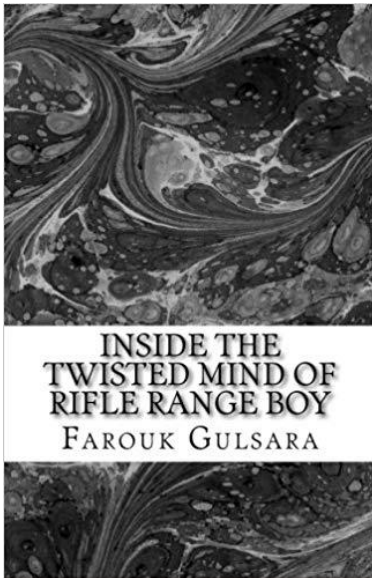


Book Review on Farouk Gulsara's *Inside the Twisted Mind of Rifle Range Boy*

Prof Shiv Sethi



'Inside the Twisted Mind of Rifle Range Boy' is a meleanage of profound thoughts penned down by Farouk Gulsara. Hailing from a family where everybody perceives that there is only a single way to deal with the things either black or white whereas the writer is inclined to have an altogether contrary viewpoint . As he advances in the years and grows mature , he becomes aware of the harsh reality that the family of his

parents has innumerable blood curdling tales to narrate because they had witnessed the seamy side of life during the turbulent times of early Malaya.

Farouk Gulsara makes the most of that opportunity and begins to write his own blog known as 'Rifle Range Boy'. There is no denying the fact that we the people very conveniently bend rules and regulations to cater to our

own whims and fancies. Brahmins are normally considered as the propagators of vegetarianism, but the Brahmins dwelling around the Bay of Bengal and Kashmir have not set such prohibitions for them and they place fish on their platter as their staple diet. Thus, Man is basically a bundle of contradictions. The writer renders twelve years of his services as a Government employee. But he is badly disillusioned and thinks of himself as an idiot for his unwavering commitment to work when he observes that others are being paid lucratively without toiling hard. The varied cultures, diverse civilizations and religion have dovetailed with one another and everything has become a religious event. Indian mythology and festivals have been cherished with unshakable faith, but no one is keen to give heed to the similarities among these different fiesta.

The author appears to be deeply agitated at heart when people question him over his ethnicity or look upon him as an Indian Malaysian. His parents belonged to Malaysia and so does he. Though he has never even set a foot on the Indian soil and evidently specifies in the book that he has no intention to visit india. For he is least interested in beholding the spectacle of poverty ridden people for that he need not pay visit to india. He can have that repulsive glimpse in his own backyard. And a big No to temples , as God is omnipresent for him. Farouk Gulsara has his distinctive views about Hinduism, India, and Bollywood. He holds Late Shammi Kapoor in derision by equating him with a fat monkey, but makes frequent usage of Manoj Kumar's dialogues for reference in another anecdote. He

sheds light on the various cuisines of India, but he has no desire to try Indian food because the menu of Malaysia comprises a vast variety of umpteen delicacies and he is fully content with his life in his native land and its foods. The author poses to be a sentimental fool whereas a discerning reader will take this with a pinch of salt.

The downside with the book is that at some places it is marred with prolixity, superfluousness and repetition and one of chapters has been translated into French which is beyond the ken of most of the readers. Undoubtedly, we aspire for perfection in life contrary to that our life has many imperfection and some of which we can never do away with. We whine, we cringe, we fret and fume, we grumble, we demand and we assert our rights but eventually the reality dawns upon us and we come to terms with the fact that we are mere pawns in the hands of the mighty forces of destiny. Here I am aptly reminded of a famed Victorian writer Thomas Hardy who gives much credence to the philosophy of Determinism and Fatalism.

The writer of this book also throws a flood of light on the legal system of Malaysia and its economic state of affairs. Here we come across several stark similarities between India and Malaysia. In both the nations in the name of development poor people have to bear the brunt of displacement and are bound to lead nomadic existence. The education system is in a shambles and they still require interpreters just like their ancestors required some five decades ago. The so-called modern day parents

are shown dancing to the tune of the snake charmers' flute blinded with abominable superstitions. They are unbothered for the dreams and aspirations of their children and in a way suffer from peter complex.

To lend a concrete shape to one's pent-up thoughts has not been very popular practice in literature with no specific genre. But soon the writer listens to his inner voice and gets convinced that many roads do indeed lead to Rome, and there is a divine power up there righting the wrong, but still, we have a host of instances of misdeeds committed by the Church and a long lost legacy of the renowned figures. We as humans are capable of inspiring a person to an extent only. Beyond that it is entirely up to his genes or nature whether he succeeds in reaching his place in space on time or not. If a person fails to measure up to certain expectations, it does not signify that he is a failure. We all have to be stretched in order to grow.

In our pursuit to growth and edification rigorous discipline is of paramount importance. Which caste one belongs to does not matter at all. As the author alludes that Hindus would resort to hard penance either through self-imposed starvation, self-flagellation, self-piercing, and observe countless other rituals and customs before Mahatma Gandhi proposed Satyagraha. It is all deeply ingrained in the Indian psyche. The author narrates different stories of the people who arrive in his life and to whom he is all available to lend a helping hand and offer his shoulder to cry on and achieve their Aristotelian cathartic bliss.

The writer is exasperated with the fact that the little cherubic children will be unable to fully bloom into the majestic swan that they always hanker to be. The Asian attitude to life believes in producing a generation of studious book worms only. Nobody bothers if the children have earned enough of life experiences and optimal professional qualifications coupled with the sufficient emotional maturity to match with. Once the formal degrees and material comforts begin to rolling , people here get a semblance of contentment and start believing that now everything will fall in place. Alack! the modern folk dwell in an illusion or a shambolic world . Much to the writer's chagrin, they are heading towards a cultural bankruptcy as they have lost their connect with their moorings.

With great power comes great responsibility. Information is the power and the unquenchable thirst of mankind for knowledge seems insatiable. Some theories are accepted as pure Gospel; while others are debatable. The Government lies to people in the name of National Security, and it creates more curiosity and restrictions to self-expression. In our daily lives too, we see many able bodies leading miserable life.

The world is fraught with hatred and fissiparous tendencies around us. Even amongst apparently homogeneous societies, there is suspicion and desire to dominate over the other. There is West, East, North, and South, Hindus, Christian, and Muslims, the fair skinned

and the dark-skinned, indigenous people and immigrants, moderates and conservatives, all exist with their dichotomous ideologies. The list goes on. But still, people flock together and put their resources during the disasters like earthquakes and tsunami. It reflects the humanity is not fully dead yet.

Farouk Gulsara makes use of the allusions of Arnold Schwarzenegger to Steve Jobs and Lord Shiva. Though he does not provide any solutions about the different worldly problem, but only offers his opinions, and twisted thoughts of his deviant mind. Therefore, this work emerges as a refreshing and eye-opening read. The language is lucid. The narration is flawless. The author also takes recourse to Hindi and Malay languages at many places in the book. . His spontaneous thoughts spread all over the canvas of the book. There's no dull moment and It is an unputdownable work.

Title: Inside the Twisted Mind of Rifle Range Boy

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About the Reviewer



Prof. Shiv Sethi (Ph D, M Phil, four times MA) is the Head of the Department of English language and Linguistics at Dev Samaj Post Graduate College For Women Ferozepur for the last 17 years.

His research articles have been published in various journals of international repute including The Tribune, The Hindu, The Hindustan Times, The New Indian Express, The Deccan Herald, The Hitavada, and The Daily post and in several newspapers of neighboring countries like Nepal and Pakistan. He has presented his papers at various universities in India and abroad. He is a guide for research scholars for M Phil thesis.

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