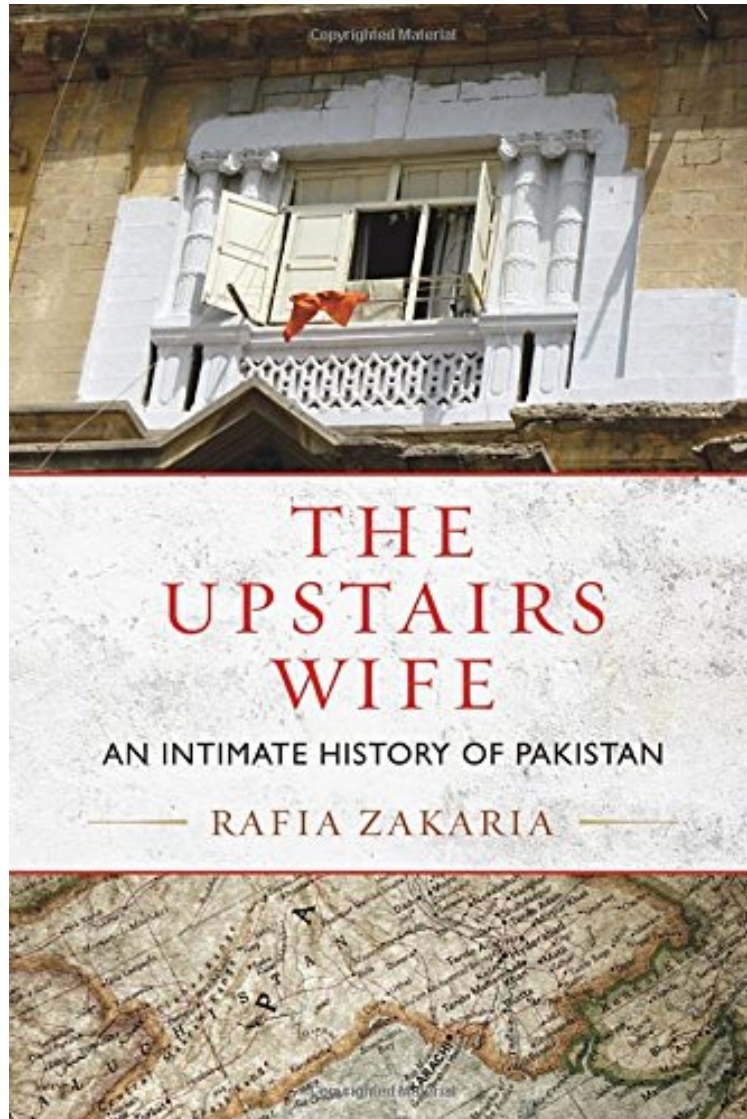


[Library ebook] The Upstairs Wife: An Intimate History of Pakistan

# The Upstairs Wife: An Intimate History of Pakistan

Rafia Zakaria

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#133011 in Books Zakaria Rafia 2016-01-05 2016-01-05Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.99 x .78 x 5.951, .81 #File Name: 0807080462264 pagesThe Upstairs Wife An Intimate History of Pakistan | File size: 21.Mb

**Rafia Zakaria : The Upstairs Wife: An Intimate History of Pakistan** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Upstairs Wife: An Intimate History of Pakistan:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. I enjoyed reading the bookBy Adil AsharyI enjoyed reading the book, however at the same time; I was saddened by the developments that occurred in Pakistan, specially Karachi, ever since the 1980s Afghan War. While I was growing up in Karachi, it was a peaceful and fun place. I left before the

war started, but I have been back many times since then, and I have seen the deterioration of the city only from the fringes. The book gave me a real insight into the events that transformed the city for the worse. As the book described, the great influx of people from the north to Karachi caused ethnic, economical social and security stresses upon the city. The corrupt politicians and military are to blame equally for the mess. The city grew haphazardly with pockets of ethnicity and total lack of proper infrastructure. This book in some ways reminded me of another book written years ago, Maximum City written by Suketu Mehta. The parallel story in the book about authors Aunt Amina was depressing and heartening, whereby Uncle Sohail and his two wives lived in two separate stories of the same house for twenty years. There was not only a great animosity between the two wives to the extent that had not seen each other until the very end of the book. From personal experience, I can tell you that this is highly unusual situation. While I was growing up in Pakistan, I knew of only one family with two wives to a man. I did not know all the details of their relationships; of course, but it was certainly not anything like that the trio in the book. Zakarias book is written very well. Once I started the book, I had a hard time in putting it down. As far as I know, The Upstairs Wife is Zakarias first book. I look forward to reading her future creations. I would highly recommend this book to anyone wanting to read a well written story detailing the poignant history of Karachi. Adil Ashary 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A great introduction to Pakistan culture By James in Alabama I really enjoyed this book. The interweaving of the history of the "upstairs wife" and the history of Pakistan is, for the most part, admirably done. Some passages are a bit melodramatic; but, overall, those are rarities in this well-written and informative book. It is a great introduction to a fascinating culture. However, if you are seeking a pure macro level history of Pakistan I recommend looking elsewhere. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Yes read By Lauren Diamond Recent history of Pakistan told alongside and in contrast and comparison with the recent "herstory" of a devout Muslim plural wife. The writer has a light hand and achieves a deft balance of fact with story, multiple plots and character. The story is permeated by the writer's love of and sympathy for her country and also, earnestly strives for objectivity in the telling of its tale.

A memoir of Karachi through the eyes of its women An Indies Introduce Debut Authors Selection For a brief moment on December 27, 2007, life came to a standstill in Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto, the countrys former prime minister and the first woman ever to lead a Muslim country, had been assassinated at a political rally just outside Islamabad. Back in Karachi Bhuttos birthplace and Pakistans other great metropolis Rafia Zakarias family was suffering through a crisis of its own: her Uncle Sohail, the man who had brought shame upon the family, was near death. In that moment these twin catastrophes one political and public, the other secret and intensely personal briefly converged. Zakaria uses that moment to begin her intimate exploration of the country of her birth. Her Muslim-Indian family immigrated to Pakistan from Bombay in 1962, escaping the precarious state in which the Muslim population in India found itself following the Partition. For them, Pakistan represented enormous promise. And for some time, Zakarias family prospered and the city prospered. But in the 1980s, Pakistans military dictators began an Islamization campaign designed to legitimate their rule a campaign that particularly affected womens freedom and safety. The political became personal when her aunt Aminas husband, Sohail, did the unthinkable and took a second wife, a humiliating and painful betrayal of kin and custom that shook the foundation of Zakarias family but was permitted under the countrys new laws. The young Rafia grows up in the shadow of Aminas shame and fury, while the world outside her home turns ever more chaotic and violent as the opportunities available to post-Partition immigrants are dramatically curtailed and terrorism sows its seeds in Karachi. Telling the parallel stories of Aminas polygamous marriage and Pakistans hopes and betrayals, The Upstairs Wife is an intimate exploration of the disjunction between exalted dreams and complicated realities.

"The Upstairs Wife does manage to cover so much ground so skillfully, casting a sharp eye on complicated personal politics and affairs of state alike." New York Times "The Upstairs Wife weaves emotion, historical fact, and a young persons wonder at her world into an exquisite tale of patriarchy, conflict, love, hope and hate The story that unfolds is both memorable and magnificent. CounterPunch A dense, carefully rendered work of minute, memorable detail. Kirkus s In this emotionally generous, beautifully written memoir, Rafia Zakaria tells two stories that are really the same story. One is the descent of Pakistan into violence, poverty, corruption, and extremist Islam; the other is the smoldering misery of family life in which women have little power, except, sometimes, over each other. The Upstairs Wife is a revelation. Katha Pollitt, poet, essayist, and columnist for The Nation Rafia Zakarias gorgeous prose and brave storytelling transported me into the center of a region Ive struggled to understand in a way no newspaper article or history book ever could. Better yet, she made me love the women there their woundedness, their resilience, their uncertain future. The personal and the political collide in this beautiful memoir of Pakistan. Courtney E. Martin, author of Do It Anyway From a window in the upstairs of her familys house, Rafia Zakaria parts the curtain, looks down on Pakistan, and writes its history. The Upstairs Wife roams between the lives of a family and the life of a nation and finds itself in the heart of a society that is much maligned and little understood. Vijay Prashad, author of The Poorer Nations What a tour de force! Rafia Zakarias The Upstairs Wife is a masterful tapestry. Through the eyes

of Karachi women, the beauty and horrors and mysteries of Pakistan are laid bare. Zakaria elegantly weaves personal memoir with historical treatise, showcasing a breathtaking literary talent. Medea Benjamin, cofounder of Code Pink and author of *Drone Warfare* captures polygamys emotional toll on wives: the depression, self-doubt, and jealous calculations that poison the politics of intimacy. Ms. magazine If it weren't for the personal bravery of women like Rafia Zakaria, and the countless other Muslim women fighting hard to reclaim their rightful space in public and private, as well as personal and political arenas, the no-go zones for Muslim women would continue to expand. Sampsonia Way About the Author Rafia Zakaria is an author, attorney, and human rights activist who has worked on behalf of victims of domestic violence around the world. She is a columnist for Al Jazeera America, Ms., Dissent, and DAWN, Pakistans largest English-language newspaper. Zakaria was born and raised in Karachi and now lives in Pakistan and the United States, where she serves on the board of directors of Amnesty International USA. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. From Chapter 1: "The Return" As we entered this Karachi the easy, smiling contours of my mothers face pulled tight and then even tighter. She had fought for this, learning to drive just so she could take us to school, to the best schools, insisting that it could be done and that she could do it. For this she had sat awkwardly between my father and my grandfather, arguing her case against their objections. For this she had tolerated our crying chorus, every Monday and Wednesday, when the instructor from the driving school showed up at the door at 9:00 a.m. sharp. For this, she had tolerated the weeks and months of my grandfather Said, insisting that he, who could not himself drive, must nevertheless accompany her on every trip, because a woman, even one with a drivers license, could not be trusted to drive alone. Her battle to be permitted to drive had not been an easy one. Five years had passed and now she was allowed to drive alone and without my father or grandfather correcting the timing of her turns, the certainty of her navigation. But despite her victory, the descent into this other Karachi, the sweaty, angry, male Karachi, was still my mothers daily test. Because children never pick the right moment to burst in, I blurted out a question that appeared on the periphery of my mind: Is Uncle Sohail dead? My twin brother, Zaid, turned around to glare. I wanted an answer, and so I asked again: Is Uncle Sohail dead? My mother did not respond when the light turned green, or at the next light, or as we descended even deeper into the city, onto roads flagged by beggars and hawkers and aimless men hanging around corners. She was quiet as we drove past the row of cinemas, the Capri, the Nishat, the Regal, the Star, past the bloody face of Sylvester Stallone, the jutting hips of a Punjabi actress stilled in midgyration. We passed the electronics market with its unlit neon signs (Hitachi, Sanyo, Toshiba) exposing their wiry entrails. It was only as our car pulled up before my brothers school that my mother spoke. No, Uncle Sohail is not dead, she said in the tiny moment before the gates would shut and leave my brother punished for being tardy. He is not dead, but it would have been better if he were. These words, my mild-mannered mothers wishes for a mans death, tumbled out behind us, stumbling into our lunch boxes and schoolbooks. I carried them into my classroom, where I took in a lesson on the Indus River valley, where I completed a test on fractions. I said them to myself in recess as I tried to swap my jam sandwich for a carton of fruit juice: He is not dead, but it would have been better if he were.