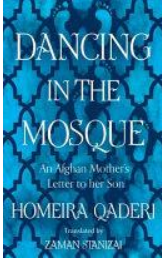


Book Group Review April 2024



Dancing in the Mosque
An Afghan Mother's Letters to Her Son
By
Homeira Qaderi
Translated by Zaman Stanizai

Homeira, a human rights advocate, tells a moving memoir of her childhood in Herat Western Afghanistan and her early adult years in Tehran, Iran. The desire for gender equality is at the heart of this story and is Homeira's reason for writing the book, first published in 2020.

Born in 1990 during the Russian occupation of Afghanistan, she increases our knowledge of this part of the world during that era.

As she grew to a 13-14 year old, her world changed from Russian occupation to Civil war, then to Taliban Militant Islamist. Schools closed and women and children stayed hidden in their homes.

No ordinary Afghanistan woman, she refused to cower under the structures of a misogynistic social order. Defying the law at thirteen, Homeira began to teach young children in her family home, and risked her life to join a writing group, even having one of her stories published.

She was forced to marry an older man and moved to Tehran. Making the most of this change she studied at the Tehran University. She moved back to her home town and eventually had a son. Due to a difficult marital situation, in the end she had to leave her son behind, a sacrifice to her survival. Her son was fourteen months old.

The book is divided by her letters to her son and the true story of her life, a most unusual and beautifully written autobiography, one that almost crosses the boundary between fiction and non-fiction.

At times her book is of an ethereal, poetic and Persian quality.

Our group enjoyed this book, we entered into a robust discussion around how women were treated, a mother leaving her baby, the hardships in these cultures where women are treated so cruelly and the sadness that they endure in the face of harsh religion, no education, and very difficult marriage arrangements.

We gave this book a higher rating than most, some read it twice, three gave it five out of five averaging a four and a half. So a good read if you are looking for something to make you think about this subject and era in our world history. (Reviewed by Stella Kinniburgh.)