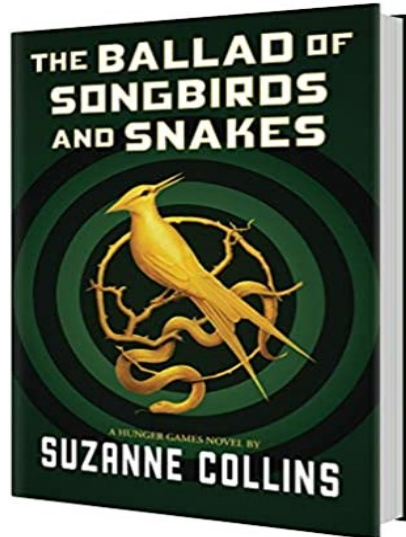


Book Review

by
Prof. Vandana Sharma



The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes by Suzanne Collins

The Ballad of songbirds and snakes is a fascinating story of Coriolanus Snow by Suzanne Collins. The readers who know of the dystopia Hunger Games trilogy, this book will be a treat as you will get to know about the root cause of Coriolanus Snow's villainous behaviour. Collins has built a mesmerizing world around complex characters who bind your attention till the end of the novel.

This new book is ideally a prequel to 'The Hunger Games', as Collins unfolds the story dating back to 64 years before Katniss competed in the Games. The time when a Capitol that is still rebuilding after the district's unsuccessful rebellion. Coryo, as Coriolanus's friends called him was 18 years old and was still a student at the prestigious Academy who needed a scholarship desperately. His condition is so that he is carrying the burden of a heavy lineage but is lingering for food. He lives in his luxurious apartment which is struggling to offer any luxuries with his cousin Tigris and grandmother. His valour remains in the fact that he was born to a war hero and his only goal is to bring back glory to the House of Snow. The big question is, how to do that? A question which itself has a tall order for someone who is lingering to have beans and cabbage on his platter, but the games ought to be the game-changer.

The games have been in existence since 10 years now. For the first time, it was decided that students from the Academy would mentor the tributes who were forced to compete. Coryo was chosen to mentor Lucy Gary Baird, the District 12 girl. "Could there be a bigger slap in the face?" Coriolanus wonders. "District 12, the smallest district, the joke district, with its stunted, joint-swollen kids that always died in the first five minutes, and not only that ... but the girl?", however, it turns out that Coriolanus has no need to panic. He knows that the fans of Hunger games know that District 12 was Katniss's district and she was anything but stunted. So is Lucy Gray Baird. She may have inadequate vibe to act as a game changer on the field but as a singer has the charisma to croon her way to the hearts of people with her whiskey voice. Coriolanus knows that charm itself is a powerful weapon for those who place bets on tributes and she was so much a charmer herself. He had already started dreaming about steak for dinner and how his purchasing power would increase manifold in the coming years.

It is not understood until the end of the book that what was the origin of the Games. We know that the Games are inspired by the theatrics and violence of ancient Rome, however the Television viewership is not materializing. The ratings of TV need a desperate boost, and the mentors have a big role to increase them. The big question is that should they execute those who don't watch? Or let viewers feed the tributes as if they were zoo animals?

The Games are very carefully plotted. In the whole sequence Collins has beautifully portrayed the pull between Coryo's head and heart. The future President actually realizes that he has a beating heart and not just a lump of scented coal.

The book has a potential to keep you captivated with tense characters, twists, heartbreaks and tragic **inevitable**s. It is thoroughly exciting to read The Ballads of Songbirds and Snakes as it is thought provoking and relevant.

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