



Woman Master

Mehrnaz Stars

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An elegantly written tale of one Persian woman's journey—she marries for love, and eventually loses everything and must start again. The author says "I wanted to tell a Persian story and I wanted Westerners to hear it the way an Iranian might hear it."

Strong, independent, and always with an opinion of her own, Pari grew up in an environment where women were expected to marry young and bear children, but she elopes with a wealthy older man who already has one wife. Her husband is Master to a large rural village community and his new wife Pari becomes the Zan-Arbab, the Woman Master. Realizing that she is unable to have children, Pari lives vicariously through the villagers, who teach her important life lessons. Her somewhat idyllic life changes drastically when, soon after her husband takes another wife who can bear him children, he loses all his money and is forced to sell his villages. Pari flees to her cousin Zeeba's house in Tehran where she finds that the family is full of conflicts and strong personalities waiting to collide. Though she is treated as a servant responsible for cooking, cleaning, and other menial tasks, Pari is the one person Zeeba and the other women in the household turn to in times of trouble. As time goes by Pari sees changes in the status of women in Iranian society and the new challenges this brings to young and old alike. Throughout the turmoil, she maintains a steady resilience and in doing so suggests that age-old cultural traditions have much to offer the Iran of today.

Woman Master Details

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Claire says

What a great story. I love books that tell you about how people in different countries live, and Pari led many different lives, helping others in many ways, a true guide. The most selfless lady, she could teach many of us how to live our lives with respect and kindness for others. Thank you for this remarkable tale.

Sarah Freeman-langford says

I won this book through a Goodreads Giveaway so my thanks go as usual to the author and publisher. The book arrived very promptly and is a very good quality paperback so on first impression this was excellent.

I'm not sure why I entered this giveaway as it wouldn't be my usual choice of reading material but nevertheless I started reading with an open mind. It is actually a very good read, well written and easy to get into. From previous reviews I was expecting it to be a boring chore, which it definitely isn't and also I was expecting to feel angered/let down which again I wasn't.

Please do not go into reading this book with the idea it's going to be revolutionary and that the main character of Pari is going to be a 'wonder' woman who fixed everyone's problems and sorted out everyone's lives. She didn't and neither the character or the author is suggesting she did.

Take this novel as a 'good' read, which is what it is and you will not be disappointed. Take it as a 'classic' then you will be sadly mistaken.

I would urge you to read it for yourself and make up your own mind.

I do have one criticism though, I don't like the title but that is my opinion.

Otherwise, well done to the author.

Jennifer says

received this as part of Good Reads First Reads

This book is the life of Pari who is a Persian woman , and her journey through marriage and life She becomes a 2nd wife to a man much older than herself. As her husband is the master of the villages she becomes the woman master. She finds she cannot have children and her husband takes another wife and it's here that things begin to change.

Her husband loses his money and his villages a Pari's life turns to hardship.

The author has obviously done a lot of research for this book.

Descriptions of places really take you to the heart of the story and you feel entangled with Pari's life Some parts of the book are very moving, so much so that you could almost be in the book with Pari Unfortunately some parts of the book are rushed which is a shame as I would have loved to know more.

This is one book I will keep and read again - only had it for a day and a half before I finished it - I just couldn't put it down

Shelly says

Thank you Goodreads First-Reads for the opportunity to read this book. It took me a very long time to complete it. I wasn't drawn to the story or the characters. The first half of the book was long and drawn out and the last handful of chapters blew through years and decades in a matter of a few paragraphs. I realize it's set in a different culture but I had a tough time with a 19 year old running off to be someone's 2nd wife and becoming the "master" of the community and a most difficult time with a woman falling in love with someone who raped her.

Elizabeth Creaghan says

This was a fascinating book that spanned the whole lifetime of the main character Pari and every important person in her life. An insight into Iranian life and a kaleidoscope of events and emotions. I was a bit perturbed by the way Hannah's marriage was presented but if it's a true reflection of reality then I suppose it is valid too. Overall an interesting read. (Also, a First Reads book for me!)

Sam says

Won this on a Goodreads giveaway.

I have rather mixed feelings about this book. On the one hand it is a beautifully told story of one woman's life and family and how it changed over the years. Stars creates in Pari the ultimate Iranian woman, pious, religious and always willing to help family and friends and to run her home as expected and required by her husband. And therein lies my problem, yes Pari is a strong woman but only within the confines and restrictions imposed by her husband, her society and to a large extent herself. This is where I begin to get a little irrate and question the character's motivation and purpose. This is compounded by the fact that every woman in this book is tied to the idea that she must be married to be worth anything. And this concept runs through each and every generation met through Pari's story, including her enlightened niece Malous and her daughter Hannah (referred to as Pari's grand-daughter), makes a decision that actually had me throw the book down in disgust (you'll know it when you read it). Now don't get me wrong this is a good read, a fascinating story and a very interesting insight into another time and another culture, I just struggled to get past some of the character decisions as they conflicted so much with my own morals and beliefs.

Maggie says

I received this book as part of a Goodreads Giveaway.

I thoroughly enjoyed the book. It is well-written and I became entranced by the descriptions of the life of a woman from a culture and time I was unfamiliar with.

I am surprised that other reviewers objected to the customs of Pari's culture and the decisions she makes in her life: I am not sure this is the role of the reviewer.

Mario says

I have received a copy through the Goodreads First Reads programme.

"Woman Master" follows the life of Pari, an Iranian woman born in the past century. We have to live through the up's and down's of her life and meet many strong and weak women and men along the way. Especially the first half of the book were written very well. The descriptions are very natural, while reading I could almost smell and taste the things that were described. It was often quite moving and also very touching.

After about the first half or two-thirds, the book became a bit "faster". Many years or even decades passed in just one or two sentences. But unfortunately there was no consistent development of the characters, really. It was quite hard to follow the story then. Sometimes people behaved in a way that didn't feel right, and that made it especially in dialogues quite difficult to understand who was saying what.

I would still recommend this book to everybody interested in the culture and daily life of 20th century Iran, and those who enjoy stories about strong women, because Pari was for sure a strong woman, a "Woman Master".

Jennifer says

I'm not too keen on this book, I found it uncomfortable to read. I can't see how eloping to become a second wife is rebellious. and why would the villagers go to a 19-year-old for medical advice, and there is a situation involving Hanna later on in the book which I just didn't agree with and found it difficult to continue reading. I think this genre of book is not for me.

Nikki Bywater says

At times this is quite a chilling and a moving story about different generations of Persian women from one family. Headed by Pari, who marries a man who already has one wife. Pari's husband is head of a village, so Pari becomes the Zan-Arbab, the Women Master who everybody goes to if they need help and advice. The story moves through Pari's lifetime and the changes she goes through. It is about tradition and the ways that women have to do what is expected of them. There are some scenes towards the end of the book that the reader may find disturbing and uncomfortable. The author does present the story well and it is beautifully written. I would read more books by this author in the future.

Lkai says

The story opens when Hannah's husband is gone. We do not meet Hannah again until the end of the book. We meet her grandmother, called Pari, and follow Pari from a willful young woman, to old age. Her triumphs and hardships. This is beautifully told, I could "hear" the voices of the characters and "see" the settings. A tale well seasoned with Persian spices. Recommend.

Geraldine O'Donnell says

Thank you for the copy of this book provided through Goodreads. It is a wonderful story beautifully written. I have been completely absorbed in it from beginning to end. The writing is indeed elegant, lean and spare- every single word and phrase counts. I was somewhat taken aback by the gradual build up of emotional momentum towards the end but a steady supply of tissues was on hand. I loved this book and will heartily endorse it. Look forward to more from this author.

Emma Bull says

RECEIVED FROM GOODREADS GIVEAWAY

Although there doesn't appear to be much going on, it's a beautifully written story of the life of an Iranian woman who eloped with her choice of groom at 19. Life takes a sour turn and she must carry on regardless. Pari is an elegant and classy character, not in the way you would imagine, but in how she conducts herself. This novel gives you a good idea of Iranian society and traditions throughout the 20th century. I loved it.

Sarah says

I have just been treated to a wonderful tale through a Goodreads Giveaway (thank you Goodreads and all those involved in these giveaways) and here is my honest review.

Woman Master was so well written that on occasion I found myself checking the blurb to ensure that what I was reading was definitely a work of fiction and not a real life story, it takes great skill to convince the reader to such an extent. The style of writing was quite new to me and at times there were places where I felt small parts of the storyline were skipped over, personally I would have enjoyed an extra hundred or so pages for the book go into more depth in these places, but that is quite possibly a personal choice rather than any real criticism of the book. The story gave me a wonderful insight into an Iranian household rather than the stereotyped glimpses we see on the television. The characters, even those not central to the storyline were believable and well rounded.

Woman Master was an enjoyable read which I found myself picking up at every given opportunity. Therefore I would honestly recommend to other readers and look forward to reading any further books written by Mehrnaz Stars.

Bookdragon Sean says

I cannot understand the decisions the protagonist makes, in what way is being a second wife a rebellious move? She then seems to spend an entire year giving bad advice and cooking. Nothing seems to happen in this book, nothing exciting anyway. Friends come round for dinner, one gives birth then leaves. I was prepared to read this to the end to give an informed review but I had to give up after she tried to scare of a wolf using a match! I mean seriously, a match? Life is too short to read bad books.....

On a plus it is well written, in terms of descriptions and language but just so uninteresting on any level. There is very little plot, the characters are flat and there is no real depth to them. It seems to be a sequence of event strung together with a bit of dialog. When reading a book becomes a chore it is time to put it down!

I received this copy for free as a good reads giveaway.
