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**BOOK REVIEW**

**Tarar, Mustansar Hussain, *Lenin for Sale*, translated by Durdana Soomro, Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2017, 296 pages.**

Contemporary Urdu literature's premier traveloguer, Mustansar Hussain Tarar creates a nerve shattering narrative of the demise of Communism in *Lenin for Sale*, which is an English translation of *Ay Ghazaal-i-Shab* by Durdana Soomro.

This novel is a deeply emotional account of Pakistanis who in the flower of their youth left their native soil and moved to the Communist heaven. They immersed themselves in the flora and fauna of their adopted land. They built families, raised children and continued their holy struggle to achieve a workers' paradise. Youthful idealism kept homesickness in check.

Then, calamity strikes. The shrine collapses and emotionally ruins its worshippers. They are left rootless. The indomitable forces of history have pulled the rug out from under their feet. Would they survive the fall? How are they going to spend these hopeless moments? They are now strangers in their ancestral home as well as in their ideological abode. A lifetime of optimism vanishes.

Mustapha Islam, Zaheeruddin Inqilabi, Sardar Qalib, Waris Chaudary and Arif Naqvi are the different masks humans wear. Furthermore, they symbolize the heartfelt experiences of migration and the quest to fit in. They also show us how humans can love their homeland and then so madly fell in love with another land. These characters, moreover, portray the spirit of "Asian patriotism"; an unbreakable bond with ancestral land, culture, tradition and religion. The stories of these characters' ideological decisions, and the imaginative steps that they took to achieve what they thought were the answers to their existential crises, actually personify the adventurous desire to erect a utopia.

The novel takes the reader back and forth; from the present era to the rise of Communist Berlin, Moscow and Warsaw. It sketches streets embellished with Lenin's statues. It pushes us into the mind of the respectable and the despised, and the oppressor and the oppressed. It shows us the images of Burewala, Karachi, Lahore and Lyallpur showcasing their struggle on the streets of the former Soviet Union.

Although it is a novel, the insightful traveler within Tarar manifests himself in various hues and colours. There is constant movement between South Asia and Eurasia. The characters' profound recollections of their past generates a trajectory that marks the shift from an intensely divided ideological world to a consumerist dystopia.

It questions the structure that comes into being after the disintegration. The new actors who had been cogs in the wheel now feast on the carcass. Almost overnight, erstwhile beggars become billionaires.

This piece of work cannot be approached without a certain attitude towards global history, literature, and even towards boldness and sexuality. It contains strong and quite explicit imagery; however, it never repulses the reader thanks to Mustansar's admirable command on expression.

It has been more than one hundred years since the Bolshevik revolution, but its powerful nostalgia lives on.

**Hiba Zehra**