.

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There is food for thought, for those involved in Gender and Development, look at the character of Bali Jatti, who became the first Women Owner of a theater, performing male characters on stage, but her struggle is true example of exploitation by men, may it be her husband or her son or the men attached to the profession.

This piece of writing infact has opened new vistas for the researcher to explore, to assimilate, to develop and to carry forward our heritage which seeks attention for its custodians. You peep into the world of folk theaters through eyes of the author. She introduces the nuts and boots of the theater, and documents the famous nomadic theater groups of time, like Phaji Shah and Gaman and others.

She calls Bali as legendary Bali Jatti. The title of the book says “Forgotten Faces”, Daring women of Pakistan’s folk theater, allow me to say that the author herself is a daring woman to pen down the Ins and outs of these women, how they were patronized and exploited economically and socially.

Well done Fouzia