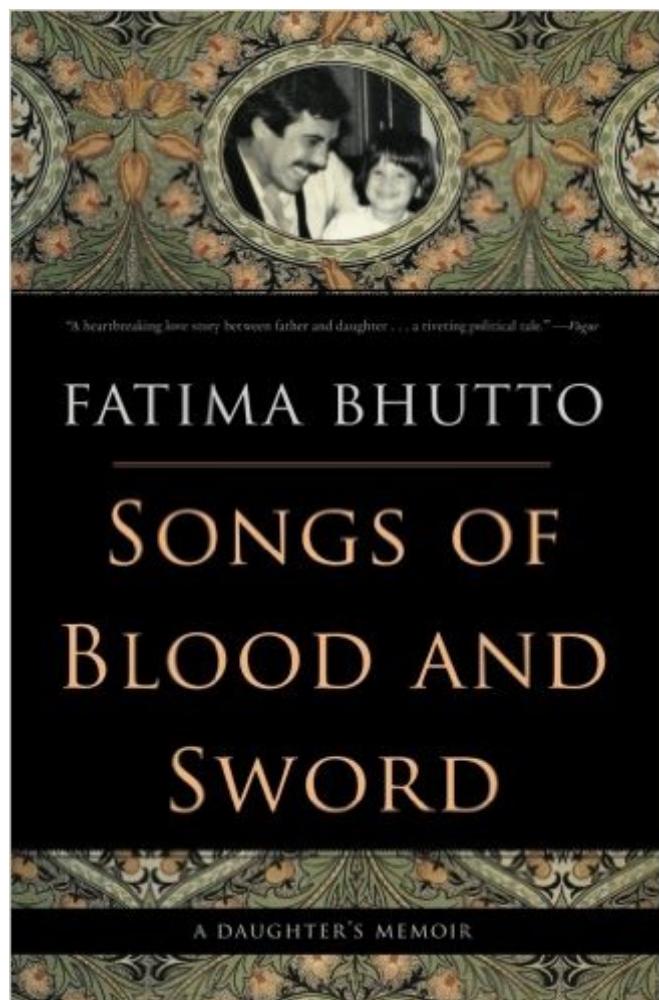


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Songs Of Blood And Sword: A Daughter's Memoir



Synopsis

In September 1996, fourteen-year-old Fatima Bhutto shielded her baby brother while shots rang out outside the family home in Karachi. This was the evening that her father, Murtaza, was assassinated. It was the latest in a long line of tragedies for one of the world's best-known political dynasties. Songs of Blood and Sword tells the story of a family of feudal landlords who became power brokers in the newly created state of Pakistan. It is an epic tale of intrigue and the international political elite, the making of modern Pakistan, and, ultimately, tragedy. It is also a book about a daughter's love for her father and her search to uncover the truth of his life and death.

Book Information

Paperback: 496 pages

Publisher: Nation Books; First Trade Paper Edition edition (September 6, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1568586760

ISBN-13: 978-1568586762

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 1.2 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars (See all reviews) (28 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #259,236 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #29 in Books > History > Asia > Pakistan #66 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Asia > India & South Asia #231 in Books > History > Asia > India

Customer Reviews

Fatima Bhutto is a young, beautiful and opinionated Pakistani columnist who also happens to be the niece of Benazir Bhutto, twice the prime minister of Pakistan and eventually assassinated during a campaign rally back in 2007. She has just released a very uneven book about her father, Murtaza Bhutto who was gunned down under mysterious circumstances back in 1996 outside his home in Karachi. The book itself is indeed "a love letter" to her father, as the writer herself has said in an interview and a hateful letter to her late aunt for whom she finds flaws to point out even while Benazir was still a teenager. Fatima's world seems to be strictly split between the good guys (her father, his friends and allies, her grandfather and strangely enough the Chinese and Hafez al-Assad's Syria) and the bad guys (mainly Benazir Bhutto and the Americans). Murtaza Bhutto is presented here as the perfect man, the perfect politician, the perfect father, the perfect husband and even the perfect boyfriend in the case of Della Garoufalidis, a woman married to a jailed general

of the failed greek junta. " I had to understand why he went to Kabul . It was a decision which changed our lifes " writes Fatima but never is she willing to question anything about her father's actions , even his decision to take up arms .I have not lived in Pakistan so i don't know which Bhutto had more influence to the pakistani people or was more righteous or honest but having read many interviews of all of them on the web and seen speeches of theirs on youtube , i can say all three public figures of the family (Benazir , Murtaza and their father Zulfiqar) seemed to excel in a typical populist rhetoric which promises much more than can be delivered .

I approached this book with both interest (I am a Pakistani and from Karachi, and attended the same high school as Ms. Bhutto) and an open mind. I have heard that Fatima Bhutto is a smart, outspoken, and young Pakistani woman. For this reason, I was curious about the content of this book. Nevertheless, coming from a family as cursed and controversial as the Bhuttos, I had reservations initially, about whether she would indeed provide truth, clarity, and candor into the crazy world of the Bhutto clan. As I had expected, the book is a huge and utter disappointment. It is impossible for a Bhutto to be balanced and objective regarding all that the Bhutto ruling clan have contributed to Pakistan both positively and (overwhelmingly) negatively. Despite a Western liberal education, formative years outside of the larger Bhutto yoke, and slights received by various members of the Bhuttocracy, Ms. Bhutto has not been able to shed her Bhutto-ness, especially when approaching the subject of her grandfather, and her father. Her views regarding her aunt Benazir were already well known to me, thru her various comments in the media in the past. That Benazir and her husband have left our country in tatters is apparent to anyone who lives in the real world (not the PPP stalwarts who are deluded beyond comprehension). This book did not provide any analysis or information that any realistic and interested party into the world of Pakistani politics, would have known anyway. Her comments about the Benazir-Zardari Axis was not enlightening in the least, except for her personal remarks about them, which makes for interesting tabloid-esque material. The real problem with this book is the lack of adequate critical analysis of her grandfather and her father.

I first heard about Fatima Bhutto's book in the October 2010 edition of "Vogue" magazine. In an article entitled "Dreams of her father", written by Vogue's regular columnist Elizabeth Rubin, the young woman lets the world know not only her version of how her father died, but also about the tight bond she had with him. For Fatima Bhutto, her father was her world. So much so, that when he once broke his arm and had to wear a cast for a few weeks, she insisted in wearing one as well.

Although she was only four, the young girl stood by her father throughout his setback. She also stood by his side when he was drenched in blood, agonizing during the last minutes of his life, barely tended to at the Mideast Clinic in Karachi - "I kissed my father's face, his cheeks, his lips, his nose, his chin, over and over again." (page 413). Having seen death more than once at a very young age myself, albeit only of natural causes, I cannot even begin to imagine how this must have impacted a girl of just fourteen, the age Bhutto was at the time her father was assassinated in his native Pakistan. The Bhuttos are a political dynasty who does not escape the air of tragedy that goes attached to most other political dynasties, like the Kennedys or the Borgias. The patriarch and founder of the Pakistan's People Party or PPP, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (ZAB), was himself hanged after a coup d'État in 1979, setting the tone for the death of other members of the family, at the pace of one per decade, as Bhutto is quick to point out.

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