



Alipur ka Ailee / ??? ??? ?? ????

Mumtaz Mufti

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Alipur Ka Ailee is Mumtaz Mufti's semi-autobiographical novel describing the trials and tribulations of the early phase of its protagonist's life. The story continues in *Alakh Nagri*, which makes up the second part of the long novel.

Alipur ka Ailee / ??? ??? ?? ??? Details

Date : Published 2008 by Al-Faisal Nashran, Lahore (first published 1961)

ISBN : 9695035205

Author : Mumtaz Mufti

Format : Hardcover 984 pages

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From Reader Review Alipur ka Ailee / ??? ??? ?? ??? for online ebook

Ahsen Ali says

I am too emotional to leave a comment. I wanted to know more....especially about Saadi.....I wish Mr. Mufti was alive so I could meet him. He has revived my interest in Urdu literature. Thank you sir for writing this masterpiece.

Naveed Nawaz says

Raw and superb. One of the best novels you will ever come across. You don't read this book, you live it. It's a crown jewel of urdu literature this book.

Muhammad Arqum says

4.5

At this particular moment in time I am quite ecstatically experiencing that wonderful, distinct state of trance mixed with a heavy inexplicable sadness that one experiences on finishing a thoroughly rewarding gem of a book. I will put it exactly how a friend did in his review of this book: "You don't read Alipur ka Aili, You live it!"

One can say so much about this book, all the positives and the negatives. All the implications. But no one can deny the grand,monumental effort that Mumtaz Mufti has put in documenting his life. It is courageous, bold, raw and in the end if read at the right age, would minus a lot of the potential negative implications. But hey, most of the important works in literature happen to be like double edged swords.

Like they say, A MUST READ!!

Salman Tariq says

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Noorilhuda says

This is the story of the first 40 years of Ilyas Aasfi's life. Ilyas is the son of an affluent Muslim civil servant Ali Ahmed and his homemaker wife Hajra who live in Alipur town / village of Gurdaspur in pre-partition United India. He has an elder sister Farhat. Ali Ahmed is a philanderer / polygamist and Hajra is the long-suffering first wife / servant / enabler. The train of women that Ali Ahmed scorches through in the first quarter of the book is dizzying and insulting and sets the tone for the sexual evolution of his first-born son. There is Safiya, Ali Ahmed's first-second wife, Shamim is the second-second, Roja is the third, flings with visitors, passerbys and 'special someones' (prostitutes) all occurring under the ever-present relatives, wives and Ali Ahmed's mother (Ilyas's beloved 'daadi').

Ilyas and Farhat are neglected by their father, whose attentions are always focussed on either his work ('register'), women or smoke ('huqqa'). In fact Ali Ahmed does not become a real father till he has Naseer, Wazeer and Kabeer - all with third-wife Roja - and Roja's son from first husband, Sher Ali. By that time, Ali Ahmed has produced plenty of known/legitimate kids (1 other son with Hajra who died in infancy, 2 girls with Shamim). But the one thing that he does manage to get done is Ilyas' education - he makes sure that Ilyas, who is a below-average student and repeat exam-failure, completes his education (bachelors, technical ed. certificate) and gets an employment (teacher). Farhat, he makes sure, is taken off after class 8 (because girls are not supposed to get more education).

The majority of the book is full of the sexcapades of boys and men - with and without women. The writer also calls every second man mentioned in the book (usually a friend of Ilyas) as 'a beautiful man' which is either the way authors wrote in 50s/60s, a homo-erotic fantasy or Ilyas' way of further undermining himself, because he has low self-esteem and is ugly: Mansar, whom Ilyas loves - is the brother of almost-fiance Saadi, Mehr ('the most beautiful youngster in college'), Jamal ('what a beautiful man'), Raazi ('thin beautiful boy'), Hai (looked like 'a beautiful woman'), Zia (a 'feminine look in his eyes') and a few others whose 'way of looking at Ilyas' makes him uncomfortable /run away. There are also detailed descriptions of men's bodies ('beautiful' body, shoulders, face). There are boys and men who either are overtly or theoretically homosexual: Bala - giving Ilyas first lesson in masturbation or Ilyas dreaming that he does because of shame; Noor, the singing boy.

The book covers a long list of Ilyas's friends from infancy to adulthood and it gets repetitive on page 865 when you know that the writer will first name and describe a town/ village/ city, Ilyas's principal / boss and house, his own place of residence, and the friends he makes (one is always 'beautiful', the other always average), and their romances/ flirting / flings / marriages - in exactly this order! Either it is laziness or imitation of life where things change and yet remain the same. I flipped the pages and started re-reading on page 945 when The Relationship Saga takes a turn.

That would be the relationship between Ilyas and Shehzad (that's a woman's name), a beautiful, erratic, smart, liberal and in-love-with-love young wife of Ilyas's friend (and relative) Sharif. She is quite possibly illiterate but vivacious, good-mannered and attention-seeking. This is the definitive female relationship of Ilyas' life, combining the maternal, emotional and sexual/ lustful elements that Ilyas sees in various other important women in his life (his grandmother, the almost-fiance Saadi) and does not want (Hajra, Ali Ahmed's women). It also is a curse and has a hint of Philip Carey and Mildred Rogers dynamic from Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*. Shehzad is not a sadist but this is a sadomasochistic affair full of lust, doubts, jealousy, insecurity, frustration, accusations, control-issues, anger, hate, longing, companionship, back to lust etc. etc. Ilyas has plenty of opportunities to get rid of and get away from Shehzad's influence and grip: Samra, the fiance that his mother Hajra chooses to stop Ali Ahmed from throwing the boy amongst his own relatives (a mother's paranoia for sure, because Ali Ahmed has no interest in getting his kids married); Tasleem / Neem, married woman and her single sister, from Amritsar; Saadi, the almost-fiance from a great settled wealthy family - a match marred by Begum (Shehzad's divorced mother) and by Ali Ahmed (whose refusal to fund the marriage ends Ilyas' hope of being in a respectable family), the prostitute Shaadi and her duplicate Shaadi (technically, I figured, anyone is better than Shehzad!).

Ilyas is basically a good man, an ordinary man trying to do good, in spite of what the world (and Shehzad) throws at him. And what Shehzad does time and again, is practically unforgivable - her relentless pursuit of Ilyas in spite of producing 6 kids with her own husband; flirting or shacking up with Safdar (a neighborhood guy who is later married to someone else, has kids, is a drunkard but Shehzad keeps up the affair with him); her siding with her manipulative daughter to get her divorced and married to the already-married half-brother of Ilyas; her wilful destruction of Ilyas' reputation. To me, Shehzad seemed like the female personification of Ilyas' father Ali Ahmed (selfish, narcissistic, good-looking, indifferent, lustful, manipulative, exploitative, talkative).

It is ultimately Ilyas' good that wins in the end - he finds strangers who will vouch for his good character in police, office, neighborhood. But Shehzad - the one he had a 16 year affair with, the one he accepted with 6 kids and lived in extreme poverty and lowly prospects because of that - lets him down and yet, he still pines for her. Time and time again I said 'this woman is too much' and 'he is a complete idiot'.

The story is full of memorable characters: Ali Ahmed, Asif and Arjumund (one committed suicide, the other died of tapdiq or TB - sad lonely ends to brilliant hopes), Jamal, Dr. Hashim, Begum, Shehzad and the village oldies / elderly women gossiping loudly.

I had a problem understanding timeline when the period detailing Ilyas' 3 years from 15 years of age to 18, turn out to be a 10-year period (he fails in college, does FA), then enrolls in BA which he passes because of Ansar's contacts. How did he turn out to be 25 or 27 when he does technical course?

There's also a 'Nazeeraan' who suddenly appears and gives him overtures when the household servant's name is something else. The writer was also inconsistent in his portrayal of Farhat-Ilyas and Farhat-Ajmal relationship (barely mentioned). As for Ilyas' character evolution, there isn't much of that either - there's a ping pong, on-off with Shehzad that takes half of the book. I don't think Ilyas learnt anything from the experience. He doesn't have a blow-out with Ali Ahmed over his sexual peccadilloes that color his life and only has a face-to-face quarrel over Ali Ahmed's assertion that Ilyas's professional success is because of him. His mother, Hajra, also is an invisible part of his life that he only accepts because he has to raise his son by Shehzad, Aali, alone. There is no conversation between Ilyas and his second wife, Bulund Bakht, and she is set aside after a paragraph - her fate described as a 'wife' and not a 'life partner'. Well, who told you to go for an arranged marriage without looking at the woman?!

It was cool to read about old cinema houses of Lahore (like Empire Cinema on Macleod Road) which still exist.

The book also gives bird's eye-view of typical Muslim behavior in the subcontinent so much so that Muslim women are all in burqas (which my mom attests too); girls were taken off school in class 8 and below (my mom's mom was the first woman in her family from Gujrat who studied till class 5 in 1920s, her sister till class eight, my mom's sister was the first one to complete matric (grade 10) and my mom was the first one to do Masters in '60s and that too from Lahore!); the hypocrisy / bigotry ('the wife' versus all the colorful women one can play with); the male advancement and lack of proper guidance, spiritual or otherwise.

Since this is pre-partition subcontinent, there are frequent interactions with non-Muslim people - men and women- Hindus, Sikhs, Christians - all pleasant, few full of bias: for e.g. Ali Ahmed's mistress / go-to Hindu prostitute Kaur who insists on drinking from the village's well instead of Ali Ahmed's home, a Hindu boy who refuses to fetch water for Ilyas saying he will get impure (religiously unclean), the stenographer employment that Muslim Ilyas does not get because Hindus are the government employees making the decision, the 'Ram Deens' / Muslims forced by Hindu employers to change their name (or forced religious conversion). Then the hostel-food issue raised by the 4 Muslim students including Ilyas in an Aryan college in Amritsar- that they want to eat meat; the lamentation by an old Hindu woman whose Muslim tonga driver is killed in Hindu-Muslim massacres that erupted just before partition. There's a dig at Muslim Bengali 'Babus' (in an eating contest) and the word 'Muslay' (the Muslim equivalent of British 'Paki') uttered by Muslims! My only peeve was the one-liner on page 1198 (in 'Mushumlaat') which talks of the Pakistan question that is being fought by 'the Muslim League in Punjab, the U.P. Muslims, and Aligarh University students'. There is no mention of Bengal or Bengali Muslims who were the driving force of the movement before Urdu-speaking community got on the bandwagon and Punjabis got into the fray! Maybe I'm oversensitive to revisionist history. Anyways, it seems like the Pakistan Movement and Partition in the plot came as an after-thought to the writer because they literally rise on page 1198 and meet a thrilling, nerve-wracking, nauseating, macabre end at page 1228.

There is also quite another story here, left unexplored: all the women left by their husbands, or whose husbands are working in far-off places, women living with other women, full of lonely lives.

Dr. Mohd. Ahsan Farouqi's 29-page-long critique / review at the end is gibberish, big words, hot air.

The book is 1206 pages long and I am amazed that I finished it.

This is the first 'classic' from Urdu literature that I've read. It is a well-written and exhaustive study of a boy to man journey, most of the time feels like the author is giving a day-to-day snapshot of Ilyas' life, it seems like forward motion but it is also going round and round in circles. I don't know what kind of stories Manto wrote but they couldn't be more risque' than this. It is also famous for being a reject for 'Adamjee Literary Award' in 1961 which was at that time in its third year and used to give four cash-awards annually - to 2 Urdu and 2 Bengali authors work. The award went to Jamila Hashmi's 'Talaash Bahaaraan'. I wonder what kind of book that was because nobody remembers it.

And lastly, the book is "Alipur Ka Aili" not 'Eli' (i.e. it is pronounced as 'Aylee' or 'Eelee', not 'Eelaayay'!)

Shuja says

Vow ! The mystical , nostalgic setting of pre partition. And the writer is bold. Bold enough to include the most intimate, embarrassing events/info relating to himself and his family..and many others..Most of Urdu writers that I have read usually hide themselves behind pretty poetic words and connotations.. the 'takhliyas'. Mumtaz Mufti does not. He is straight, bold and makes no bones about it. Immense observation this writer has..Immense..

Hassan Ali says

ahmad afriди says

was in trance of this story for more than 3 weeks. the way he described his personal life without just selecting only the good looking part . although i am not the shrine visitor type but i would say it was charm of mufti sahab's personality that i went to his grave sit by his side and the events of this book were filmed on my mind screen .

Sunny says

"You are like a Mom; you hate what she thinks, you hate what she says, but you just love her!"-Chootoo

"Ap ye kitaab na parhen, barbaad hojayen gay, khuwar hojayengay."-Aksii Mufti.

"Ik Baghe shakhss ki dastaan.."-Aksii

"Agar ap jantay han k mard batakh ki manind hae, hamesha oper say panio mai tera hae aur machli ki tarha nichlay panio mai nahi jaa sakta tou 'Ali pur ka Aeli' ap k liye bais-e-musarrat hoga"-Maa Je Bano Qudsia.

"Jis nay kai ik mohabbaten ken likin mohabbat na kar saka... sapurdage k azeem jazbay say begana raha.."

"Chalen Pakistan chalen...Pakistan Zindabaad".

Well, it was a book worth my time. Initially, it did shock me, disgusted me, troubled me with the times back then, but then there came a time when I started enjoying it and the only thing which kept me going was that its Mufti jee's life story and what an interesting tale is told here. Full of all kinds of uncertainties, all kinds of emotions, events, likely and unlikely ones, its life...in its originality.

And may i just say, the brilliant details of the men and women's psyche just strengthened my existing understanding of the two; sadly or not i don't know, but Aeli's tale did push the boundaries for me and made me experience the vastness of the psyches which can so drastically shape one's life. Sometimes i found it overwhelming, other times it was too exhausting and shocking too.

Lastly, an open recommendation would be that its a must read. Without any second opinion, everyone should give it a read and experience all that which Aeli (Mufti je) has in his life for you all to learn from, its worth the effort.

Samreen says

Ibn Azhar says

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Nyla Talpur says

A Must Read !!

Zojaja Aswad says

It's True daring anyone has made by telling Truth in front of whole world to show them the path of believe, commitment, relationship and simplicity more than that to speak truth in any circumstances ... thumbs up!

Tariq Mahmood says

Great book, bold and courageous autobiography of a very colour full character, set in united India. The author traces his life into a nascent state of Pakistan, detailing his struggles, loves and losses across his years. Every culture needs such ordinary people who are willing to place their very personal lives on a platter for others to judge and justify. I salute Mumtaz Mufti for giving me an insight into his life. I especially liked his descriptions of his birth city Alipur and his relationship with his father. The book promises to tickle interest on almost every page filled with surprises, romance, excitement, adventure, grief and hope. Must read for every reader of Urdu.

Ayesha Amin says

ufffff Allah Mufti Jee!

Right now i am mix with so many emotions...

if ur reading it as a novel dan i cannot think how hard it would be for a writer to create such a story with so beautifully detailed characters. but after knowing that it is a biography dan ur amazed 'so amazed that how a man can write his story with such courage n truth.

no body else dan Mufti sahab can write such courageous thing. It is so hard to accept all those dark parts of ur life~Not only accept but write those horifiying and dark facts...

A man can be this much spontaneous i can't believe dat. dat was so amusing Mufti sahab i guess inherit only this gud thing frm his father. And the way they love was so indefinable . Shahzad and aaili and their relation and love and the way shahzad treated aaili in the case if her daughter. ufff that was so hurting but still aailix love was there till end.

hats off to the love and to the book.
