

## The South Asian Life & Times - SALT

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### Children of The Revolution

By Feroze Dada

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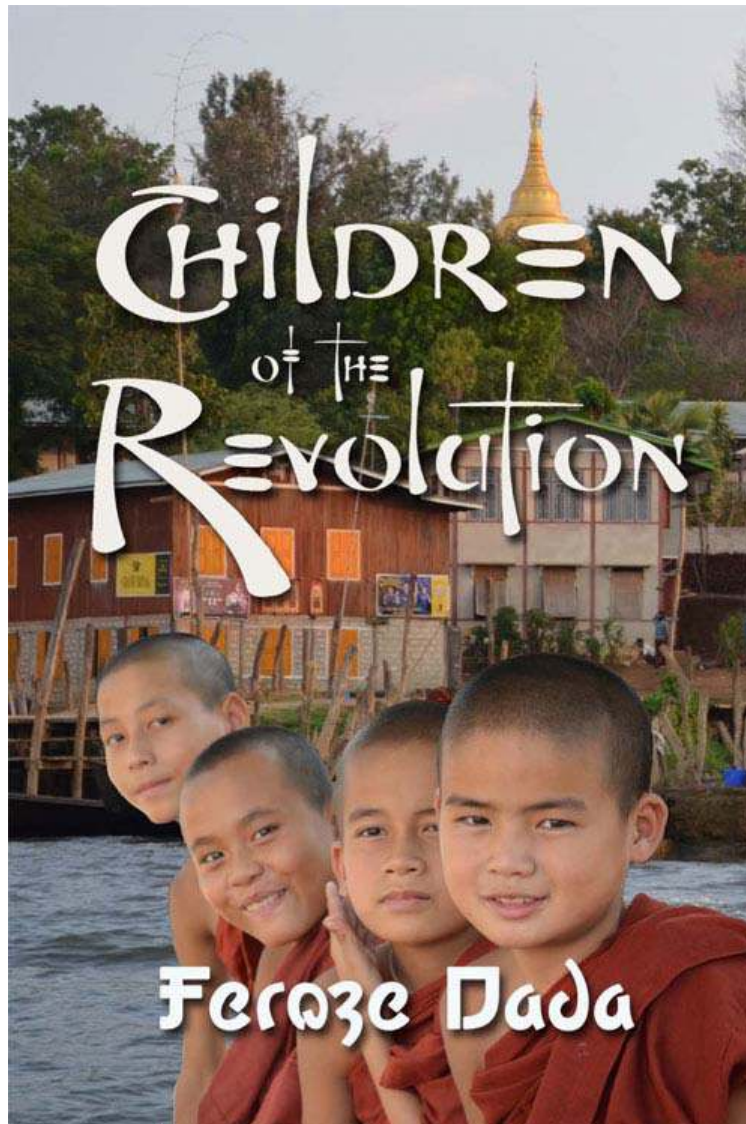
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Reviewed by Dilkash Kapur

*"It's about our journey together against the backdrop of a beautiful and remote lake community in what has been one of the most turbulent and dangerous regions of the country now called Myanmar."*

In the larger picture of political struggle and tumultuous times, individual experiences and lives are often lost. The Children of Revolution is about a few such lives. Feroze Dada provides us insight into how people, in the face of threat, struggle, and adversity, manage to build and rebuild their lives.

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Dada, while travelling to Myanmar to meet his in-laws, has a chance encounter with a man with an incredible life, and an incredible tale, leading to a series of chance discoveries and an incredible story of his very own. 'The Major', tells a tale of survival, and yet is initially hesitant to divulge the details of his journey, considering the foreboding threat he faces from his government. Fortunately, Dada persuades him to share his tale, which we get to now relive. Born to a father that fought for sovereignty, The Major experienced the powerful beauty of dissent, and the importance of facing the various adversities of life head-on, at a very early age. Forced to find work, he finds himself travelling through jungles, smuggling cattle from Burma to Thailand. He meets thereupon the varied peculiar folk of the jungle, and realizes that he has a certain skill set that could drive him forward. It is through an exploration of this that he finds himself branded a Rebel, earns the nickname 'The Major' and gets caught in the torpid air of political struggle that nestles itself in the heart of Burma. The Major possesses incredible acumen and the strength of will to go along with it. He is able to go from an impoverished orphan to a successful, influential member of society.

Guided by the The Major, Feroze Dada finds himself travelling to the turbulent areas of the region, to experience the narrative first hand. Dada and The Major rest at a monastery where the course of their journey dramatically shifts. The monastery houses and schools 600 orphans and native children, who depend on government funding along with the help of locals for their education and other needs. An impoverished facility due to the problematic political conflict, the children were often sent to live here so they could find themselves basic food and shelter. The monastery is run by the sheer will and dedication of a monk named Phongyi, who cares for these children, and tries to provide them with necessary life skills. The monastery took time and strife to set up, but in spite of the opposition he faced, the monk persevered through, to do what he believed was right for the society and the children that belong to it. The monk tries to provide for the children's need, as much as possible, but the monastery is always wanting for funds.

Dada, stricken and taken aback by the determination of the monk, suggests bringing the children computers, to adequately equip them for life ahead. However, computers seem to be a distant dream, since the area lacks basic amenities such as electricity. Inspired by the monk, Dada struggles, but manages to find solar powered computers to help the children. This sets off a series of events, where Dada finds himself actively involved in the community of a land that was once alien. To generate funds for the monastery, he set up a unit to bottle the purified mineral water from a spring close to the monastery. Dada finds himself irrevocably bound to the monastery and those who belong to it.

The narrative is unique for the way in which it shifts protagonists, and travels through time. It allows the reader to travel through the heart of adversity and see the optimistic determination that perseveres through the spirit of the locals. It also tells the tale of the refusal to be passive in the face of struggle and chaos, and to be an active participant in not only one's own life, but also in the larger spectrums that we thrive in. Pictorial cues allow the reader to himself experience the journey, without the need for excessive literally flourish on Dada's part. The simplicity of the narrative however sometimes leaves one wanting for more, especially in the light of the novelty of the tale that is being told. One can however, respect the stance of the author, because by choosing to avoid complexity and elaborate literary embellishments, Dada not only maintains the raw truth unveiled in The Major's simple words and the Monk's humble actions, but also manages to stay true to the subtle passion the people of Burma embody and imbibe. In its essence, the Children of The Revolution is an understated testament to the tales that remain untold.

[Q & A with the author Feroze Dada](#)

*All author profits go to The Inle Trust (Charity Registered in England 1154767). The book – hard and soft copy-can be purchased via [www.inletrust.org.uk](http://www.inletrust.org.uk) or Amazon)*

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