



# Sikander

*M. Salahuddin Khan*

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## **Sikander** M. Salahuddin Khan

It's 1986 and Ronald Reagan's commitment to the anti-Soviet mujahideen of Afghanistan is resolute. Meanwhile, 17 year-old Pakistani student, Sikander, yearns for the freedom of his tribal brethren in neighboring Afghanistan, and that leads him to admire everything American but more directly, to want to study and live in America.

When a heated quarrel stemming from a naive indiscretion about his parents' financial woes provokes Sikander into leaving the comfort of his upper-middle class home, events lead to his being thrust into the very heart of the Afghan resistance.

Between fighting the Russians and living among the mujahideen villagers, Sikander meets Rabia, the independent, uneducated, but sharp-witted niece of his Afghan mentor and he begins to have feelings for her. After two years, aided by long-awaited American Stinger missiles, Sikander and the mujahideen prevail. Amid the euphoria of victory and the prospects for peace Sikander and Rabia cement their love in marriage.

With the war over, Sikander decides it's time he and his new bride head back to Pakistan for a reconciliation with his family. To their delight he is welcomed back as a long missed, war hero and the couple settle in with his now financially recovered family.

Years pass, and Sikander prospers in the family business, while feeling though never fulfilling his desire to move to America. But then a bitter civil war rages in neighboring Afghanistan that results in the rise of the Taliban and with it, an unraveling of Rabia's family. Things get far worse when the tragedy of 9/11 strikes, and aided by Rabia's pleadings Sikander feels compelled to make the perilous journey across the border to persuade her family to come back with him and away from the conflict. He manages to find them and lead them to the relative safety of Pakistan but not without himself being placed on collision course with the country of his dreams - America.

Learn more about this remarkable story at <http://www.sikanderbook.com>

## **Sikander Details**

Date : Published April 24th 2012 by Karakoram Press; Fourth American edition (first published July 26th 2010)

ISBN :

Author : M. Salahuddin Khan

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## **From Reader Review Sikander for online ebook**

### **Chuck says**

This excellent work of historical fiction concentrates on one mans struggle and redemption in pursuit of his life as a devout Muslim. It begins after he leaves his home in Pakistan and joins the Mujahadeen in their struggle against the Russian army in Afghanistan. His many struggles are well documented in this well written novel. I appreciated the "explanation" of the Muslim faith and its interpretations. It was interesting to review the U.S. runup to the invasion of Iraq following 9-11 and all its consequences although, that could not be covered in any great detail since this was, afterall, not a historical or scholarly work on that subject. Those of us who would like to consider ourselves openminded concerning all religions could benefit from this very well done piece of historical fiction. An important piece of literature that won many awards probably due to its unbiased covering of a difficult topic. It also recieved many positive reviews by the average reader. A very "good read".

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### **M. Salahuddin says**

This is my first published book and it literally erupted from my soul at the start of 2010. Once the basic story idea took shape in my mind (which took about an hour), I was frenzied in pursuit of completing it.

For anyone with a soft spot for historical fiction intertwining world events with the personal hopes, dreams, struggles and joys of the protagonist, this book provides a readable western cultural style while describing a wholly alien Muslim Pakistani and Afghani perspective. It immerses the reader in a world most Westerners only learn about through sound bites and video clips.

Being a product of a diaspora and having moved from Pakistan to England at the age of 4 and then to the US a little over 20 years ago, I was especially keen to illustrate the dichotomies of perspective that often arise when two very different cultures interact. Among such interactions, misunderstanding and being misunderstood are the causes of so many "wrong turns" and that fascinates me. I hope you enjoy it and are challenged by it. You can learn more about my views and background by visiting <http://www.sikanderbook.com> .

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### **Julie Schoerke says**

I so appreciate that Mr. Khan wrote this sweeping novel that provides perspective on the recent history/current events in the Southeastern Asia/Middle East region, of which he is an expert and a host of a national radio program on this topic. I loved the Kite Runner and I recommend this to anyone who fell in love with that novelThe Kite Runner. Bravo, Mr. Khan!

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### **Sheila says**

Sikander, a Pakistani youth who has led a comfortable upper-middle class life, dreams of one day visiting

America, a country for which he has developed a great fondness. But his dreams are smashed when, after a heated family argument, he flees his home and manages to find himself in the midst of a nation's struggle for liberation from an imperialist enemy. But joining the mujahideen warriors in their fight against Soviet oppression in Afghanistan is only the beginning of Sikander's remarkable story that takes him all the way across the ocean to a country which was once only a part of his dreams. It is the same country that is bound to become a nightmarish proving ground for him. Join Sikander on his journey of self-discovery, loss, growth, and personal evolution as he learns what it means to live in a world as tumultuous as this. Sikander is M. Salahuddin Khan's first effort at the craft of a novel. It is perhaps for this reason that the novel will seem even more impressive for its eloquence and quality. This remarkably well-crafted bildungsroman-style story is an excellent start for Khan, though he is no stranger to the field of writing. He has served as publisher for the "highly regarded" Islamica magazine and is respected by his peers at the online writer's community helium.com, where his articles usually rank somewhere in the range of the top five to ten percent. Readers who are partial to coming-of-age novels, stories that involve the culture and character of the Middle East and Pakistan (specifically), or exciting, yet well-grounded works of biographical fiction will especially enjoy the novel Sikander. Also, readers who enjoy fiction related to current national and/or global struggles should definitely look for this novel on bookstore shelves this July.

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## **Grady says**

### Insights and Explanations: A Novel of Wonder

Were there more novels like this astonishing, absorbing and challenging one by M. Salahuddin Khan then perhaps the confusion and chaos of the world response to the seemingly endless wars of the past decades would ease. With all the grace of an experienced writer (this is Khan's first full length novel though he has served as Publisher for Islamica Magazine, a quarterly journal that is written in English for Muslim readers as a forum for discussing current events and philosophical differences), Khan launches the reader into a maze of pathways of understanding just why we have become so confused and overwhelmed by the cross-section of Christian and Islam beliefs - and he does this in the person of an idealistic Pakistani youth (Sikander) whose life is complexly tattooed with events and coincidences, choices and commitments that lead him from Pakistan to Afghanistan to Scotland to the USA.

But the most intriguing and successful part of this fine novel is the insight Khan gives to the plight of prisoner versus captor in the way he explores the Guantanamo apex of the story. In ultimately narrowing this epic to the interaction between an American soldier guard and an innocent Pakistani detainee, Khan manages to explain conflicts so basic and roots of core friendships so unique that he allows us to see the madness of war and its consequences on individuals no matter what their prior backgrounds can mean. This is a book that will affect the thinking of all who are fortunate enough to read it, providing a path to understanding and appreciation for human rights.

Grady Harp

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## **Nicki says**

I won this through the Goodreads First Reads program. And whew, where do I start? This is an amazing

book, spanning 21 years in the life of Sikander, a Pakistani man who fights against the Soviets in Afghanistan, and later against corporate America. All of the characters were rich and developed, and by the end of the novel I was disappointed when I couldn't read about what happened next in their lives. I really liked that I could learn a bit more about Islam. I already knew most of the information presented, but it was interesting reading it from the perspective of a Muslim in the novel. And when Sikander was captured by the Americans, and tortured, it made me want to cry. I wonder how many times America has made that mistake in real life. And while I can't criticize the army for allowing it to occur (things happen in war), it made me wish war just didn't happen. I loved this book, and I would recommend it to anyone. It was just so superbly written, and it draws you in so well.

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### **Susan says**

This was a truly fine book that all Americans should read. It provides lessons in political history, Islam, Afghanistan and Pakistan - all through the eyes of one very likeable man, Sikander. We follow him through youth in Pakistan, fighting Russians in Afghanistan, falling in love and marrying, and finally as the innocent prisoner of the American military after 9-11.

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### **Tahira Shahbazi says**

Sikander, Sikander.

Sikander the character is the best of who we all would strive to be. Sikander the book is simply fantastic, with heavy emphasis on the simply. It manages to show a point of view not often grasped or explained in today's world. I feel it manages to humanize very real and misunderstood people, concepts, beliefs and practices, which beyond the statement it makes about the world we have come to accept that we occupy, is I think perhaps the most generous and important message that comes through. It makes no bones about the fact that there are injustices in the world, and doesn't hide the fact that there are boogymen out there, but lays ground for the understanding that there are layers and exceptions to every truth. Through Sikander's journeys and life, the author deftly weaves a beautiful message that gives this reader hope, along with a deeper understanding of how the world became the place it now is. I hope that others with less personal experience in this area than I myself have, will pick up this book and have their ideas broadened and their hearts opened to see the beauty in it. Laghar Juy is a place I'd love to see, and it's inhabitants people I'd want to adopt as my own. Sikander's victories in his journey to manhood make you cheer, and his losses throughout his life break your heart. Whether you have an interest in this part of the world, or just want to go on an adventure, pick up this book, and it will take you places you didn't expect.

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### **Michelle Kaye says**

M. Salahuddin Khan, Author  
Sikander

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Fiction- Historical, Religious

571 pages

August/September 2010 Review for Bookpleasures

Reviewer-Michelle Kaye Malsbury, BSBM, MM

Review

Mr. Khan, author of *Sikander*, is of Indian descent. (2010, p.571) He has lived and worked in Pakistan, England, USA, and elsewhere. Mr. Khan attended the University of Southampton in England where he got his bachelors degree in aeronautics and astronautics. He has worked as consultant, producer, designer, engineer, artist, writer, inventor, as well as, held executive positions for major organizations. Currently he calls Lake Forest, IL home.

*Sikander* is the moving, coming of age, story of a young Pakistani man. This tale begins with Sikander in high school looking forward to college and his future, for which he has high hopes and aspirations. Sikander's family was affluent, but fell upon hard times because of a less than credible business dealing his father made. On the brink of failure Sikander and his father have words. Distraught Sikander leaves and embarks on a dangerous and amazing new life. He ends up in Afghanistan fighting with the Afghan forces against the Soviets and makes many new lifetime friends who eventually become family. As the Soviets leave Afghanistan Sikander comes back home to Pakistan where his family meets his new Afghan wife and they settle in to upper middle Pakistani life.

An interesting facet of this book is that it is presented from the Muslim perspective and covers a lot of history in the Middle East. There are numerous references to Muslim culture and it was fun for me to learn more about this complex religion and her people. It touches on the importance of family and reverence to religion as applied to the Qur'an, but far from the extremism that many in America believe is part and parcel of Islam. It is about love, commitment, forgiveness, and inner peace. I really enjoyed the learning process.

As America ramps up taking over where the Soviets left off in the wake of 9/11 in Afghanistan Sikander feels compelled to bring his wife's family over into Pakistan where they can be safer than remaining in war torn Afghanistan. It is a long and arduous trek inside Afghanistan and back. They are in the homestretch of this exodus and relocation when Sikander is shot, captured, and treated as "enemy combatant" by US forces. He is wounded, tortured regularly, and moved to Guantanamo, Cuba to see if he will finally confess to being Taliban or Al Qaeda. He never confesses and reveals little information because he was not in that loop. Beaten, battered, and bruised eventually he is freed and allowed to go back to Pakistan to resume his life with his family. The scars are deep, both physically and mentally, from his experiences with the many and various means of torture. He undergoes therapy and tries to forget and forgive, finally making peace with himself, and his tormentors, in the process.

Sikander takes over the thriving family business and expands it into America where he and his extremely wealthy family eventually move because they feel the educational system is better than Pakistan for their three children. They are very happy and things are going quite well until an unfortunate accident changes their lives forever. For more insight into this incredible, fast paced, action filled novel please visit [www.sikanderbook.com](http://www.sikanderbook.com).

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## **Mystee says**

<http://amomentwithmystee.blogspot.com...>

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## **June Creedon says**

This is an amazing novel that incorporates the history of the battle between the Soviet Union & the middle east. The U.S. supplied the middle east with high tech weaponry to battle the communist regime & Operation Arrow was a success.

Osama bin Laden, the non-Afghan mujahideen, returned to his native Saudi Arabia, though he was frequently in & out of Pakistan.

The new threat to an Islamic state was America, the staunchest ally of the mujahideen.

On Nov. 24, 1989. Azzam & his 3 sons were killed on their way to an evening prayer at the local masjid. regardless of whoever was responsible, al-Zawahiri's ascendancy with Bin Laden was assured.

A global jihad aimed at establishing an Islamic state. It was called the Base, in Arabic it was called "al-Qaeda".

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## **Allizabeth Collins says**

### **Description:**

In 1986, Sikander is a seventeen year-old Pakistani who dreams of going to America to study and live. But his plans are crushed when he flees his home after a disagreement with his family, which leads him to join a band of mujahideen warriors who are fighting Soviets in Afghanistan. After two years away, the mujahideen prevail, and Sikander decides to return to Pakistan and make a life for himself. Here he falls in love with and marries an Afghan woman while running a successful business. But following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in America, turmoil ensues in the Middle East, and Sikander must help his wife's family flee from Afghanistan to Pakistan, a dangerous trek that ends in Sikander's capture, torture, and imprisonment by U.S. Forces. The land he's always dreamed of is now a painful scarring nightmare that he may not survive.

### **Review:**

M. Salahuddin Khan's first novel is a remarkable coming-of-age journey full of rich detail and remarkable characters. I wasn't sure what to expect when I first received it, but after a few chapters, I knew that I was reading an amazingly crafted and emotionally charged novel. The characters are realistic and well-developed, seemingly taking on a life of their own through the well-written dialogue. The details are vivid and captivating, allowing the reader to experience the Middle East as beautiful one moment and war-torn the next. The plot flows nicely and is very solid, never losing ground and keeping up the fast-pace. The style reminded me of *The Kite Runner*, another excellent book, and I recommend both to adults interested in the Middle East, biographical historical fiction, or those who just want to read excellent stories about life's journey.

Rating: Clean Getaway (5/5)

\*\*\* I received this book from JKS Communications in exchange for an honest and unbiased review.

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## **Sami Jo says**

There are so many misconceptions among Americans in regard to Middle Eastern culture and history - especially since 9/11. Salahuddin Khan opens discussion about these topics through his fictional tale of Sikander, and delivers his message in a miraculous way. Although it hits on serious issues, the story is captivating, and will definitely leave you thinking and feeling differently than you did before reading. His research and experience definitely shows! I highly recommend this!!

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## **Rachel Kahler says**

This book is HUGE! Not a light read, either. However, it's well worth the effort to read. The story begins with Sikander as a young man in Pakistan. He's the eldest son in an upper-middle class family. He's smart, naive, idealistic, and somewhat bored and over privileged. Sikander is 17 or 18 at the beginning of the story and somewhat antagonistic to his parents, as any teenaged boy who knows everything is. One day, his father discovers that a business associate has bilked him out of a small fortune and put the family's financial and social standing at risk. As a result, both his parents are on edge and Sikander gets in a tiff with his father, which leads young Sikander to sneak out that evening with only half a mind to run away. He takes the contents of his piggy bank and takes himself to a local place of worship. He really only wants to be rebellious, but finds himself in the company of a man, his two sons, and his two nephews, who he discovers are Afghani muhajideen in the war against the Soviet Union. His sympathy for the Afghani fighters being a point of contention between himself and his father, he impulsively asks to join them.

Thus begins the journey of Sikander, from being a young, privileged, and idealistic boy to becoming family in a tiny village in Afghanistan, far from his roots financially, yet close enough to share a common bond. He experiences war and killing and wishing for peace. He grows up into an intelligent, thoughtful, and very importantly, loving adult.

I learned a lot about Pakistan and Afghanistan from the Afghan/USSR war to 9/11 to the US bombings following 9/11. I learned a lot about Islam and Muslims and recent history. Even though you know that Sikander is a character in a story, it's hard not to imagine him real.

My only complaint was that I read this on Kindle, and the book wanted to jump to the glossary at the back. (By the way, it's worth reading the glossary although much meaning can be identified from context in the book.) Because the book is so long, I had to get into the habit of noting the location of my reading before turning each page or I would have to skim from the last point I remembered reading from to get to where I was.

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## **John M. says**

This book is wonderful and heartbreaking at the same time. It is, like M.M.Kaye's novel "The Far Pavilions," two books. The first is a love story, set in an extended family with the cultural and religious traditions of Afghanistan. The second is the story of Afghanistan in the modern era. I cried and became angry, at the same time, for our ignorance of the culture and for what has and is being done in our name. This is a human story,

at ground level, not at the level of a B-52 bomber. I recommend this book highly and commend the author for the research and such detail that I think I could now cross through the Khyber Pass from Pakistan to Afghanistan -- and possibly load and fire a Stinger missile. The history is precise, leaving us to wonder, as does the character: "When did all this start and when will it end?" Not just a good read to understand a culture --and a religious so mischaracterized in the West -- but truly a beautiful story. The Russians spent 9 years trying to subjugate the tribes of Afghanistan; the U.S. is in its 10th year. This book shows why it is futile -- and counterproductive. When will it end? (John M. Poswall, author of two novels: "THE LAWYERS: Class of '69" and "The Altar Boys.")

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