

LEGACY
A memoir

By

Col. (Retd.) Syed Hasnain Ahmed

Sept, 2004

The train was about to depart, and my Uncle had just left for the men's section after having helped settle my mother in her seat. A stranger – a woman seated near my mother – pulled out a gun and pointing it at the baby in my mother's arms, threatened to shoot. She gave no explanation for her bizarre and dangerous intent. My mother was a religious lady of strong faith, and this sort of threatening talk was totally alien to her simple and compromising nature. As could be expected, my mother was not prepared to deal with such a situation, and in her supreme anxiety, got off the train on the wrong side – she was standing on the tracks instead of the platform. Another train on those tracks was minutes away.

Meanwhile, my uncle was seated comfortably in his seat, but thought better to check on his sister once again to be absolutely sure all was well. His eyes fell on the tracks incidentally, and to his utter amazement he saw his sister with a baby in her arms and his niece – who was 4 or 5 years old at the time – standing next to her mother in the middle of the tracks.

He immediately got off the train, and took them off to the side of the tracks. The train coming down those tracks sped by moments later. Everybody thanked God. The station master was informed, and the luggage was off-loaded at Multan¹, the train's destination. And the travelers took another train to Multan, where my father was posted at the time. He was a doctor in the army².

The baby in his mother's arms was me. Did the woman truly intend to act on her words without rhyme or reason? Was she mad? Suffering psychologically somehow? Anyhow, this incident took place when I was but a few months old.

My family belongs to the town of [Amroha](#), in present-day India, and still is one of the principal towns in the district of Moradabad. Amroha is approximately 80 miles due east from the capital city of New Delhi. It is situated on both the highway and railway lines that join New Delhi with the city of Moradabad. Amroha is an old settlement. Ibn-e-Batuta has mentioned it in his travelogue in these words - "and then we reached Amroha. This is a small and beautiful town. Town leaders came out to greet us. The town's Qazi³ Syed Ameer Ali and the

¹ City in Pakistan (and at the time India), located in the state of Punjab.

² The year is circa 1930. The army is the British army. The British still governed India during this time period.

³ Qazi means Judge in Arabic, Urdu, Persian, Turkish etc.

Sheikh⁴ of the town's Khankah⁵ were very gracious hosts.." And let me add that the town of Amroha has been officially renamed⁶.

The Amroha that I remember, and the scene that is forever etched in my memory, is being on the train as it pulled into the town station. For starting from a few miles out, as the train neared the station, there was a succession of mango groves, with some trees so close as to touch the box-cars. And this scene was repeated on the other side of the train station.

Legend has it that the name Amroha is a joining of the words "Aam" (mango) and "Rohu" fish. As the story goes, these two things were presented to my family's ancestor - Syed Shah Wilayat - when he first arrived here. And he named it thus. How true this story is? - well God knows best.

Amroha is located near mountains, whenever the weather is clear you can see the mountains belonging to the Himalayan range in the distance. The land is very fertile and mango groves abound. In season, the owners of the mango groves, and their friends and family, would spend entire days there. They would set up small tents for this purpose, which would be equipped with all necessities for spending the day.

Amroha belonged to the Suba⁷ of Dehli. In the times of the Mughul rule of India (and perhaps even earlier) the empire had been partitioned into Subas. The subas in turn were sub-divided into Sarakars⁸. Amroha belonged to the Sarkar of Sumbhul. During Emperor Akbar's rule, the empire had to provide 1000 strong cavalry

⁴ Sheikh means Leader / Principal of the seminary.

⁵ Khankah - religious institution, seminary.

⁶ After independence the Indian government has re-named some towns and cities to more Hindu-derivative names. However, Amroha still shows up as the name of the town in current maps of India.

⁷ Province.

⁸ An historic administrative unit, used mostly in the Muslim states of the [Indian subcontinent](#)

and 5000 foot-soldiers, in times of need. In the book *Ain-e-Akbari*⁹, the noteworthy group mentioned with regards to Amroha, are the Syeds, and in fact no other group of people is mentioned. It seems Abu'l Fazl in his compilation mentioned only those groups that were the ruling class of the time. When in fact, there were many other ethnic and religious groups represented in Amroha, including Hindus.

Immigration into India has been going on for thousands of years and the reason for that is clear. Here you have giant rivers, fertile lands which support a variety of crops. No wonder that for the people in the surrounding lands, India held a strong attraction.

The immigration of the Aryan race from Central Asia is an example of this attraction, that brought them thousands of miles to the fertile lands of India. The sub-continent – which at that time must have had a population of no more than a few million – with its mountains, rivers and lush fields must have stolen their hearts. The land offered them plentiful grazing for cattle, and no shortage of food and game. This must have amazed them, as for those early settlers a land of plenty of this nature was unheard of.

The same reason attracted the later immigrants. Arabs and the Muslims of Central Asia headed to the Indian sub-continent steadily. These people began to settle in the north-west of India. And after the formation of Muslim rule in India, which didn't happen until their capture of the Delhi sultanate, this immigration was incorporated into formal state policy. This included monetary assistance to the new immigrants.

Ibn-e-Batuta notes in his travelogue that whoever came to India from the west, was met by the Moghul sultanate's representatives in the city of Multan. There the perspective immigrant was interrogated to judge their condition, the news of which reached the *darbar*¹⁰ of the *Badshah*¹¹. Only those people were allowed through who intended to settle in India. The way it worked was that in Multan a certain class of traders had sprung up that would size-up the perspective immigrants' skills, and present them with gifts to take to the King in Dehli. After having presented the gifts to the king, and obtained either a job or a

⁹ The **Ain-i-Akbari** or the "Institutes of Akbar", is a 16th century, detailed document recording the administration of emperor [Akbar](#)'s empire, written by his [vizier](#), [Abu'l-Fazl ibn Mubarak](#)

¹⁰ *Darbar* – Urdu, Persian. King's court.

¹¹ *Badshah* – Urdu, Persian. King

jageer¹², the settler would be in a position to pay the traders for the gifts. Obviously, the merchants in Multan were shrewd, and made loans after carefully judging their clients' ability.

After the fall of Baghdad following the Mongol invasion, the immigration of the population in the Arab lands increased, and people belonging to all kinds of professions made their way from Baghdad to Dehli, where they were patronized. So much so, that Dehli came to be known as New Baghdad.

This mass immigration saw people from all walks of life settle in the sub-continent, as if pulled magnetically to the land of plenty that was India. Among them were the Aulia' – the great Muslim saints – which include personalities that played a key role in the spread of Islam in India. They cannot be named here individually, as that topic is worthy of a lengthy essay by itself. Among these personalities are those whose Mizars¹³ are scattered all over the sub-continent.

Among the names of these great personalities is the one of Shah Sharfuddin. His family immigrated from the west of what is now Iraq, after the Mongol invasion. They first settled in Multan, and then via Sohdra (near Lahore), they came to be settled permanently in Amroha.

And because Shah Sharfuddin was a descendant of Imam Naqi (A.S), his progeny called themselves the Naqvi Sadat¹⁴. And this is the very family of Sadat that Emperor's Akbar's biographer has written about in his famous and detailed book Aien-e-Akbari.

I belong to this family of Naqvi Sadat. And the train incident that I mentioned at the start – which I know of only through my mother, elder sister and uncle – I have no personal recollection of as I was but a baby in my mother's arms.

My earliest recollections from my childhood are those of the city of Agra, where my father worked as a doctor. Our house was in the

¹² Estate, generally a piece of land. Usually obtained in inheritance, and in this case as a gesture of patronage from the King.

¹³ Pl. of Shrine.

¹⁴ Syed – a title of respect - Sadat – Pl of Syed. Usually reserved for a descendant of Prophet Muhammad (A.S). The 12 Imams in turn are descendants of the Prophet from his daughter Bibi Fatima (S.A) and Imam Ali (A.S). Imam Naqi (A.S) is the 8th Imam in that lineage starting with Imam Ali, who is the first Shi'a imam.

Sadar¹⁵. This was a big house, in the front of which was a large make-shift room filled with nice furniture to accommodate visitors. Both my elder brothers attended Saint John's school, the most obvious aspect of their uniform was the safa they wore on their heads. They rode their bikes to school.

Me and my elder sister would be tutored at home where we were taught the Urdu¹⁶ qaeda¹⁷. My sister was older by 5 or 6 years, and she was a much better student than me.

During our stay in Agra, an incident related to kites and kite-flying recurs to me time and again. It is related to a mischievous act of mine, when I was 7 or 8. I really felt like flying a kite all by myself – till then my elder brothers would only let me hold their kites for a little while, once they were well in the air. But my desire was to fly a kite all by myself.

In our household, kite-flying was not considered a good past-time, as people would spend altogether too much time doing it, and forget about all else. Moreover, boys from good families were expected to play proper sports like cricket, tennis, hockey etc.

Now the question was how to get the kite and string, because I knew for sure that if I asked my father or mother for the money, the answer would be no. So the easy way out was for me to take some from my mother's pan-dan¹⁸. And that is what I did. When my mother was busy, I took 4 annas from the pan-dan. I went straight to the shop and bought 2 or 3 kites, and a string-holder with the string wound on it. Around 1935-36, 4 annas was a considerable amount. I remember I got back quite a bit of change from the shop-keeper. I cannot remember how much, but I remember it was quite heavy. Change was bigger and heavy in those days.

On the way back from the shop, I happened to run across my elder brother (may his soul rest in peace). He was quite furious to see me with the kites and string, and the first thing he did was to waste them. My brother did not approve of kite-flying. And once it was found that I had sneaked the money from the pan-dan, my father was informed.

¹⁵ The Sadar – central part of the city.

¹⁶ Urdu – The official language of Pakistan. Popular, especially among the Muslims of India, as a language of the arts, literature and poetry.

¹⁷ Qaeda – the very basic teaching guide for the language.

¹⁸ Pan-dan – Pan is the popular beetle-leaf based digestive that you chew. Pan-dan is the small box used to hold the ingredients.

And as was customary at a time when parents saw no harm in spanking their children to discipline them, my father gave me a beating that I can still recall. My mother tried to protect me, but she could not hold my father back. I remember that when I left the room after that beating, my cousin who was in the room outside was also crying having heard my screams. The result of the beating was that I never went close to the pan-dan again. But I did start to get regular pocket-money after that.

In my memories of Agra is visiting the Taj Mahal at night. Seeing the Taj Mahal on moon-lit nights puts you in a strange and wondrous state of mind. Even though I was very young, I can still recall how the monument takes on a haunting aspect at night, and it seems that this tomb belongs to the realm of dreams, and that perhaps fairies and djinns have brought it here for a time, and they will take it back to koh-e-kaaf¹⁹.

In our stay at Agra, another event that I recall is that of an English lady patient of my father. This lady had a big estate, and her business was considerable. My father would pay her visits to her home in relation to her medical treatment. One time I rode along with my dad to her home. I remember the lady kissed me, and then I went out where a beautiful young lady with a very attractive figure was standing. There was a governess with her as well. The lady would insist that her daughter be married to my elder brother. But this was not possible. When my father got transferred to Burma, and there his health deteriorated, my mother would say that it was that English lady that cast a spell to make him sick.

From our stay in Agra, in the deep recesses of my memory, are visits to Fatehpour Sikri and to the shrine of Qazi Sahib in Agra. As the story goes, Qazi Saheb²⁰ was martyred sometime during the reign of Jehangir. But then Noor Jehan built the shrine in his honor. My mother was a follower of Qazi Saheb and would visit his shrine occasionally on Thursdays. The difficulty was that the sweets she would buy and take to the shrine had to be purchased from a Muslim

¹⁹ Koh-e-kaaf – Literally the Mountain of Kaaf. A world of creatures that exist parallel to our world in literature of antiquity and modern, in Arabic, Persian and Urdu.

²⁰ Qazi Saheb – Learned scholar in the sufi tradition, real name was Qazi Noorullah Shustri.

shopkeeper, and finding such a shop was like getting joo-e-sheer²¹, as most of this business was in the hand of Hindus.

Qazi Saheb's real name was Noorullah Shustri, and was a renowned scholar. He came to India from Iran during Emperor Akbar's reign and was appointed qazi, and even served as qazi of Lahore. He was held in high regard by all for his knowledge and good character. But during Jehangir's era when Sunni-Shia tensions were riding high, he fell from favor and Jehangir punished him, and he was executed. He is known as the Shaheed-e-Thalith²².

When my father was posted to Burma, the family moved to Amroha where I was admitted to a school, which was administered by a family member.

Our house in Amroha was made up of a Seh-Dari, 2 or 3 separate rooms, a dalaan, a kitchen and an old style toilet. The house was quite old, in fact probably 2 to 3 hundred years old. The bricks used were the small-size variety, and the walls must have been 2 1/2 to 3 feet thick. The outer-most wall was part a much older house that was built on 4 to 5 acres. This house had been built by one of our principal ancestors, Nawab Asadullah Khan aka Mir Kilo. His progeny inherited the house, divided up the estate, and over time smaller houses were constructed, which kept getting smaller as the property was inherited by later generations. When the Rohilla Pathans ruled the Sarkar of Sumbhul – infact were in charge of the whole of Rohilla Khand (Rohilla State) – Nawab Asadullah was the administrator of Pargana Amroha, and as a result has been given a considerable land as endowment in and around Amroha.

During the time when Nawab Asadullah was the administrator of Amroha, which was part of the Rohilla State at the time, an event of great importance is the Third Battle of Panipat, which was fought between Ahmed Shah Abdali and the Marhattas. The year was 1761 A.D. Nawab Asadullah took part in this battle, as the noteworthy leaders of the Rohilla State like Shuja' ud Dawla and Nawab Donday Khan fought on the side of Ahmed Shah Abdali. After their loss the Marhattas' grip on power was broken, and it was established that their dream of ruling northern India would never be realized. It is quite possible that behind the scenes Shah Waliullah played a role in

²¹ Joo-e-sheer – literally "a river of milk". Used metaphorically in Urdu to mean an impossible task.

²² Shaheed – Martyr

encouraging the Muslim leaders to support Ahmed Shah Abdali, and is possible that his letters to Ahmed Shah had an effect as well.

The relationship between the sadat of Amroha and the sultanate of Dehli was cemented during the reign of Emperor Akbar the great, when Syed Mohammad Saheb was given the position of Mir Adal²³ in the Dehli darbar. And this was probably done because members of the Syed family of Amroha had worked as qazis in the Mughul administration.

Mir Adal had a special job that involved the overseeing of the justice department of the sultanate as a whole. And since the Amroha sadat had done this job previously, they were considered the most qualified. Syed Mohammad Saheb managed to secure a position in the darbar partly due to influence of sadat-e-bahera²⁴ as well as the possibly direct intervention of Akbar-e-Azam²⁵ himself.

The story of Syed Mohammad Saheb is very interesting because he was in this position but a little while when an unpleasant episode took place. Emperor Akbar once came to court dressed in bright and showy clothes. Akbar was an open-minded individual, understood the times he lived in, and made sensible decisions. He has grasped the fact that in order to rule India it was necessary to do this in partnership with the Hindus. If any other policy was adopted, the result would be naught but the destruction of the sultanate. He had perhaps dressed in such a manner with this thought in the back of his mind. A courtier, who was also a scholar of some sort, praised the King's clothes. This did not sit well with Mir Adal Syed Mohammad, and he raised his cane at the individual. Akbar did not like this reaction. Since he was a Syed, no punishment was meted out, however he was sent to Bhakkar, which was a small community in Punjab, close to the Sind province in present-day Pakistan, well-known for its fort, as a fauj-dar²⁶. During his term in the army, Syed Mohammad Saheb took part in the successful campaigns to win Sibbi. He died and was buried in Bhakkar. His sons were also appointed to various positions in the Moghul darbar.

Emperor Akbar spent 10 to 11 years of his rule in Lahore. Syed Mohammed Saheb also spent some time there. An interesting

²³ Mir Adal – an approximate equivalent to Chief Justice.

²⁴ Sadat-e-bahera - The Sadat-e-Bara refers to a community of [Savyids](#) who inhabit a group of twelve villages situated in the [Muzaffarnagar](#) district of [Uttar Pradesh](#).

²⁵ Akbar the Great.

²⁶ Fauj – Urdu, meaning Army. Fauj-dar is an army commander.

anecdote from his time there relates to when a Hindu gentlemen came to visit the darbar and Syed Saheb greeted him with an Assalam alaikum. That gentlemen responded in the same manner. After he left, and Syed Saheb found out that he had in fact been a Hindu, he was upset and demanded that henceforth Hindus visiting the court wear a special marking. It is said about Syed Saheb that he was a very religious and abstemious person. He did settle for marrying just four times.

As I mentioned above, in Amroha, ours – that is the Syed family²⁷ – homes were quite old and some did even seem like ramparts, so that it was a bit scary walking past them at night. Probably this was the reason why the talk of djinns was common, and for some homes the presence of these spirits was almost like family. Some family members would “cut Chillays”²⁸ in order to appease the jinns. Anyway, I cannot remember anyone having got any worthwhile done out of this way of controlling the djinns.

By the middle of the nineteenth century the situation for the Sadat of Amroha had deteriorated significantly. And those inheritances that had been obtained for past services to the rulers, had suffered due to mismanagement and neglect, and lost value over time by getting distributed to successive generations. The Sadat were in that sense victims of the general decay that had the Muslims of India in its grip.

Perhaps they were still living in the glory days of centuries past, for they had not adjusted to the changing times. The 1857 war of independence did shake them a bit out of their stupor, but not quite enough, so that many were happy to live off the meager incomes from small land-holdings. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, some families had come to grips with the times, and had started giving their children modern education. To this end the Aligarh movement of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan played a major role in this enlightenment.

Another effect of being behind the times was that the Sadat were in general financially in bad shape, and some households were quite destitute. A major milestone in the history of Sadat was a major group among them having declared themselves as Shi’a muslims. As the story goes, the Sadat had been in Taqiyya, keeping their Shi’a

²⁷ Translator’s note: Henceforth, I will refer to the Syed family as “the Sadat” .

²⁸ In Urdu, “chillay katna”, which means spending a prolonged time in abstinence and prayer.

Commented [AS1]:

Commented [AS2]:

beliefs secret, for fear of persecution. Taqiyya - which means to hide your true beliefs if you fear harm from others - is an allowed course of action for Shi'a.

This event happened after the attack on India of Ahmed Shah Abdali. Because Nawab Asadullah Khan aka Mir Qilo, was there at the third battle of Pani Patt, alongside the Rohila general Donday Khan, he was obviously Sunni. This battle was fought between Ahmed Shah Abdali and the Marhattas, took place in 1761, and one can ascertain that at this time the Amroha Sadats were Sunni.

This change happened after the end of Rohila rule, which had Breli in Indian Uttar Pradesh as its center of power. At the time, Rohila Sardar named Hafiz Rehmat Khan was ruling this small section of the Rohila State.

The clear proof of this historic fact is the existence of the famous mosque whose custodians are the Shi'a, but it is in use by the Ahle-Sunnat. Inside this mosque is the grave of none other than Mir Kilo Sahib. The madressa associated with this mosque is also for Ahle-Sunnat.

The Rohilas were Pathans, and even before the Mughul Emperors, the Pathans dominated the Dehli Sultanate - and at one point Sher Shah Suri has even managed to exile Mughul Emperor Humayun outside India - and it had seemed that the Mughuls would not be able to establish their empire. But the untimely death of Sher Shah Suri extinguished this dream of the Pathans forever. The Pathan rulers did consider themselves the true heirs of the Dehli Sultanate, and the Rohila State was a small realization of that dream.

Shuja-ud-Daulah's attack in the year 1774 C.E spelled the end of the Rohila State and Amroha too came under the domination of Oudh. Shuja-ud-Daulah's ancestors were from Iran, and he was follower of the Shi'a sect of Islam. In my estimate, the time when a large number of the Amroha Syeds declared themselves as Shi'a must have been after 1774 CE. The reasoning is that these Syeds now thought that it was safe to come out in the open as Shia since the rulers were also of the Shi'a persuasion. However, those Syeds that stayed in the Sunni fold would go on to say the Syeds that did declare themselves Shi'a were motivated by greed, with promises of land grants from the State of Oudh.

As the Mughul empire lost its preeminence over time - and the glory days of Akbar, Jehaneer and Shah Jehan became a distant memory – so too did Dehli lose its luster as a city. The Amroha Sadat began looking more towards Lucknow and Faizabad (both these cities served as capitals of the Oudh State one after the other). In dress and culture and in traditions related to month of Muharram, Lucknow was where people looked towards now. Imam Bargahs were constructed, grand Majalis were held, large Muharram processions with Alams and Tazias became common. Soon after, the State of Oudh lost out to the British imperial expansion, and Amroha too came under British domination.

And with that came to an end the working-relationship that the Amroha Sadat had with the Dehli sultanate. Specifically, there had been military campaigns to take part in from time to time, with the Mughul army. These came to an end with British rule. The British began conscripting from eastern Uttar Pradesh into their Bengal Army. This army fought in the War of Independence of 1857, and took part in battles with the Sikhs. And after 1857, this army was dis-banded with the charge of mutiny.

Soon afterwards, the British got more loyal recruits from the provinces of Punjab and Sarhad (the North-west frontier province), and in these circumstances there was little room for the Sadat of Amroha – and in any case they were not ready to accept this change in their status. As a result, they stayed stuck in time, happy to live in the past where they could relive their glory days - and this was the general state of affairs for the Muslims across the sub-continent. Small land-holdings were still in-hand and that was enough to survive on. In this situation, a new way to salvage their pride and maintain their sense of identity was found – the elaborate commemoration of the month of Muharram.

The commemoration of Muharram in Amroha took on the style of Lucknow. Each neighborhood constructed an Imam-bargah (Shi'a mosque is often called Imam-bargah or the House of Imam), which was appropriately decorated. The elaborate Imam-bargahs became a source of pride for the neighborhood, and a way to show off to the other neighborhoods as well. The Majalis (pl. of Majlis, a gathering in the Imam-bargah to commemorate Muharram where speeches and songs of lamentations are recited) placed a great emphasis on the description of the events of Kerbala and specially the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (AS). The imaginative use of language as well as passionate delivery became popular.

There were majalis I can still remember that I especially liked. The orator was Jinab Mutahar Hussein and he used to recite at the Safran Imam-bargah (this was located in the Amroha neighborhood of "Guzri"). Use of embellished language and style of delivery were key elements of his oratory. The subject was the events at Karbala, and a combination of poetry and prose made the oration very captivating. Reciting the lamentations was also a big part of the majalis. Those with good voices had this opportunity to show off their talents, without incurring any criticism, since singing in general was looked-down upon. The month of Muharram also became a time for family reunions for the extended family. The activities around Muharram had gained such importance, that those family members that had moved away, would take this opportunity to visit the family at Amroha. During the ten days of Muharram, a jaloos (a procession of mourners) carrying alams (flags or standards in memory of the Battle of Kerbala) that would start from each of the Imam-bargahs in town. The mourners would be barefoot forming a long line, calling out "Ya Hussein", "Ya Hussein" as they walked with their hands on the back of the mourner in front. These processions would take a specific route through the neighborhood and make their way back to the Imambargah where they started from. Along the way, the mourners would get refreshments, tea or 'sherbet', depending upon the season. Tea had special spice added to it and was very tasty. The tea was served in small clay cups.

Before the Majalis commenced, drums were sounded. These were special drums, honorary gifts given from the Emperor of Dehli to the elites of Amroha. The drum-beat announced that the majlis was about to start, and that the honorable gentleman of the city had arrived to attend the majlis. As has been mentioned above, while a significant portion of the Amroha Sadat declared themselves Shi'a, nearly one-fourth of that population remained in the Sunni fold. Tradition has it that this was due to the fact that the elders of those who remained Sunni, had in fact been away when the opportunity arose to declare themselves Shi'a, and so were unable to do so. In any case, there were close family links between the Sunni and Shi'a members within the larger clan. Interestingly, during Muharram the doors of the Sunni family members were shut to the Shi'a family members. Yet right after the month of Muharram was over, the doors were open in welcome and members socialized as normal. During the ten days of Muharram, a jaloos (a procession of mourners) carrying alams (flags or standards in memory of the Battle of Kerbala) that would start from each of the Imam-bargahs in town. The mourners would be barefoot forming a

long line, calling out "Ya Hussein", "Ya Hussein" as they walked with their hands on the back of the mourner in front.

As has been mentioned above, the Syeds of Amroha had settled on the elaborate processions and majalis of Muharram as a means to maintain self-importance and a semblance of the old glory days when they had more sway over matters of governance. And if the Muharram procession was a link to re-living the old glory, it was unacceptable to them for there to be any hindrance. An example of this was related to the "alams" or standards borne by some of the mourners during a Muharram procession. Now, due to the electric cables running overhead, it was necessary from time to time for the standards to be lowered as the procession moved through the streets. A court case was filed to have the electric cables elevated so as not to hinder the banners. The courts ruled for the wires to be elevated. Certainly, there was a religious element to the grievance that led to the court case, but just below the surface was the old ruling class mind-set at work.

An event germane this prevailing frame of mind relates to the Chief of Police of Amroha. The Chief of Police had the servant of a well-respected gentleman of the city jailed for a period of time. The gentleman in question intervened in the case and his servant was released into his custody. However, the gentleman considered it a grave insult that a servant of his was incarcerated in this manner. To make his point about defending one's honor, he presented his servant a choice between a set of bangles (as worn by women) or a staff. Either he could wear bangles like a woman, or use the staff to take his revenge. The servant replied with a "Sir, my honor is your honor", and took the staff to avenge the insult.

It so happened that the Chief of Police would ride his horse through a certain part of the neighborhood every morning. The shops and businesses in that neighborhood belonged mostly to the Syeds, and the gentleman asked the shop-owners to open their businesses in the morning as normal, but shutter them at a specific time afterwards. The Chief of Police would be riding by at the time. The servant hid, and in a surprise attack hit the Chief of Police with the staff. The Chief of Police lost his balance, and upon getting hit a second time, fell from his horse. The servant fled. The policeman suffered injuries and had to be taken for medical attention. The gentleman was watching it all unfold from a terrace in the neighborhood.

A criminal case was filed. But no one came forward as a witness as

the shops were closed during the time of the incident. Since the Chief of Police was a government functionary, this was a serious matter, and a ruling against the servant was issued by a lower court. The case was appealed to the higher courts, with the same ruling as the result. The case was litigated all the way to the higher courts in London (as the British rule held sway at this moment in history), with the same result that the servant was found guilty and handed punishment. And in all of this, the expenses for the court cases was borne by the gentlemen, with the result that his inheritance took a further hit, for no other purpose than defending honor, which was really ego satisfaction.

This was as yet another example of the frame of mind that the elites of the Sadat still carried within them. And perhaps my mind too was effected by this false sense of superiority. I remember whenever I returned to Amroha on vacation from school, I felt that I has returned to a place where I was entitled to a certain status over and above the others. When in fact, it was nothing but a figment of my imagination.

As I mentioned above, my father was transferred to Burma, from Agra, and I was sent to Amroha with my other siblings. There I went to an elementary school that was in a mosque. Students would sit in two long rows, on mats, with books laid out in front of them. The daughter of an uncle from my father's side also attended this school, so in that sense it was a co-education facility. A close relative was in charge of the school administration, and he would sit at one end of the row of students.

The school books that were popular at the time (1930s) were by Maulwi Ismail Meerathi. The students in this class I describe were of varying ages and their books were different too. The subjects taught were Islamic Studies and Urdu language. Students would recite their lessons in a loud voice, so as to let the teacher know that they were focused on their work.

Absence from school was noted promptly. The teacher would be informed of the reason for the absence, and if that was not considered satisfactory, four elder strong boys would be sent to the absentee's home. If the absent student was willing to come to school, he would be allowed to. If not, the four boys would carry the student forcibly, in the so called "flight-mode" – each boy holding up the recalcitrant student in air by his arms and legs. I cannot recall that I was ever subjected to the "flight-mode".

The school provided education at a very affordable price, where children spent their time reading and writing, who otherwise would spend that time in less useful activities. Moreover, the parents had the peace of mind that their children were in a safe place, where they were involved in learning. Developing fine handwriting was stressed in the school. For this purpose, students would use a "takhti" or wooden tablet for their alphabet-writing exercises. They used pens made from reed, and black ink. Students got special praise for good handwriting. During break-time, the children would play games, like hide and seek.

My father was working in Burma during this time, and me and my siblings lived with our grandfather in Amroha. My grandfather had gained a nominal education, but never held a job in his life. He also did not have much inheritance. My great-grandfather had some inheritance, and he had worked in the court-house as a lawyer on small cases, but that too as more of a hobby. These gentlemen were prime examples of the insulated mind-set of the Syed clan. They were totally unaware of the changes in society fermenting around them after the arrival of the British. They showed no interest in giving their children modern education, even though they must have been aware of Sir Syed Ahmed's movement that was promoting modern education. Sometime later a school by the name of "Imam-ul-Madaris" was established in Amroha, where the children of the Sadat were able to get modern education. But this happened much later. There was a government run school, as well as a Hindi school in Amroha. It wasn't until the later part of the nineteenth century that some Syed households in Amroha started sending their children for higher education, however the common family did not consider schooling a priority.

And where education was not a priority, one can imagine what the state of affairs was for the education for girls. My mother had no formal education whatsoever. She was a hard-working, religious and honest person. I never heard a disingenuous remark from her, it seemed simply against her nature to do so. She had seven children, and she dedicated her life to their nurturing and well-being. My younger brother fell ill as a young man, and lived a long time after my mother's passing. For him she specifically left a sum of money, with my uncle as trustee, as a means of support for my brother who remained ill. May Allah grant her a place in his Firdaus-e-Bareen, Ameen.

By the 1930s, girls' education was common and after 1947, girls and women began entering every professional field.

In Amroha, the extended family lived in adjoining houses, so that it was hard to maintain any privacy. You would get to know for example in whose house what dish was prepared for dinner and who wore what kind of clothes. Our house in particular also served as a sort of a pathway between other homes. It seemed there was always a back and forth of people, and it was because small doors and windows opened into the other homes for easy access. It was very difficult to maintain one's privacy under these circumstances.

Boys and girls got married often to their maternal or paternal first cousins. Marrying outside the family was looked down upon, as the Syed clan was obsessed with pure lineage. Therefore, many illnesses were inherited and multiplied due to this practice, and this included both physical and mental ailments.

Perhaps at one time in history it was common to keep "bandhi" or "kaneez" (female servants or slaves). These girls would accompany their ladies to the home they got married into. And as was the custom on those days, it was acceptable to have sexual relations with the servant women. The children from these women would be raised in the same household. However, everyone would be aware of the status of these children. The Syeds were very conscious of their lineage, and still are.

One of the memories from my childhood is coming down with what was probably typhoid fever and how my fever would not come down during this illness. I recall vividly my mother's intense loving care during this time. She had strong faith in the Shi'a tradition, and after attending a majlis from where she had brought back a handkerchief filled with her tears, she used to wipe my face, believing strongly that this would heal me. And it so happened that I did feel better soon after thanks to her prayers and constant care.

During this period of my stay in Amroha, when my father was in Burma, our guardian was my grandfather. However, I can't remember him playing any significant role in my upbringing. I cannot recall any word of advice or affection from him. Maybe he didn't give me much importance. In any case he did not have a job or occupation and most of his time was spent visiting friends and family, going from one house to the other.

Another memory I have of Amroha is of the many gardens scattered throughout the town. Some has been planted by the Sadat and some by others.

The rainy season started sometime in May or June. During this time going for picnics was popular among the youngsters. The preparation for the picnics included taking along large quantity of mangoes.

These were the kinds of mangoes that you suck on and they were kept cold at home before the trip.

Cornbread (Baysan Roti) was another popular item to take along. It was mostly eaten with pickled mango (mango chutney). For desert, it would be time to eat the mangoes and these were eaten to the heart's content. Those that were not considered sweet enough, would be tossed to the side. Someone would throw a mango at another friend and soon a food fight would start. This was all in fun, and afterwards everyone would clean up and head towards home.

The Sadat of Amroha are the progeny of Shah Sharfuddin who is buried there. Every year there is an "Urs" (a gathering of the devotees) held in his honor at his burial place. One of the many miraculous things associated with his tomb is that a scorpion will not sting there, even though it is considered that a scorpion always uses its sting. Many have known to have tested this and as to how true this is, well only God knows the truth.

Some of the stories about Shah Sharfuddin defy reason. For example, one story describes how an esteemed gentleman came to visit him. It came time to eat and it was agreed that the gentleman would provide the bread and Shah Sharfuddin would provide the meat. As they were away from town, the meat could only be gotten by hunting. Shah Sharfuddin told his servant to call something out and soon after a few deer gathered. One was caught and slaughtered. Shah Sharfuddin instructed the servant to keep the skin and bones. During the skinning of the animal one of its bones broke. Food was prepared and served. After the guests had left Shah Sharfuddin asked the servant to gather the skin and bones. The broken bone was fixed with a piece of wood. Shah Sharfuddin spoke a few words in prayer and as the story goes the deer came back to life and ran off back into the jungle. Sometime later king Feroz Shah Tughlaq was out hunting in that same forest and one deer that was caught and slaughtered had a leg fixed with a piece of wood.

The king was puzzled and he asked those among his hunting party about this. It so happened that one of Shah Sharfuddin's old servants was around and came forward to tell the story. The king was amazed and gave the storyteller a prize.

How much truth there is in these stories, well God knows best. Many such miraculous events are associated with Shah Sharfuddin. As I have mentioned before the Sadat took part in many campaigns as part of the Mughul army. Emperor Jihangir in his memoirs (Tuzk-e-Jihangir) has mentioned the Syeds, specifically in the battle with the rebellious forces of Shah Jahan. That took place between Delhi and Agra. During the reign of emperor Jihangir many from the Syed family were given high posts. During the reign of Shah Jehan the Syeds took part in many campaigns in central India. They received many grants and favors from the Mughuls for their service.

Near Amroha there is a lake called Baan. During summers this was a popular picnic spot. The preparation for these picnics would start days in advance. Food was prepared and all the things that had to be taken along were loaded onto a bullock-cart. This was often borrowed from a relative. The picnic goers would start off in the early morning with the bullock-cart. Camp would be set up near the shore of the lake, which I recall didn't have that much water. Some youth would play Kabaddi, a form of wrestling popular in the subcontinent. Some spent time playing cards. Pooris would be prepared, an expert poori maker was brought along. One of the special things about these picnics was the tradition of reciting poetry in the form of "char bayt" or four lines of poetry. This is a tradition of the Pathans and it seemed wherever the Pathans settled they took this tradition with them and popularized it. As the name implies the "chaar bayt" is a compilation of poetry consisting of 4 "shayr" and these were recited extemporaneously.

In my memory from those days I can still recall two things that were extremely tasteful. One was delicious 'rabri' and the second was 'Seekh Kebab'. The rabri was prepared at Pehalwan Kaloo's shop. He would start warming milk in a cooking vat early in the morning, heating it and adding copious amounts of sugar. The result was quite delicious. It was thought in those days that eating rabri was beneficial for those that took opium. And users of opium would eat rabri with food. It is a known fact that till the 19th century opium was used commonly. People used it as pain medicine. It was even given to children to help them sleep. And since opium also has a calming effect, it was used as an anti-anxiety medicine. Perhaps at the time the deleterious side effects of opium were not well understood. Famous figures like Lord Clive were also known to use it.

A kebab maker in our neighborhood of Guzri was Kherati and his Seekh Kebabs were famous. I must say I have not had a more

delicious Seekh Kebab. The meat was finely minced, mixed with spices and the result was very tasteful. And before long the seekh kebabs would all be bought up by his customers.

Ladies that had to travel some distance within the town were transported in "Dolis" - enclosed platforms which 4 bearers would carry. The Kohars provided the service and they had their own neighborhood. They would be informed about travel plans ahead of time, and they would arrive with the Doli at the appointed time and have the customers at their destination safely and with dignity.

The 'Marasis' - people that provided entertainment including song and dance were specially popular during weddings. The Marassi ladies would visit families and so provided the delicate function of sharing information between families about marriageable young women and men. Even though due to the closeness of the families getting such information was not difficult these ladies did serve as effective matchmakers. At weddings the grooms lineage was loudly recited and this job went to the "Marassis". This was done so that the family members from the bride's side would know that the groom had impeccable lineage. Even though it would be well known already that the groom belonged to which family and who were his father and grandfather and so forth. This was done partly as a way to impress others of one's high status and partly to satisfy one's own ego. When in fact, many Syed families by the late 19th and early 20th century were quite destitute.

When there was a death in the family the "chaarpais" (beds made with wooden frame and twine) were turned over to signify a period of mourning and that the family members would sit and sleep on floors. Food would not be cooked at home and close relatives would deliver food. This was done because the family that had suffered the loss would be busy meeting with those coming to commiserate. And part of the mourning was that the cooking stove was not be used.

In the Mughul era the title Khan was given by the Royal Court for some extra-ordinary service. Many of the Sadats of Amroha also got this title. For example, Mir Assad Ullah Khan. Later on, as a large segment of them became Shi'a they dropped this title. But that branch of the family that stayed within the Sunni fold, kept the title and were known as the Khan Wallay. They are referred to in that way to this day.

In Amroha the businesses were mostly in the hands of Hindus and still are. The Sadat considered trade and shop-keeping beneath them, and this mindset was prevalent in most Muslims at the time. They considered themselves the ruling class and as such considered their work to be taking care of the country's administration. As they lost influence, they were left with nothing more than small scale land ownership. They were still used to the extravagant lifestyle and they had not adjusted to the new reality so that little by little they lost what land they had.

A heart wrenching story goes like this, that someone from the Sadat was on the rooftop calling his pet pigeons back, and someone in the street below hearing him said something like "what is lost is not going to coming back" referring to the gentleman's wealth that is now lost never to return. The economic situation of the Sadat was deteriorating and the few that woke-up to the new reality faced a changed environment.

Sir Syed's movement for modern education had started by this time and those in Amroha must have heard about it but even by the close of the 19th century there are no signs of it's influence there.

By the second and third decades of the 20th century there appear signs of many of the Sadat in Amroha start educating their children in a proper and modern manner.

It is the same movement started that laid the foundation for the Muslims of India striving for their rights and representation.

The Sadat of Amroha took part in many movements related to independence. One of the most important ones is the War of Independence of 1857 the British refer to this as a Mutiny. The war was instigated by the Bengal Army which had taken part in many campaigns for the British. It was comprised mostly of Indians from northern India, or the Uttar Pardesh region. The Muslims joined this movement as they saw this as an opportunity to regain their lost dominance and took part in this with great fervor. The Sadat of Amroha also took part in this war and as a result became a target of the British reprisal. The British collaborated with Nawab Rampoor and strived to keep Amroha within their sphere of influence, and in this they were mostly successful. Those Sadat that had risen up against the British had their homes demolished and other ethnicities like Christians were established there. After the war was over many of those who were sentenced sent to prison in Indoman, a prison island in the bay of Bengal. Many died there. Letters from those imprisoned there reached Amroha up until the time of their passing.

The War of independence of 1857 or the Sepoy Mutiny as the British called it was the first major effort by the population in India to assert independence and struggle against foreign rule. Even though it had very little chance of success from the start. A movement like this needs central organization and resources including monetary in order to wage war for a long period of time, have adequate armaments etc. The British East India Company had all these resources and they were prepared to wage war for an extended period of time. And many Indian Independent States also took side of the British as they feared a return to the chaotic situation which had existed before the establishment of British rule. As a result the war of independence ended rather quickly and the group that suffered the most were the Muslims. Thousands of Muslims had their homes destroyed and were publicly executed. Many lost their inheritances and had their property confiscated. After the war, the Muslims fell under suspicion in the eyes of the British, and the Hindus had the opportunity to gain favor, as the British came to see them as more loyal subjects.

1857 does represent an important turning point in the history of Muslims of India. Before this the Muslims still had the illusion of being the ruling class. They came to the realization that their rule was indeed over and this was a rude awakening. They had regarded the Hindu population as merely part of the merchant class, but now saw them as gaining influence in the new order where their hard-work, willingness to accept new ideas and trends helped them get ahead.

The Muslims of India were more and more left out of the affairs of state. Also, they viewed the rise Hindu Revivalist Movements, like the Arya Samaj and Shuddhi movements with some perturbation.

Even though the British has replaced Persian with English as the official language, they did play a significant role in promoting Urdu as a secondary official language. Establishment of the College at Fort Williams is an example of that effort. The introduction and promotion of Roman Script Urdu was also part of this effort. However, the simultaneous promotion by the British of the Hindi language in Devanagari script gave the Muslims the feeling of having their culture suppressed, since Urdu language played a big part of their cultural identity. People like Sir Syed did oppose this assault on the culture, but this controversy did increase the widening gulf between the Hindus and Muslims.

The Sadat of Amroha were slow to adjust to the new realities, as compared to other Muslim communities. The 1930s were tough times

for the Sadat of Amroha, and like many other Muslims of South Asia, their economic condition was generally not good.

In 1936, my father was in Burma. Me and my mother, with my younger brother and both sisters, traveled to be with him. I can still recall the journey by train from Amroha to Calcutta, and then by ship from Calcutta to Rangoon. And the journey from Rangoon to Maymyo by train, where my father was posted, was also very enjoyable.

Traveling through Mandalay, which was the capital of Burma then, I recall how it was full of pagodas. The train journey from Mandalay to Maymyo was very interesting. The train had to travel along mountainous terrain, and the tracks were laid down such that the train went up in one direction and then changed to the opposite direction of travel, as it made its way up. It was quite a feat of engineering.

We lived in Maymyo for about 2 years. I studied in an Indian school, and this was a private school. In Maymyo many of the businesses were in the hands of Indians, both Hindus and Muslims. The Burmese women were in the forefront of running businesses. Most of the Burmese shops were managed by women. Maymyo was at high altitude with a clean and healthy environment. Towards the north it had the Shan mountain range, with its many small water-falls and springs, made for ideal picnic spots. Maymyo did not have the extreme high peaks and valleys of the higher ranges, as it was situated on level plain.

Another memory of Maymyo is the fragrant smell of "raat ki rani" flower (the Night Blooming Jasmine flower that grows on a bush-like plant). The night we arrived at our house, and sat outside near the garden, this sweet smell was wafting into the room, and I smelt this fragrance for the first time in my life. Even now, whenever I happen to smell this fragrant flower, I am transported in my thoughts to that room in Maymyo at night-time. One of those few experiences in life that are forever etched into one's memory, only to emerge from time to time. So apt is that stanza of Faiz's that goes like "..kabhi kabhi yaad mein ubhartay hein naqsh-e-maazi metay metay say..".

I had a small bicycle in those days that I rode to school. I had to ride through a neighborhood where the British lived. I recall how the boys there about my age would stop me, and give me a hard time.

After about 2 years, my father was transferred to Peshawar, and we joined him there, after a stop-over in Amroha.

Peshawar Cantonment in the 1930s and 40s was a beautiful, neat and clean place. The British had kept the areas where they resided very clean and other cantonments were well maintained as well. The houses where the English officers resided were built on very large areas and were palatial. There were countless servants working in each house, like maids, cooks, grounds-keepers, butchers etc

The businesses in Peshawar were mostly in the hands of Hindus and Sikhs. The Muslims were small-scale proprietors, mostly dealing in coal and wood business. On average the Muslim population was not doing well economically, and that was reason why the security situation outside Peshawar cantonment was not good. One always felt a sense of insecurity and fear outside the confines of the cantonment, and the gates around it were locked at night with armed police keeping guard in the streets. The British had not invested in setting up any industry in this part of the country, and therefore there were few good opportunities for employment. There wasn't a network of irrigation canals, like in the Punjab, and so agriculture was not well developed either.

I was in 3rd grade during our time there, but I cannot remember any benefit from my education in that period. The building that the school was in is still standing. In those days, it was considered that Peshawar's public water was good for one's health.

Kirpa Ram was the owner of many large shops in Peshawar and the owner of the Nanda bus service. His sons were my age, and went to the same school as me. We used to bike around town together. One of them got a large inheritance and became a minister in the independent Indian government.

Alongside the main road (Mall Road) in Peshawar was a lane for riding horses. It was covered with thick grass so as to make it easy for the horses to run. And all this for the pleasure of the ruling British class.

We didn't stay in Peshawar for long. This was the period where the British rule was at its zenith. Certain elements, like the popularity of bars and dancing halls which were common-place in downtown Peshawar, would be inconceivable in the Peshawar of today. Our house was near such a dancing hall, and one could hear music and couples dancing late into the night.

The local Pathans were employed in marginal jobs. My elder brother had been admitted to his first year at the Islamia College in Peshawar. He rode his bicycle to and from college. I recall the extremely delicious Peshawari Naan-bread, which I simply loved to eat.

In 1939, my father's job took him to Chitral, and the rest of us went to Aligarh²⁹. I was in 5th grade at the time. And since the number of people going to school in the household included my younger and elder brother as well as my cousin (who later became my brother-in-law), this was a financial burden on the family. So we moved to a house in the newer part of Aligarh, called Masoodabad. My elder brother had a B.A degree by that time, and he became head of the household as well as my guardian. Unfortunately, since there was little attention paid to the education for girls, my elder sister was not admitted to any school.

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This was a time when many in Amroha had started to give their children modern education. And people had started to educate girls as well, however my immediate family was not enlightened in this respect. Even though my elder sister was very intelligent, she never got the opportunity to pursue any formal education. My father probably did not give importance to this. And she did suffer because of it later in life.

As I have mentioned, I was in 5th grade when we started living in Aligarh, and my elder brother was my guardian and tutor. He worked hard to provide a good education at home, specially in Mathematics and Languages, so that I formed a strong foundation in these subjects.

In 6th grade, I was admitted to school. There were two schools administered by the Aligarh University. One was for those that lived in the city, and was called City School. And the other was on the main campus of Aligarh, which was more expensive, had better infrastructure and better dormitories as well.

Due to my brother's personal attention towards my studies, I had no trouble passing my exams with good grades. As I was the new boy in class in 6th grade, I was the victim of some bullying. There was one boy – who later when we grew up became one of my best friends – was specially front and center in tormenting me. Early one morning when not many students had arrived in class, he began teasing me. I

²⁹ Aligarh is famous city due to the educational institutions established there by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.

got very angry and beat him up – he was shorter and weaker than me. After that incident I did not get teased in class.

Sir Syed's great achievement was in promoting modern education among the Muslims of India, and the institutions of knowledge and learning that he played a great part in creating. It was meant to shake-up the Muslims of India from the stupor and shock that there were experiencing after the failure of the War of Independence. It was like the first drop of rain that would renew their barren minds. It made them conscious of the fact that they were being left behind in the race towards modernization, and specially as compared to the Hindu population, in which a sense of Hindu national identity had developed. Many people answered Sir Syed's call to action, but as is always the case some voices rose up against him, calling him "infidel" etc. Time has indeed proven how right he was.

Aligarh University was a blessing for the Muslims of India, where even those of modest means were able to get a sound education. From the well to-do, to those that could afford just two pair of clothes, if you had the drive to learn, you had the opportunity to do so.

There were a few things that one became aware of upon attending Aligarh University. One was the Muslim condition as a whole in the past, what was transpiring currently and what kind of future to strive for. For example, I remember in 7th or 8th grade, my Geography teacher (may he Rest in Peace) would recite a few lines of poetry from the "Musaddes-e-Hali"³⁰. We had to memorize and recite these lines in class.

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There was close relations between the students and teachers. Teachers would invite the students for tea at their homes, and use that as an opportunity to teach the students social skills and etiquette. The uniform for boys was "Sherwani"³¹, white "Pajama"³² and "Turkish cap"³³. Little by little, the Turkish-cap gave way to a different style

³⁰ "Mussadas-e-Hali" is a collection of poetry by the poet Altaf Hussain Hali. He was a supporter of Sir Syed, and contributed towards enlightenment and modernization of the Muslims of India.

³¹ "Sherwani" is a long jacket-style coat worn as part of a formal dress for men.

³² "Pajama" - literally pants, usually narrow and straight, worn usually with Sherwani.

³³ "Turkish cap" is akin to the "Fez".

cap, like the velvet-style called "Ram poori" cap. Some sort of head-wear remained an essential part of the uniform.

Aligarh was a shining example of religious tolerance. Every religious sect was respected and had their place of worship. The two main branches of Islam – Sunni and Shi'a – had a single mosque. Students from each sect had separate religious studies, and each had a religious scholar called the "Dean". During the class period for religious studies, the Shi'a students, because they were smaller in number, went to the library where they were taught by a Shi'a teacher of religious studies. After this class period, they would rejoin the regular class. During my time there, I was not aware of belonging to a specific sect and we all considered ourselves Muslims first and foremost. One's religious sect was considered simply an individual's private matter.

In 8th through 10th grade I lived alone, and I spent more and more time playing sports like Cricket. In 10th grade I became the Cricket team captain. My academic performance suffered as a result.

I was generally friends with boys that were well-mannered. I did not like those that were mean and had bad habits. For example one of my acquaintances liked to steal. And by no means was he in need of stealing. He simply liked to do this. He and I were roommates for while, and there was a bike in the room which the previous tenant had left there. This guy started to remove parts from this bike and sell them as spare parts. He would also steal from the street vendors that used to frequent the school grounds. I kept my distance from these sort of boys, and avoided becoming friends with them. Even though they were from well to-do families.

I passed my matriculation exam in 1945³⁴. Because I was good in English language and mathematics, I did well and passed the exam with a 2nd Division³⁵. When I met my school head-master, he expressed disappointment, and said that I could have achieved first division with a little more hard-work.

I have not been very responsible in matters of managing money. In my school days I remember getting money at the beginning of the month, and going out and buying 2 pair of shoes of the same kind. This turned out to be a large part of my budget for the month, and for

³⁴ "Matriculation" is roughly equivalent to 10th grade.

³⁵ "2nd Division" is roughly a cumulative score of between 50% and 60%.

the rest of that month I was short of money and it was miserable. Some days I had to make do by eating just one meal.

The school headmaster, that I mentioned before, was a true gentleman but with an old-fashioned mind-set. He believed that boys that grew their hair long, in more of the modern style of the day, were not well-behaved and were likely to cause mischief. The result of this was that the mischievous boys would have their hair cut short, and whenever were called into the headmaster's office for causing trouble, would take on an air of innocence and as a result would get away with it. He was a very well-meaning and kind person, may he be granted a place in Jannat.

In 8th and 9th grade I felt very homesick. My father was posted in Punjab during this time, in places like Ambala, Pathankot and Shimla³⁶. I would look at every train going from Aligarh to Dehli longingly, wishing that I could be on it, and be with my parents.

I remember a train journey from Aligarh to Pathankot, where my father was posted at the time. When we stopped at Amritsar on the way, which was in the morning, I found that the train from Amritsar to Pathankot was not leaving until the evening. I thought this was a good opportunity to spend time exploring Amritsar. So I spent the day around town on foot and went on to the next train station, which was in Wairka, to catch the train to Pathankot. It so happened the station master there was a Muslim gentleman, and he was very kind and helpful in getting me on the train. I recall the area in and around Pathankot was very green. I took a bus back from Pathankot to Amritsar, and there were many orchards along the road, which made for beautiful scenery.

A little later, my father was posted to Shimla. During this time period of British rule, Shimla was a capital city. The infrastructure in Shimla was good, with nice roads and well-built homes. In summers Shimla got very crowded. The train journey from Shimla to Kalka was very interesting. This train ran on special tracks that were of smaller size and the train was smaller than other trains as well. In Shimla we were living in a suburb called Annadale, which was situated near a large park ground. Shimla is in a hilly locale, so in order to get to The Mall road in downtown Shimla from Annadale, one had to go quite a way uphill. My father had bought me a nice pair of shoes and I used to

³⁶ Amritsar, Shimla and Pathankot are all cities in Northern India.

enjoy wearing them when I walked on the Mall road. Once I was walking with my father, and a girl about my age coming down-hill from the opposite direction looked at me. My father said that she caught my eye because of the nice shoes I was wearing, but I knew that she was flirting with me. I was about 14 or 15 at the time.

During this period I did not visit Amroha that much. As time went by and I matured, I began to see Amroha in a new light and it seemed a very interesting place. You didn't have to go far out of town to be in large orchards and fields. Whenever my cousin and I would go for an outing, on our way back we would stop at a soda-water factory. We would buy soda-water bottles that were sealed with a marble³⁷. It's been a few years that this cousin of mine passed away.

During this time an incident that I recall vividly is how my brother's hair caught on fire. It so happened that a lantern was hanging on a door, and someone had forgot to close the opening for the oil compartment. My brother's head struck the lantern and the oil spilled onto his head. And a few sparks from the lantern that he was carrying made the oil on his head catch fire. He tried to douse the flames with his hands, my sister thought and acted fast and poured a whole "matka"³⁸ full of water on his head. His scalp was badly burnt, and it took a while for him to recover. Thanks to proper treatment and medical care, he recovered completely.

Whenever I went out to visit friends and relatives I wore a sherwani. Even when I went to visit my aunt in Amroha, I would dress formally. Even though other visitors would wear a simple shirt with pants. My aunt would complain that I was being too formal, and that after all I was visiting family and there was no need for such formality. It was just that the Sherwani was such an integral part of the dress-code at Aligarh, that I had gotten into the habit of wearing the sherwani anytime I went out.

The men greeted each other by saying "Assaalam Alaikum", whereas it was customary to greet the ladies in the family with "Aadab"³⁹. I had

³⁷ The so-called "Goli Soda" is apparently still available in parts of India.

³⁸ "Makta" is a large earthen-ware jar usually used to store drinking water.

³⁹ "Assalam Alaikum" is a greeting universal in the Muslim world, an Arabic phrase meaning "Peace be on you". "Aadab" is an Urdu language greeting specific to the sub-continent reserved for generally younger people greeting elders, meaning roughly "salutations".

gotten used to saying "Assalam Alaikum" in Aligarh so that I would greet the ladies in this manner as well. My aunt once called me out on this and said that as a lady she expected me to greet her with an "Aadab". And I respected her wishes and began to greet the ladies this way. This aunt of mine was an attractive and intelligent lady. Unfortunately, she was widowed at a young age. She worked hard to get her children educated and well-settled. May God give her a place in His Jannat (Aameen).

I began my Quran lessons when I was in 5th grade. I had a Quran teacher, who I can't recall had much knowledge himself about the proper Arabic recitation. When he would close his eyes during my lesson, I would turn over a couple of pages, and the lesson would finish early.

The month of Ramadan held special importance in Amroha. Groups of people would walk the streets to wake people up for the "sehri" – the meal the fast-keepers would eat at dawn. Sometime there would be singers in these groups as well. "Doodh jalebi" – a traditional sweet with milk, was a popular thing to eat at "sehri". The breaking of the fast – the "iftar" – was another special time, usually taking place at the local mosque, where food was sent from the households, and the men would sit together to eat. Those who were "hookah" smokers would be waiting eagerly by the time of iftar to partake. The process of preparing the hookahs was quite elaborate. It was called the "warming" of the hookah. They were cleaned, and fresh tobacco was used. The fuel used was called "upallay", made from dry animal dung, which was known to burn longer. The hookah smokers would take deep long draughts from the hose, making the embers in the burning fuel rise in the air – considered a good omen. The hookah would get passed around. And as it was passed, a person upon receiving the hose from their companion would say words of greeting and courtesy.

In Amroha, it was common to eat the dinner-time left-overs for breakfast, with tea or milk. I really enjoyed bread with milk. People also like eating traditional "chapati" bread with butter and "gurrh" – clumps of raw sugar. Food for lunch and dinner would be some sort of curry made with vegetable, lentils or meat. Rice "pilao" and meat "korma" were popular dishes for weddings. Professional cooks would prepare the meals, and people would sit on special mats – the "dastarkwan" – to eat.

In 7th grade I attended City school, and lived with my two elder brothers in Aligarh. As they moved from Aligarh for work, and I was left alone, I was transferred to the University School, where I lived in the hostel. But I didn't like it there and I went back to my old school.

After Matriculation (passing 10th grade, also called 'Matric'), I planned to take pre-engineering subjects. During 1945-47, when I was in F.Sc (equivalent to Senior High School), Aligarh University was a center for the struggle for an independent Pakistan. Quaid-e-Azam ("Great Leader") , Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan and other leaders of the Muslim League (a political party formed to represent the Muslim population of India) would visit the campus and address the students. I too became an avid supporter of the idea of an independent Pakistan. That was partly because of Aligarh, but also due to the increasingly tense situation in India at the time. Aligarh was an exemplary place when it came to religious tolerance.

After Matric, my father suggested I sit for an exam for the Merchant Navy, which was administered throughout India. In United India in order to become an officer in the Merchant Navy, the successful candidates were given training to become officers in a special ship called the "Dufferin Indian Merchantile Marine Training Ship". This was stationed in Mumbai, one could get admission at a young age, and in just 4 years of training, a position of Midshipman could be had aboard a trading naval vessel. This exam was administered in 4 cities throughout India, probably Dehli, Mumbai, Madras and Calcutta. I gave this exam in Dehli. The exam covered topics in British History, English and General Knowledge. I passed the exam and was called for an interview to Mumbai. The training cost was a considerable sum, and the money had been arranged as well. At last, it was decided that I do engineering, and I kept on with my studies in Aligarh.

The form that was to be filled when applying for the "Dufferin" exam, required the signature from a government bureaucrat called a "Collector" – equivalent to a District Commissioner. My father requested a friend of his to accompany me to the collector's office to get this done. I recall how this office was an annex to a large building, and outside was a guard wearing a "patka" – a special head-gear that was part of a uniform. My escort gave a piece of paper to the guard to take to the government officer. The collector, whose name was Dixon, called us inside. The collector asked a few questions about the entries in the form, and asked if everything was correct. My escort, who was wearing his army uniform, answered in the affirmative. And within a matter of minutes he reviewed the paperwork and signed the form. I

cannot help but compare the diligence of this British government official, to the attitude of District Commissioners in Pakistan. And this gives an idea about how due to just this diligence and discipline, the British were able to govern the sub-continent for as long as they did.

As a comparison, I recall having to interact with a government official in Gujranwala, when I was a Major in the Pakistan Army. Me and another officer had to meet the District Commissioner there on official business. We were at his office by 11a.m, but the D.C had not come to work yet – he was busy entertaining guests at his residence. And when he did come to the office, his attitude towards us was that of a lord that had to attend to the needs of his subjects. I couldn't help but remember the ethics and competence of the British government official.

The time period 1945 to 1947 proved to be a chapter of immense importance in the history of the sub-continent. During this time the future of the sub-continent was decided, and along with it the fate of millions of people.

World War II ended in 1945 and with it the British realized that the form of rule that had prevailed in India for about a 100 years could no longer be sustained. These years held great importance specially for the Muslims of India. During the past 100 years or so, it had become clear to the Muslims that in a united India their status would that be of a minority, and that the Hindu population would dominate. The political solution that they pushed for was to have 33% seats in the National Assembly designated for the Muslims. And to allocate more seats for Hindus in those provincial assemblies where the Muslims were in majority. Similarly, Muslims would get more provincial seats in Hindu majority provinces. Congress party and the Hindu Muhasaba (the Hindu Nationalist Wing) would not agree to this. They were adamant on one person one vote. Many in the Congress – including the party's Muslims members, mistakenly thought that there was a single nation living in India and that religious tolerance and brotherhood still prevailed, whereas the reality was quite different and this was but a mirage.

After centuries of Muslim sovereignty, the majority Hindu population envisioned a dominant practical role in affairs of newly independent state. A sea-change had happened - the Hindu culture had over centuries merged with the Central Asian and Iranian civilizations, to produce a new and unique society, but Hindus wanted to breathe new

life in what in their minds was the pure Hindu culture. This was the main point of contention between the Hindu and Muslim populations.

Along with this, the economic standing of the Muslims had fallen. The reigns of economic power had always been held by the Hindus. The Muslims had held administrative power, but had shied away from business and trade. In the new world order, Muslims did not have the resources to succeed. They had kept close ties to government related work, but as their influence in the state declined, the structure of their power and influence collapsed. And it took some time for this mindset to change.

1857 was a year after which the Muslims little by little realized that they are a minority, and going forward their status would be dictated by this fact. And the Hindu majority started to exercise their strength in every facet of society. As the British rule took root, the attitude of Hindu population changed. Tensions rose between the Hindus and Muslims, and the controversies around the Hindi, Persian and Urdu languages increased the gulf.

The obstinate attitude of the Hindu majority and the weak position of the Muslims resulted in the inevitable partition of India and an independent nation for them. To avoid partition, a last ditch effort was the introduction of the so called Cabinet Mission Plan, which was doomed to fail given the uncompromising position taken by Congress and the near-sightedness of its leader Pandit Nehru, and in August 1947 India was partitioned. And what followed is one of the saddest chapters in the history of the region.

Many Muslims, which included many religious scholars, were against the idea of a Pakistan. Their main reasoning, including some that were my relatives that belonged to the Congress party, was that for the Muslims that remained in India life would take a turn for the worse with the creation of Pakistan. Among these relatives was one gentleman that was an uncle of my mine. He was visiting our home in Amroha where I happened to meet him as I was home from school. Having been in Aligarh – which was a hot-bed of young students agitating for Pakistan – I was a fervent supporter of Pakistan. My uncle was a member of the Congress party, and was explaining his point of view on why India should remain united. He had a long association with Congress party, and had even spent some time in jail. In this discussion he mentioned his work as a lawyer. I was a hotheaded youth, and I retorted that he should include the income he gets from Congress party. He was very upset, got red in his face with

anger, and railed on my lack of manners, and left. I was very pleased with myself, thinking I had scored a point. Now that I am over 70 years of age, I look back at that episode with respect for my uncle's point of view. He did stick to what he believed in. He stayed in India after partition and our ancestral family home was given to him by the authorities after we left for Pakistan. He was a person with modest means and I am sure he did not gain materially from being in the Congress party. He has long since passed away – may Allah grant mercy to his soul (Aameen).

Since my father was in the army, he decided to work in Pakistan. In December, 1948 me and mother along with my other siblings moved to Peshawar with my father.

My father was close to retirement and we wanted to make sure that we managed to live in a house with the same amenities as the one he had been allotted during his service. After some effort, I was able to rent a house in Colry Lane in Peshawar. I have many memories associated with that house. It has long been demolished, and in its place high-rise apartments have been built for members of the air-force and their families. My father was a true gentleman, and he worked hard towards the goal of providing a good education for us. May Allah grant mercy to his soul (Aameen).

I passed my F.Sc (12th grade in U.S school system) in 1947, and in June 1948 I arrived in Peshawar. I gained admission in the B.Sc program at Islamia College, Peshawar. It was a great institution, and probably still is.

During my time at Islamia College I also took flying lessons. I logged 40 hours of flying and a solo as well. This happened because the Pakistani Air Force had started a program called "University Air Squadron", to get college age men interested in flying. I was picked for this program, and we started our training at the Peshawar air field on the small Tiger Moth aircraft. Our instructor was an English gentleman named Busby, and he was an expert instructor. After about 14 hours, I did a solo flight as well. But somehow flying did not interest me much. In 1950 I was selected to the Pakistan Army and for 6 months went to Pre-cadet training School in Quetta. The basic training was tough. Even though we were there during harsh winter months, the accommodations were excellent.

After Quetta, I went to the Kakol military academy. This is an excellent institution and after going through the training program

there, a raw young man is transformed into a tough, resilient individual. I was there 2 years, and met many other young men from different backgrounds, and we all learnt from each other as well. And friendships were formed that lasted a lifetime.

I got my commission⁴⁰ on 14th of February, 1953. During my stay at the military academy the personality that stands out is that of the drill sergeant Duffield – a six-foot tall, very athletic man. He was a dominating personality, and his voice commands were so loud that if the wind was blowing just right you could hear him in Abbotabad.

You had to get a haircut every week in the military academy. I started losing my hair during my time there. I recall once I got a haircut on Sunday and on Monday when we during parade, I was checked by Sergeant Duffield for not having my hair cut. I didn't think that was right, so after the parade I approached the sergeant and told him that I had in fact gotten a haircut just the day before, and it hadn't been 12 hours. He inspected me again, and struck-off my name from the list of those that were to face some punishment for failing inspection.

Life was hard at the military academy but very interesting. After the military academy, we went to Infantry school in Quetta. After that I was at Risalpur for about 3 years. Here I got my undergraduate degree (B.Sc) in engineering.

During this time at Risalpur, I started playing the game of Squash with great interest. The British introduced this game to the sub-continent. Squash is played in a small room, and can be played year-round. I became a good squash player, and played for the Army in the Inter-services tournament⁴¹.

During this stay in Risalpur, an interesting episode I recall is the shaving off the moustache of a fellow cadet. This gentleman, who has now passed away, liked keeping a big moustache. He was not very keen about personal hygiene and didn't bathe very often. A group of us got a bet going about who would cut off his moustache. One of our

⁴⁰ "getting commission" is a term used when you graduate from the military academy to an actual job with the Army. Thus becoming a "commissioned officer" leading enlisted men. Similar to U.S Army.

⁴¹ In remember my father telling me that he played with Qamar Zaman, a Pakistani squash champion in the 70s, when Qamar was a young, talented, up and coming player. My father continued to play squash well into his 40s.

dare-devil friends – who has since become very religious – said he would be the one to win the bet. His room was next to the would-be victim of this prank. In the evening, while visiting his friend he unbolted the locks on a window. Late at night, he entered the room with scissors and a torch. We had all gathered outside. He jumped onto the friend's chest and began using the scissors. Our friend called out in panic – “help, someone is cutting off my moustache”. We all heard his cries for help, but only entered the room when the deed was done, to offer our condolences about the moustache – even though we were all in on it. Many such pranks and practical jokes were part of student life at the engineering college in Risalpur.

I believe strongly that it takes a good teacher to help students get interested in and understand the concepts of a subject well. I speak from personal experience. When I was attending Islamia College in Peshawar, an English teacher got me interested in reading novels, and that interest has stayed with me till now. A subject that I had trouble understanding was Calculus. In F. Sc, I had 3 compulsory subjects – Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. Part of the Mathematics curriculum was Calculus. Partly due to my own lack of understanding and partly due to the teachers, I had a difficult time grasping the concepts of this topic. In my F.Sc exams I recall there were a couple of questions in the final exam that I didn't even attempt, which I now consider to be pretty easy. In B.Sc I also failed to understand Calculus. In the military academy there were good teachers but somehow they too could not get this subject across to me. But when I got to the engineering college in Risalpur, I had a math teacher that really helped me understand this subject. Calculus plays a foundational role in engineering, without it its near impossible to grasp other concepts needed for engineering. The way this teacher taught me the subject of calculus made it very interesting and easy to understand. And where I had thought this topic to be so difficult, it now seemed not at all difficult. I got interested in Calculus to such an extent that even now if I ever come across a calculus book, I open it and like to read it. I cannot be more grateful to this teacher, whom I credit for helping me understand this subject. As I have said before, nothing can help more than having a good teacher when it comes to learning.

Cheating during exams – or trying to cheat - is common among our students. This was the case at the Risalpur Engineering College as well. Many of the cheaters would stay up all night playing cards, and then cheat in the exams to get good grades. I worked hard on my own, didn't cheat, and as a result I got worse grades than them. I

was really frustrated by that. In those days the Commandant and officers in charge of training were British. I complained to them, but to no avail. The cheaters kept on cheating. And when it came time for the final exam, many knew the exam questions already, except for me and another student. They didn't include us thinking perhaps that we would disclose their secret to the staff.

My first posting was in Jehlum, where I had a position with an engineering company. There was an older gentleman with the rank of Major who was the commanding officer. I recall he had a simple nature and a kindly personality. My stay in Jehlum was very peaceful. I would be at the parade grounds early in the morning. All of the marching bands of the Engineering Corp were also attached to our company in Jehlum, and I remember I would have them play all the tunes that they knew.

The year was 1956, and it was this year that the well-known "Khanki Headworks" joint military exercise, code-name "Agility" was held. I was given the responsibility to manage the upkeep of the roads and camps. I stayed at the rest-house at the Khanki Headworks, and my stay there was excellent. Many American army officers took part in this military exercise, and probably right about this time military aid to Pakistan started to become significant. Then President of Pakistan Sikandar Mirza and Prime Minister Sehrwari also came to see this exercise. The rest-house at Khanki had been renovated and had gotten all new furniture. My job was to take care of the non-essential aspects related to electricity, roads and camps during the exercise, so this experience was not very helpful to me professionally.

During my stay at Jehlum I took advantage of the amenities available at the Army Club, where there were excellent facilities for Tennis, Squash etc.

In March 1957 I went for an engineering survey course to England. This was at a military school in Newbury, about 70 miles from London. I stayed there about a year and a half.

The English didn't take to becoming friends quickly – they probably want to get to know one better first. After a while I was able to socialize with others, and some became my very good friends. The first batman⁴² I had there was Scottish, and I had a difficult time, and

⁴² A **batman** or an orderly, is a soldier or airman, assigned to a commissioned officer as a personal servant.

I had a difficult time understanding his heavy accent. I had another assigned to me later, and his English was excellent.

At the time England was a very affordable place, and you could get a good meal for a few shillings. Young men would all try to get a girlfriend, otherwise spending the weekend single was not easy. Therefore, most of the young men there had girlfriends. I dated some girls there, but it was not a good experience for me. I did enjoy dancing.

During my stay in England, I bought a small car – a Ford Anglia – on a monthly payment plan, so things were a bit tight financially. However, it was good investment. I couldn't drive well at the time, so I had a tough time driving it from the showroom to my place.

Once I had completed the course, I drove this car from England to Pakistan. This was June 1958. I drove to Dover, and crossed over to the Belgium port city of Ostend via ferry. From there I drove to Germany. You could see Germany getting back up on its feet after the devastation it suffered in WW-II. What I found to be really great there was how many affordable guest houses one could get a room for the night. Some places still showed after-effects of war, and some parts of towns were quite devastated.

One event that has stayed with me from my trip as I drove through a small village in Germany – and I still get goose-bumps thinking about it – was a very close call I had, that could have resulted in a serious accident. In England and in Pakistan, car drive on the left side of the road. Germany has vehicular traffic to the right side, and in order to get on the Autobahn highways from the city roads, you use on-ramps. Since I was used to driving on the left, I took the wrong ramp onto the Autobahn, so that I found myself on the highway with cars coming at high-speed in the opposite direction. They turned on their head-lights as warning to me, I realized my mistake and turned quickly to the correct direction. Thankfully, no car was using that off-ramp to exit the highway, otherwise there could have been a serious accident.

Travelling via Yugoslavia, I entered Greece. The cities and roads in Greece reminded me of Pakistan. The food was similar as well. What I remember vividly is traveling on the highway next to the Mediterranean sea. The road went through mountains with the sea below. The small ships sailing on the blue water were a beautiful

sight. The weather was excellent as well, and this scene has stayed with me through the years.

From Greece, I entered Turkey. On the border of Greece and Turkey, many money-changers were dealing in exchanging the Pound Sterling into the Turkish Lira at a good rate. The official exchange rate was perhaps 12 Lira to the Pound, but these "black-market" money-changers would offer something like 30 Lira.

Istanbul was seeing development with many construction projects in the works. Istanbul is a beautiful city, situated such that the sea is on both its sides. Around this time Jamal Abdul Nasir had come to power in Egypt, and many entertainers had come to Istanbul. I visited a night-club and the Egyptian belly-dancer Samia Jamal was performing. She was famous and her dancing skills were worth watching. It is said that Egypt's King Farooq was a big fan of hers.

From Istanbul, I went to Ankara and stayed there 2 days, and from there onwards to Iran. As I traveled westward, the conditions of the roads and towns began to deteriorate. Somewhere near Erzurum in Turkey, I had dinner at a restaurant where the waiter served a drink with a whitish color and because it smelled like fennel seed, I thought this was a tonic to help with digestion. I poured water in it and it became clear. I was very thirsty and I drank it quickly. Seeing my glass was empty the waiter gave me another one, while giving me a funny look. I finished that one in a hurry as well. Soon after that my head began to spin. I found out later that this was not a tonic for digestion, but one of Turkey's strong whiskeys. Its effect lasted till the next day, and I realized why the waiter had given me that strange look.

Near the border of Iran, I visited a Turkish bath. The temperature was very hot and the bath was filled with steam. After about an hour I emerged totally refreshed. The place was ordinary as far as quality goes, but this was my first time using a Turkish bath.

Near the border of Turkey and Iran there is Mount Ararat, which is famous as the place where Prophet Noah's ark landed after the flood. What is interesting about this mountain, is that you can see it from its base to the peak, and it was covered with snow at the time. It presented an excellent scene. I didn't have time and just drove by it.

Near the border the roads were gravel, but as soon as I crossed into Iran the road completely disappeared, save for the stones marking the

edge. The first city was Shiraz. This was not an impressive city at the time. What was interesting about the town and cities was the prevalence of statues of the Shah. The roads were in bad shape, my car was new and I thought to myself why I even decided to drive this distance, for what if the car got damaged by traveling on the bad roads and then I would be stuck.

Driving eastward from Shiraz on very bad roads, I reached Tehran. I stayed in a moderate quality motel. Tehran's north was the affluent part of town and towards the south was where mostly the poor lived. From Tehran I went on to Mashhad, on the same bad roads. Imam Reza's (A.S) shrine is in Mashhad, and the city is near the border with Afghanistan. The area around the city is rocky. I visited the shrine to pay my respects. From Mashhad I traveled through the desert towards Pakistan's border.

The next day I set out for Quetta. As soon as I entered Pakistan, I felt like a child feels when it is back in it's mother's arms. The road towards Quetta was in good shape, even though it was a gravel road. I stayed a night at Nokundi and reached Quetta the next day. I had to leave the car in Quetta as I didn't have the money to clear it from customs. So I went to Karachi where I borrowed some money to clear the car from customs. Since the money had to be returned, I had no course but to sell the car.

My next posting was in Lahore. My stay in Lahore turned out to have great impact on my life as future events would reveal. Lahore in 1958 was very different than the Lahore of today. Mall Road was not as busy with traffic and congested as it is now, you could take a leisurely stroll down the road. I was single, so my daily routine was work during the day, then a game of squash followed by tea and snacks at Shehzaan Restaurant with friends. Since I had a car, there were always some friends that would come along.

In the army mess where I lived, a Captain Usman Khalid – who later became Brigadier - was my next door neighbor and we became friends. I would visit his family home in Lahore and would spend time with them in the evenings. Over time I got to know his family well, and got married to his elder sister, Naeema.

When I look back I wonder what hidden power led to my meeting my partner-in-life to be, as this was a match that would otherwise not be possible. Naeema proved to be a great source of strength for me, and I consider myself extremely lucky that she became my partner in life.

I can depend on her completely, and she has given me the kind of support that I couldn't possibly get from anyone else.

Our first son was born in Lahore. Becoming a father for the first time is a strange feeling. You try to understand this miracle of nature that through God's will has sustained generations of humanity. God has created human beings in a way such that knowingly or unknowingly this continuity is maintained, and you cannot but praise the power that sustains this universe.

I do wonder at some people's mind-set. The day my son was born, I was late coming to the office as there were some complications during the birth and both mother and baby were at the hospital. I called to let my senior officer know that I will be late. He replied that what did I have to do with a child's birth and to come to the office. I was amazed at his attitude. It was said about him that when he was taking a course in England, he would steal money from his colleagues rooms. What can one say except "it takes all kinds".

While I was in Lahore, my younger sister's health deteriorated, which eventually led to her passing away. May Allah grant her Jannat, Aameen.

In my life I have tried my utmost that I help my family and friends. I have strived at least not to be indebted to those close to me. God has helped me in this regard, and I cannot say how successful I have been at this. Whenever someone has extended a hand in need, I have tried to help, even though my own finances were constrained. My prayer has always been to allow me the financial wherewithal to help others. And some eternal, merciful being has helped me. I have many flaws and I have suffered the consequences. Some acts of mine were done without my being fully aware, and after all as a human being, I have erred, however I have tried not to be hurtful to anyone.

My stay in Lahore was a great experience. I was working at M.E.S (Military Engineering Services) and this was my first experience working with private businesses. Many people working for me were older than me. One Mr. Siddiqui, who was an SDO, drove a Morris and would always greet me deferentially, as he would stick his head out through the open window of his car. This was a source of some embarrassment to me. The M.E.S was responsible for the civil infrastructure of the military cantonment, like the electricity, water and roads, and had been functioning since the time of the British. This was my first hands-on experience with civil works. Most of the work

was done via contractors, and the job of the officer like me was managing and approving the projects. The M.E.S had been in existence since the time of the British rule. The army officer managing the project had wide authority over the approval of the work. This could result in some corrupt practices that can occur in this situation throughout the world. In those days the level of corruption is not what I hear it is today. The way this worked, and perhaps still does, is that the private contractor would allocate a certain percentage of the budget towards what was called a "commission" to be given to the project manager and his superiors. The officers in charge of the project would still make sure the work was done properly, and would be satisfied with the "commission", which was about 15% or so in those days. Nowadays, this commission is upwards of 40% and one can imagine that if the amount allocated towards the actual project is roughly only 50%, the quality of that work will suffer.

After Lahore, I was posted to Rawalpindi. Since my wife was working at the Fatima Jinnah College in Lahore, she remained there. I would normally visit Lahore on the weekends. I had an official residence there, but after a while my wife and child moved to their grandfather's house.

During our stay in Rawalpindi, my daughter and then my youngest son were born. Both are married with children now. My stay in Rawalpindi was for about one year and half, and after a promotion, I was posted to Azad Kashmir in 1962.

I was first stationed at Bhimber district, which is just towards the north of the Gujrat district of Punjab. Bhimber has long been considered the gateway to Kashmir, as you have to cross the famous mountain range of Pir Panjal to enter the Kashmir valley. Historians have recorded that when Kings visited Kashmir, the common folk in their entourage were allowed to travel only till Bhimber. It was thought that the Kashmir valley's economy would not be able to support a large influx of people.

In 1962, Bhimber was a small place. Our work there was maintaining the roads, in which the engineers played a major role. This work was very interesting. I enjoy the outdoors, and so this work really suited me.

I stayed in Bhimber for a year, and then my company was transferred to Muzaffarabad, which is the capitol city of Azad Kashmir. Muzaffarabad is located near where the rivers Neelum and Jhelum

meet. The place where the two rivers meet is called Domail. River Neelum's waters are bluish and clear, whereas Jehlum's water is muddy brown. Both are fast flowing rivers. Muzaffarabad too is located on the historic route leading to the Kashmir valley. In Moghul times, the route went via Mansehra, then through Pakhli to Mazaffarabad. From there, the travel route went along river Jhelum till it reached Sri Nagar (the capitol city of Kashmir). Later, in British times, a road was constructed from Rawalpindi, through Murree up to Kohala, which traversed along river Jhelum to the Kashmir valley. After independence, and India's annexation of Kashmir, this road came under Pakistan's control till Chakothi.

Some areas of Azad Kashmir are very beautiful. Along the banks of River Neelum there are dense forests, and the fast flowing waters as they run past high mountains are a lovely sight. My company's jurisdiction was till Kale, so I got to travel often along the river Neelum.

The "Cease fire line"⁴³ in some places near Muzaffarabad runs across the river, and the road on the Pakistani side runs close to this cease-fire line. Whenever tensions are high between India and Pakistan, the traffic on this road is hampered due to firing from the Indian side. In 1964, during one such time of hostilities between the two countries, I happened to travel on this road. The firing from the Indian side would be in-coming from the right side, where the steering wheel of my army jeep was as we traveled on the road. Thinking that if I asked my driver to take the wheel, he would think that the senior officer is saving himself from the risk – so I did the driving myself. Fortunately, we reached our destination safe and sound, without any untoward incident. But those 15 or 20 minutes while we were within firing range of the Indian army were tense and thrilling.

Azad Kashmir, as I have said before, is a beautiful place. Many of the smaller towns were hard to reach and as a result the economic situation of the people in many of the smaller towns and villages was quite bad. However, over time as the network of roads and infrastructure has spread, the situation has improved as I have seen during my later travels.

⁴³ The Line of Control as it is called these days – the geographical demarcation between Pakistani and Indian held territories in Kashmir.

In all, I was in Azad Kashmir for 2 years, from 1962 to 1964. 1 year in Bhimber, and 1 year in Muzaffarabad. My stay there was excellent.

In 1964, I was posted to Karachi, at the Defense Purchase department. I was there only 6 months, when I was transferred to northern Pakistan once again, to Risalpur, as an instructor at the engineering college. I was not there that long, when I had to move once again. This time due the war of 1965, which flared up between India and Pakistan. I was stationed at Chaklala, Pishur and then Gujranwala during the war.

The war of 1965 was over Kashmir. And had it not been for the Pakistani Army high-command, which didn't have the capability to wage war on a large scale, Pakistan may very well have won, it so happened Pakistan did not achieve its objective.

The main reasons for not winning was lack of good communication, and the incompetence of the army generals. They had thought that India would not attack across the international border, and fighting would remain in Kashmir. However, India did attack Lahore and Pakistan had to divert resources to that front. And so what transpired was what the leadership was ill-prepared for. So much so that the network of roads was not well developed and logistical support was poor. As a result, we did not achieve much, and in fact had to bear heavy losses.

And as it so often the case, the majority of the suffering during war-time is borne by the civilian population. One image that I cannot forget from that time, is what I saw when I was driving in an army vehicle near Pishur. It was a fleeting scene, but it really summed up the dislocation and hardship endured by the women children and the elderly. I saw a woman on foot, carry a bundle of belongings on her head. Two small children were holding on and walking along with her. The distraught expression I saw on her face said everything - I wondered from which village she had been forced to flee with only the things she could carry. And this was but one family, there must have been so many that suffered during this time.

General Ayub Khan, who had been in power for 10 years, was removed as president within 2 or 3 years after that. Then in 1971 came the tragic episode of the breaking away of East Pakistan into independent Bangladesh. These were all after-effects of the 1965 war. And we have been on a downward trend ever since.

In 1966, Pakistan realized that a roadway connecting it to China was necessary for better trade and economic development of the areas bordering China. I was in the engineering survey team that was put together to plan the construction of this road. Pakistan had already started work on the Indus Valley Road, using its own resources.

The Indus Valley Road was constructed along the Indus river. The economic effects of this were soon apparent as economic activity picked up and small shopping centers developed along this route. The shops mostly sold items like lip-stick, women's hair and make-up accessories, which merchants transported from Swat using donkeys, horses or on foot. This was also the case for Gilgit and beyond. I visited Gilgit first in 1949, when that city was but a small village. In 1967, when I was there again at the Frontier Works Organization head-quarters, Gilgit was pretty much the same. But as soon as the Karakoram Highway opened, it transformed Gilgit and the whole Hunza valley. Shops and Hotels appeared, and what would take days to cover, that distance was now a matter of hours.

The Hunza valley is an extremely beautiful region. When I first visited it, I felt I had entered a fairy land. Going from Gilgit to Hunza, as you drive along the Hunza River, the valley narrows at some points and widens at others. Right before Karimabad the valley is narrow and as you take a turn in the road and the valley opens up so that you can see the whole of it, is a wondrous scene. The river widens and it has gardens and fields along both banks. High mountains flank the sides of the valley, with snow-covered peaks. As the sun shines on them, the mountains change color, sometimes red, and sometimes orange. In 1966, this was a hard to reach, almost forgotten place. But by the 90s, it had changed a lot and much economic development had taken place.

The Agha Khan's program for helping this under-developed region has made a difference as well. The region is well known for its plums, apples and pears. Along with the fruits, potatoes are grown as well. From what I have heard, these potatoes are now supplied to the whole country.

Our engineering team did the survey from Gilgit to Khunjerab, and marked the path that the road would take. In those days, there was only a dirt track for donkeys from Pisu to Sost. And from Sost onwards, there was only a small walking path just wide enough for goats. The valley of River Khunjerab had no human population. The distance from Sost to Khunjerab Derra is about 40 to 45 miles, and it

was treacherous. It was dangerous to traverse these narrow paths that were at an elevation of about a 1000ft, with the River Khunjerab flowing below. From that elevation, the river looks like a mere line, with its muted sound reaching high up.

During our stay at Sost, we lived at the home of an expert mountaineer and guide named Pamarchi. When I started off on foot from Sost towards Khunjerab, he said to me " the way ahead is difficult, so let me accompany you till the path becomes easier". I agreed, and thought that he was doing this to get make some money for helping me. But as we traversed the way, it became clear that I could not have done this on my own. At some places loose rocks were falling from above and he asked me to hold on to the belt around his waist, which he had fashioned out of his "chaadar". I ran behind him, and he was literally dragging me up the path. Pamarchi was probably from the Pamir Plateau area. I stayed with him three nights, and all three were subjected to bed-bugs.

Pamarchi was killed in an accident along this same path. It so happened that he had been hired for doing odd jobs at the Corp of Engineers base camp at Khunjerab Derra. He was on his way back from Pisu with our mail, when he and his companion had to take shelter in a small cave due to heavy rain. He was struck by falling rocks. His companion got help from Sost, but by the time they reached him, he was almost gone. So ended the life of an extremely adept mountaineer and guide, and along the same path where he had saved me from the falling rocks. I visited his family during another trip to the area years later. His family were well established in their businesses, and a newly constructed house stood where the old one had been.

The Karakoram highway is a marvel of engineering. Many lives were lost to make it a reality. I was commanding a battalion that was stationed in the area during this project. A strange accident took the life of one of the sergeants. It so happened that he was taking attendance of the laborers who walked past him to the job site. Just as he finished, a falling rock struck the unfortunate man. He was seriously injured and died soon after.

Pakistan did not have the resources to complete this project on its own. The People's Republic of China contributed a lot towards its completion. The Chinese had already constructed the highway in their side of the Chinese-Pakistani border. No doubt that the area north of Khunjerab is a plateau and road construction is a much easier task.

On Pakistani-side of the border it is treacherously mountainous, with fast-flowing rivers criss-crossing the terrain. North of the Khujerab valley, one would not know how dangerous, just towards the south, the terrain was.

During the survey, I had the opportunity to meet the Mir of Hunza. He was an excellent gentleman. He was the "naib" of the Agha Khan. We talked about the Prince Ali Agha Khan, who had passed away recently, and had not been buried yet. The people in Hunza are followers of the Agha Khan, whereas those living in Nagar are Shi'a.

Many languages are spoken in this region, among which Barshki and Sheena are the common ones. Even though both are spoken in the same valley, they have very few words in common.

During the survey, I also rode a Yak. Yaks are found only at a certain altitude. I couldn't ride a horse, so I didn't use that as a means of transport. People of the region also used Yak as a food source, yak meat is quite tasty.

My team prepared a detailed survey report within 6 weeks. 6 weeks was not a sufficient time to do this survey, which probably required 6 months or more to be done accurately. As could be expected, during the road's construction, many changes to the road's direction had to be made with respect to the plan we had proposed. This was a very interesting experience.

After this survey, I worked with an engineering company that was involved with the construction of a road running along the Sindh river. After that I lived in Rawalpindi for a while, and then went to Gilgit to work with the Frontier Works Organization (FWO), whose head office had moved from Chaklala to Gilgit. The infrastructure in Gilgit was in poor shape. Since the move to Gilgit was done in a hurry, we faced some rough times. Pine forests abound in the area, whereabouts now there is a Serena Hotel, we had setup our tents. We got there in winter time, we had only oil heaters to keep warm, and food was scarce. I used to keep a small heater between my legs to keep warm, my pants were burnt due to that.

During my stay in Gilgit, I was promoted to the rank of Colonel, and I was posted to head an engineering battalion in Gilgit. The karakoram highway's construction was in full swing now. Each battalion was allowed to hire a certain number of laborers, and these were from the local population. They did not have suitable accommodation, and that

effected their productivity. Despite all the difficulties, the engineering team did an excellent job. In those days the Director General of the FWO was a very kind-hearted gentleman, however he was probably better suited for staff duty.

After about one year in the northern areas, I was back in Rawalpindi. I worked in the offices of the Engineering in Chief, and my projects included the construction of two large cantonments – in Gujranwala and in Okra. The need for these was felt after the 1965 war with India, and construction was completed at a rapid pace. After a short time in Rawalpindi, I was posted as an instructor to the Engineering college in Risalpur.

Since the time when I studied at Risalpur, the engineering college had grown into a full-fledged engineering university, which was awarding engineering degrees, that were, after some struggle, being recognized by the national accreditation authorities. During my stay in Risalpur, there were two or three university presidents. One gentleman about whose unpredictable nature the well-known (in Urdu) saying was quite apt, that he was "like the camel who one never knows the way it will sit". Another, who thought giving university level engineering education to Army officers was a waste of their time. I opposed this point of view. Luckily, he was soon transferred.

I was not a good instructor, because it is not easy to teach engineering level courses, and this is meant to be a full-time profession. I did enjoy my stay in Risalpur. In the nearby town of Nowshera, there was a small golf course in the army's club. I started playing golf, which I enjoyed very much. After only a short time in Risalpur, the 1971 war started, and I went to Sahiwal and then onto Omakot, where I was put in charge of the engineering battalion. In Sahiwal, the projects were mostly construction and repair of roads. The Army Corp of Engineers was responsible for paving roads as well. In times other than war, the job of the engineering corp can be quite boring. After the intense pace of activity in a war, the time afterwards is spent in maintenance.

In Omarkot, my project was much more interesting and dangerous. Our job was to clear land-mines laid by the enemy. The accepted process of laying mines is to keep a detailed mapping of where they have been laid. These maps are kept by the engineering units. And are shared to assist with the removal. We did not have such maps for the mines laid-down by India. We only knew the general areas where the mines were. This made the work of their removal extremely dangerous.

At the start of the project, I held a meeting with the officers and enlisted men, and emphasized to them that this work was dangerous and needed to be done with due diligence. And that if someone under my command was lost due to carelessness during this project, I would not forgive. This had the intended effect on the team, and luckily there was no loss of life, even though there were accidents.

Clearing of land-mines requires extreme care and even a bit of carelessness can be life threatening. It was this lack of care that resulted in a young officer losing his leg. As it happened, this officer was responsible for clearing mines in a certain area, and he was walking around rather carelessly, when he stepped on a anti-personnel mine. His foot and leg were badly injured. I accompanied him as he was rushed to the nearest hospital. I asked the doctors if there was any way to save his leg, but that was not possible and his leg had to be amputated below the knee.

After Omarkot, I also had a tour of Ormara, which is located on the coast of Baluchistan. The Navy has arranged a Chinese-made gun-boat for my transport, which I took from Karachi to Ormara. This gun-boat was very good and had many amenities. Ormara is a small port near a fishing village. One of its interesting aspects are cliffs very near the shoreline, which rise to about 2000 feet or so. At the top of the cliffs, the land flattens out, giving an excellent view of the Arabian sea. A local army youth accompanied me on the climb to the top. He knew some Baluchi poetry which he recited. I spent the whole day there, and traversed the whole length and width of the cliffs. I headed back to Karachi that evening. I took some photographs as well.

After Omarkot we went to Quetta (capital city of Baluchistan) from there onto Kholo, where we had to build a road to Mavand. During this time, the tribal leaders of Marree and their supporters had risen up against the government.

During this project, I did get a glimpse into the mentality of the tribal leaders there. At Kholo, the deputy commissioners of the area brought me a message from the tribal leaders, which said that we had to stop the road construction, otherwise the consequences would be dire. I gave my reply, that we had been ordered to construct the road to improve the economic conditions of this region. And that under no circumstances would I halt this project. The deputy commissioner relayed my message to the tribal leaders. Some of the partisans of the tribal leaders fired on our position. In reply, and to show them that

we were fully on our guard, I had a full show of force of our firepower. I felt a bit sorry for the partisans, as their weaponry was out-dated, and in reality they were no match against the army.

Baluchistan is still a severely underdeveloped region. The tribal system hinders economic development of the population. The tribal leaders (so called Sardars) control every aspect of the lives of the people they subjugate. I got a glimpse of that relationship when during a stay at Lehri, some people came to visit, a few of which were Sardars. Their personal body-guards were with them. I asked them to sit down, but they would not sit on the furniture, and instead sat on the floor, not wanting to offend the Sardars.

As I mentioned already, Baluchistan is economically under-developed. Lack of water and the tribal system both contribute to this state of affairs. Women have to travel miles to access water. I felt sorry for the people I saw there. The tribal leaders did make matters worse. Any government aid to the local populace was through them. And after they skimmed off the top, very little reached to benefit the population.

After Baluchistan, I was transferred to Peshawar to work with the air force. The Pakistan Air Force headquarters were there. I got to visit and gain knowledge about all the air force's bases across the country. It was around this time that my dear old friend Nabi Jan, whom I knew from Aligarh school, immigrated to the United States. Nabi Jan Siddiqui was a free spirit of a man – may his soul rest in peace. He was an extremely close friend of mine, and if I quote the poet thus “.. he was not of this world nor the other..” that would be an apt description. During our Aligarh days, we were in different social circles, but when we met again in 1948 in Peshawar, we became close friends.

He worked hard to get himself established in America, and was able to help his children move there, and managed to get them educated. They are married and well settled there now. And wherever my friend Nabi Jan is, I am sure he has a cigar in one hand and glass of beverage in the other, listening to his favorite music – he indeed loved music. May God have mercy on his soul – he was a unique personality indeed.

During my posting in Peshawar with the Air Headquarters, I got to travel to all the bases across the whole of the country. The Pakistan Air Force is a very professional organization, and it has managed to

maintain its high standards. Unfortunately, we don't have the resources where the Pakistan Air Force can acquire the kind of military hardware needed, but given these limitations it still does a commendable job.

I spent a year and a half in Peshawar, and during that time I passed the 'Lateral Entry'⁴⁴ exam whereby I was able to get a job in the civilian sector, as Director of the National Development Volunteer Program (NDVP). I said farewell to the armed forces, accepted the job offer and moved to Islamabad⁴⁵. Here started another chapter of my life, which turned out to be very interesting indeed.

NDVP got its start during the time when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party was in power. After the war of 1971, the economic situation in Pakistan was stagnant, and this scheme was designed to help solve the high unemployment among fresh graduates. These graduates of engineering and polytechnic institutes were to be given apprenticeships in private firms, and a nominal stipend was paid by the government until they found permanent work. To this end a law was passed that had rather vague language, and seemed to give the director of NDVP vast powers, that could be interpreted as interfering in the affairs of other governmental departments. This resulted in problems later on. One problem that arose was that not only were graduates with technical degrees allowed into the program, but those with non-technical education were also given apprenticeships and stipends. In the early days this did not pose any problems because funds were plentiful. But as money dried up, the volunteers started agitating across the country and placed the government in a tough spot.

I became director right at the time when money had run out, and these protests by the volunteers were in full swing. For me this was a new experience, and I didn't know right away how to deal with this situation. N.D.V.P had made the rounds of being under several different government ministries, and had finally settled in the Industries Department. The protests were hard to control, as the volunteers were young and hot-headed. They had been receiving their stipends and thought that the change in policy was due to new

⁴⁴ 'Lateral Entry' is the process by which Army Officers are allowed start a career as an official with a governmental institution.

⁴⁵ The capital city of Pakistan – where the National Assembly, the Prime Minister's residence and many government offices are located.

management – that is, myself. The reality was quite different. The department had over-extended itself and financial mismanagement had resulted in money running short. Even the suppliers of equipment to this department were up in arms due to non-payment. As a result, I was under extreme pressure.

The first step I took was to take a good look at the work-force and got rid of all the unnecessary employees across the country. I also had an 'organizational chart' made for the complete department. Next, I had an accurate head count done for all the volunteers. Those that were not eligible due to non-technical qualifications were to be dismissed after they got their stipend. Next step was to get the funding to achieve this. In this I was not successful until I presented the volunteer data in a meeting where Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was in attendance. Cannot say if it was my presentation that helped, in any case the department did get the funds. We were able to get over a big hurdle by giving the last of the stipends to the ineligible volunteers.

Now that there was relief from pressure of the volunteers, the department began making progress. I learnt many valuable lessons here. First of all, any organization needs to have a specific purpose and well-defined goals. The available resources need to be focused towards achieving these goals. Second, an organizational chart is a must. The workforce headcount needs to be limited to what is absolutely necessary, since laying-off workers is difficult. Thirdly, since the leader of any organization has considerable power, it is absolutely necessary that the person in charge be incorruptible, so that wasteful spending and graft is avoided.

This employment scheme by the government could have been a big success if it had been planned and executed properly from the start, and even nowadays it can be run successfully. This can provide a way for unemployed graduates with technical know-how to gain valuable experience, and keep their focus on productive activities.

I was with this organization for about 2 years, and I can say with some pride that by the time I left, it was functioning smoothly. My work was appreciated, and I was approved as managing director of the Garments Corporation.

The Garments Corporation was another of Z.A.Bhutto's schemes based on "Food, Clothing and Housing"⁴⁶ policy of the PPP. The plan was to establish clothing factories in Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar, the 3 main metropolitan areas at the time. When I took over from the previous managing director, a head-office has been set up in Lahore, near Canal road, and the building was quite grand. Machinery had been imported from Japan, and was mostly stored in warehouses. There was a small manufacturing plan in operation in Lahore already. I quickly realized that the overhead of this operation was quite high and it was operating at a loss. I visited private garment manufacturing enterprises in Karachi, and saw that their overhead was very low, their staff was minimal and their operation was obviously optimized for profit. In contrast the government run garment corporation had a large workforce at good salaries. I tried my best to have the small manufacturing unit operate as a going concern, tried to gain commercial level orders and gain some efficiency. I quickly realized that a government-run operation cannot compete with private concerns, as I was not able to make the decisions necessary, like cutting staff and reduce other overheads. I faced pressure from above and many times was forced to reverse my decisions.

On top of that, this was my first experience dealing with something akin to running a business. I had no prior training in this area. My family historically were professionals or land holders. Not to say that this a skill that cannot be learned given time.

I was at this job but a few months that Martial Law was declared by General Zia-ul-Haq on July 5th, 1977, and not soon after the garment corporation was dissolved.

I lost my job and was placed as an "officer on special duty". I went from having served in senior managerial positions, where I had gotten used to the routine of waking up, going to work and all the other things that come with it, to not having anything substantial to do. This naturally resulted in considerable mental stress during this time period.

General Zia's coup d'état was the result of the army taking over the affairs of state, because the civilian government had not been able to deal with the law and order issues, resulting from the riots and

⁴⁶ In Urdu the Pakistan's Peoples Party's slogan was "Roti, Kapra aur Makaan". As a socialist party it promised to provide affordable "food, Clothing and Housing" to the masses.

protests over rigging of the 1977 general elections. Some rigging had taken place, even though given Z.A.Bhutto's popularity among the masses, his PPP would have won the election with a fair and transparent process. The Army as an institution has played a critical role in Pakistan's politics, and that was perhaps inevitable from the start as a new nation came into being. The political leadership was dominated by the feudal class due the predominant rural population.

There was not a strong educated middle-class, nor many representatives in politics with that background. The political leaders looked at being in power as a way to benefit themselves – that is, keep the system functioning like in the British days, preserve their power structure with the benefit of the people being a secondary concern. In Punjab, the biggest province of Pakistan, was dominated politically by the Unionist party, which did not support an independent Pakistan. Same was true in Sindh and Baluchistan. It was naïve to expect this type of political leadership for any progress, and the result was naught but corruption and lack of organization. Army was the sole institution that had the organization and discipline to manage the affairs of state. And so it happened that starting from 1958, the Army began to take direct control of the political process.

Even Z.A Bhutto had come to be Prime Minister with the Army's blessing. But due to the political crisis that ensued after the elections, the Army once again dissolved parliament and took power.

The Army asked me to return to military duty. That was unacceptable to me, as my contemporaries in the Engineering Corp had since been promoted to higher ranks, and I would have to report to my juniors. During this time my wife had managed to find work in Libya. She and my youngest son went to Libya in 1979, and towards the end of the same year I too found myself in Libya, after I took retirement from the army.

It is quite ironic that I happened to be in Libya, because my previous trip to an Arab country was a visit to Saudi Arabia. My experience in Saudi Arabia was not a positive one with respect to dealing with the people there, and I had vowed never to visit an Arab country again. Even that trip to Saudi Arabia transpired due to a strange coincidence. My cousin was injured while visiting that country during Hajj during a commotion among the crowds. His brother called me from Canada and asked me check up on him and make sure he was taken care of. I called and spoke to my cousin in Saudi Arabia, but his brother insisted that I go visit him in person. Given that I was going to visit

Saudi Arabia, my wife decided to come with me, and we decided to do the Umrah (the lesser Hajj). The visit to the holy sites of Mecca and Medina, specially offering prayers at the Ka'ba in Mecca is a deeply spiritual and up-lifting, soulful experience that is hard to describe in words.

As I mentioned, in later half of 1970, I was in Libya which is in North Africa with a long coastline on the Mediterranean Ocean. This offers a beautiful scene and the beaches and shoreline is a great place for tourism.

What would normally happen is people would find jobs in Libya before arriving there. In my situation, I did not have a job. So I had to visit many offices to find out about job openings. After some effort, I managed to secure a position as an engineer with the City of Tripoli Municipal district. Most of the engineers employed at this office were from Eastern European⁴⁷ countries, like Yugoslavia and Poland for example. They had difficulty with English language, and in this area engineers from South Asian countries had an advantage. In the early days of Libyan independence, America and U.K had influence, many workers were from those countries and the language used for business and technical work was mostly English. This remained the case even after Col. Ghaddafi's revolution. Libya was a former colony of Italy, and so there were Italians in Libya as well.

My experience with Libyan co-workers was very positive, they helped me at every turn. I found them to be of good character and sociable. They had been dependent on foreign workers so much that they did hesitate to take on work themselves. Ghaddafi was investing in education and building a local workforce, and in this he had some success. There was a special effort in the education of women and their inclusion in the workforce, even in the army. I hope this has continued and that women have kept making progress in Libyan society.

One of the tragedies in the oil-rich Arab countries is that the appearance of sudden wealth and availability of foreign workers has made the local population quite lazy. "Easy money" has also resulted in a mind-set that does not understand the true worth of money that much.

⁴⁷ Col. Muammar Gaddafi's government was socialist oriented and so many foreign workers were from the former Soviet bloc.

Another observation I have about my experience in Libya, is that the Western companies did take advantage of the lack of know-how of the local population. But then these countries were heavily dependent on foreign technical expertise.

The work at the municipality was quite disorganized and the projects had difficulty getting to completion. Part of the blame rested with the Libyans themselves, while some of it lay with the foreign companies. My job was in the department that oversaw the projects. I did not have a lot to do at the office and that was the case with the other engineers as well. During my stay in Tripoli, most of the socializing was with the group of Pakistani expat workers. Most of the social activities were dinner parties, poetry recitations and picnics. Not knowing Arabic meant that it was difficult to socialize with the Libyans, and there was the cultural difference as well.

I then moved to a job with a government construction company. The pay was better, but I saw the same disorganization and mismanagement. The work was related to road construction and water distribution systems.

During my stay in Libya, I came across the "Green Book" which was written by Col. Ghaddafi in the same vein as Mao's Red Book. He was trying to promote these ideas in other countries as well. I too belonged to a group of people who were taught the ideas in the Green book.

The ideas in the green book are closely related to the communist ideology, therefore in Libya most economic activity had moved from private ownership to the hands of the government. The effect of this is what always happens when government takes on this role - which is that the energy and innovation associated with private enterprise goes away. As I said earlier, my own experience has shown that the government has no role in the actual running of industry and business. The government's role should be limited to regulation in the public interest, so that good quality products and services enter the market.

The Libyan experience was not that different from what transpired in Russia. However, there is no doubt that in the areas of education and uplifting the poor, Muammar Gadhafi did achieve a lot.

I changed jobs after my stint at the municipality, and I got a good pay raise. I had limited hands-on experience. Therefore, in this new job

with a survey company I struggled to learn how to use the instruments. My role in the army had been focused on project management, so I was lacking in practical experience. Compared to me, the engineers from USA and Europe were much more proficient.

I joined another company which took me to the southern regions of Libya, which is mostly desert. This company did oil drilling. The desert is another wonder of creation – everywhere the eye can see is sand, and beneath the sand is oil. I was with this company for about a year and then I went back to Pakistan. My wife had gone to Pakistan one year earlier.

Libya fell under Italy's colonial influence, and then after the second world war was under American influence during the period when Libya was a kingdom. The kingdom ended with Colonel Ghaddafi's revolution which was inspired by the Arab nationalist movement of Gamal Abdul Nasser.

Gamal Abdul Nasser's Arab nationalism spread to many Arab-speaking countries. However, it did not take hold in the oil-rich kingdoms. This was because these countries depended upon oil as their sole source of income and wealth and their technical reliance on the US oil companies meant that they needed to maintain good relations with America. That is the case even until now.

Libyan government implemented policies based on the thesis outlined in Ghaddafi's "Green Book". The book promulgated a socialist system, whereby the "means of production" are controlled by the government or the workers. These ideas are fine so long they are confined to theory, but when they are implemented in the real world, they inevitably fail. This has something to do with human nature itself. Unless that is changed, all these theoretical assumptions come to naught. What little benefit that can come from this is if the top leadership is honest, that can have a positive effect on the leaders at the lower levels. But this too is temporary and soon the situation reverts to what went before. As we have seen the from the Russian and Chinese experience with their economies under communism. As the verse from Allama Iqbal goes.." for whose blood has given color to the story of Adam"⁴⁸. The same happened in Libya. As soon the socialist policies were implemented all the energy and dynamism in the

⁴⁸ This verse belongs to the a poem by the great poet Mohammad Iqbal – popularly known as Allama Iqbal.

economy disappeared. However, there is no doubt that public education did prosper under this system, specially women's education.

What was most eye-opening was the presence of American oil companies operating in Libya. This was the case in spite of the tense relations between the two governments. To enable this, the American workers would get a special visa such that their passports would not get marked to show any entry or exit record. I am sure the American government was fully aware of this arrangement. The top management in these oil companies in Libya were all Americans. The oil-company made sure their workers' housing and living was top-notch.

I was in Libya till 1983. Our sons were studying in America during this time. We were able to fund their education with the money earned working in Libya, otherwise it was not within our power to do this. This was indeed a great help from above. The result of this was that our sons emigrated to the US. Maybe this was for the best and part of God's plan.

My constant postings during my career meant that I didn't get to spend a lot of time with my children. I did enjoy the time I had with them throughout every stage of their growing-up. By God's grace they are all married and have children of their own. I tried to encourage them in all their interests and hobbies. My daughter enjoyed horse-back riding, and I gave her riding lessons. She went to medical school and is now a health-care professional.

I found the people of Libya very helpful, and my experience there was a very good one. An episode that I recall that caused me some trouble happened when I was traveling from Libya to Islamabad. I misplaced my airline ticket during the journey from Tripoli to Istanbul. I was stuck at Istanbul, and struggling to figure out what to do, when by sheer coincidence I ran into someone I knew who was a counselor at the Pakistan embassy in Turkey who just happened to be at the airport. I was able to stay at his residence while he helped arrange for an airline ticket to Islamabad. And so I was able to get out of this predicament, which was nothing short of a small miracle.

I left Libya back for Pakistan in 1983. Once back home, I had to face the familiar problem of finding a job. There was our house in Islamabad, so I had a roof over my head, and my wife had her job. My daughter was at the Fatima Jinnah medical college and my sons were studying in the USA. After a year of looking I managed to find a

position with a consulting company that was working on a project with the World Bank. I had not been an year at this job that I found myself, on a morning in 1985, facing a new predicament. It had so happened that during my absence from Pakistan, the Pakistan army had initiated court martial proceedings against me, the decision for which was not rendered until 1985. In the morning paper I read my name on page one, with the judgement of the military court announcing a sentence of 14 years in jail and the confiscation of all property. I was at a total loss as to what to do. A lawyer suggested that I immediately submit a petition of my innocence, and leave Islamabad for the time being. And that is what I did.

By the grace of God, a good friend of mine had a brother who was working at the martial law headquarters. He asked me put in a request with the martial law office and promised to help me. I did as he asked, submitted a petition and was able to have the sentence overturned. I thanked the Almighty for delivering me from this predicament, and I was able to resume my work with the consulting company.

It was miraculous that I was able to escape from this potentially serious predicament after only a few tense days. I was truly thankful to God for He is the ultimate source of salvation. It is one thing to overcome serious difficulties once or twice, but I have experienced the hidden hand of the Almighty at work to deliver me from difficulties time and again.

The company I worked for was the National Development Consultants. They had been picked by the World Bank for a development project. This project was for the improvement of irrigation in Pakistan. The scope of this project included the improvement of canals and the paving-work for the water courses⁴⁹. USAID also contributed funds towards this project. Pakistan does not have the budget for such infrastructure projects, and so there is no choice but to work with entities like the World Bank by taking out loans to fund critical infrastructure improvement. In some cases the loans are taken out for projects that do not contribute towards any significant development.

⁴⁹ To view the project details on World Bank website use this link:
<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/172151468091760170/pakistan-irrigation-systems-rehabilitation-project>.

The Department of Canals is a useful entity, but as is the case elsewhere, over time this department has fallen victim to corruption and mis-management due to inept leadership. According to one experienced and senior officer, almost fifty percent of the budget was subject to embezzlement. One can imagine the effect this had on the maintenance of the irrigation system. The system got delapidated over time, and the country had no option but to take out loans from the World Bank. This project focused on certain areas in the four provinces. USAID also contributed to this project, as some funds were contributed by them.

The loans arrangement with the World Bank includes clauses that stipulate the hiring of foreign consultants. A significant portion of the money is allocated towards this. And since Pakistan is a developing nation known for corrupt practices, the competence of these consultants is also suspect. As a result top-notch consultants do not work on these projects.

In Pakistan, unfortunately, projects do get to completion but there is little follow-up. A nice building may fall into disrepair for example, due to lack of proper attention and corrupt practices. What is needed is to stop corruption and strengthen management oversight. But this is only possible if the leadership is free from corruption itself, and is genuinely interested in the work.

The irrigation project was a success, and as a result our company got a good name. The company was short-listed for other projects as well. As of now, it is one of the few well-regarded consulting companies in Pakistan.

Among the areas that I got visit for this project, one of my favorites was the 'Hub Canal' zone near Karachi. The Hub Dam is in Balochistan, and it supplies water to the large metropolis of Karachi and water for irrigation to the area around Hub. As a result, an almost barren landscape in Hub is now fertile. Fruit and 'paan'⁵⁰ trees are grown there, which supply the needs of the large market in Karachi. This has been very helpful to this area economically. This was the first time I saw 'paan' trees in Pakistan, and they seemed to be of very good quality. They were fulfilling to some extent the demand for this commodity in Pakistan.

⁵⁰ Beetle leaf tree. 'Paan' is an aperitif made from beetle leaves which are chewed.

Another success story is the 'Warsik Lift Canal' in the province of KPK⁵¹. It supplies water from river Kabul, using pumps, to a large area.

I had a chance to visit Singapore during this time. My daughter and husband were living there – they had moved there because my son-in-law had a job with a bank. I was impressed to see how that country had developed, and how an honest and smart leadership can do for a place. The first reason I thought for this was the geography, Singapore is a city-state located at the critical junction of major maritime trade routes. The second was honest and smart leadership. And the third reason was the diligence and innovation of the Chinese population, which was quick to embrace new ideas and trends. All these together had resulted in lightning-fast economic development, taking this small country to the top of the list of developed countries.

Unfortunately, Pakistanis have a bad reputation in the eyes of the world, and we are viewed with suspicion whenever traveling abroad. As the saying goes, 'you reap what you sow'. As soon as a Pakistani presents the passport to immigration, questions are asked and we have to face some embarrassment. I now deal with this situation as if it is part and parcel of traveling.

My job with the consulting company, and taking part in the irrigation project, was a great experience. I got to know the ins and outs of the Department of Irrigation, and it was overall a good learning experience. One personality that I cannot forget is that of one of the owners of the company, namely Mr. Nazar Hussein Mashadi (deceased). He was real gentleman, big of heart and very easy to get along with. I have seen few people that work with such dedication, and if I were to say that his personality is a shining star, it would not be an exaggeration. May his soul rest in peace with the mercy of the Almighty.

From 1977 to 1988, when General Zia-ul-Haq died in a plane crash, Pakistan went through a strange period. The movement that toppled Z.A Bhutto started as a protest against perceived irregularities in the election, but over time it took on a religious aspect by morphing into a

⁵¹ My father uses the older name for this province in the book – 'Sarhad' or 'the Frontier' province, a holdover name from the British Empire days when the Northwest of Pakistan, bordering Afghanistan, was 'The Frontier'. The province's new name is 'Khyber Pakhtunkwa' or KPK for short.

movement for 'Nizam-e-Mustafa'⁵². The coalition of religious and other political parties that were agitating against Z.A Bhutto used the cause of Islamization successfully by exploiting people's religious sensibilities. Bhutto's government was shaken by the protests, and he called in the army to help quell the protests. Using the army is a double-edged sword in Pakistani politics, as this powerful institution while acting as a broker between the antagonists will itself take power. And this is what happened after General Zia-ul-Haq's coup de etat. And once he took over the reins of power, he fully embraced the Islamization movement, partly as a matter of political convenience and partly as Zia was himself of the same mind-set as the mullahs that were leading the religious movement. He exploited these religious feelings and exploited them to stay in power. His first religious decree was the mandatory imposition of Zakat⁵³. This had the result of creating a fissure between the two main Islamic sects in Pakistan – as the Shi'a came out in protests against this law. Zia had to repeal the mandatory law. This caused sectarianism, as differences between the sects never before brought to light came to the fore. This rise in sectarianism became the legacy of Zia's rule, and the religious parties that supported Zia, played a role in it too by strengthening his hand.

After Zia's death in the 1988 plane crash, there was a move towards democracy in the country, and People's Party won the elections and came to power under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto. However, by that time Zia's protégé Nawaz Sharif had gained a leadership position. His effort was to make Benazir's government a failure. Due to some of her own mismanagement, as well as the undue influence of her husband⁵⁴ in matters of government and his corruption, she lost power. And from this point onwards, Nawaz Sharif and her came in and out of power in successive failed governments. This led to the Army getting more involved and eventually taking the reins of government.

As I mentioned, I worked for the consulting firm upon my return from Libya. During this time my children were going through the stages of higher education. My eldest son had always wanted to study in USA, and my younger son also joined him there. My daughter graduated from medical college as well. Now they are all married and with

⁵² Literally 'Rule of Mohammad' – in other words "Islamization".

⁵³ Asif Ali Zardari.

⁵⁴ One of duties in Islam – the 'Charity Tax'.

children. Their mother had a great hand in their upbringing, which is what all mothers do. The mother plays a critical role by providing love and guidance to the children. Among the parents the mother plays a pre-eminent part, and the success or failure of the children is greatly dependent upon her.

How important is the role of 'kismet'⁵⁵ in life? Just as one cannot choose one's neighbors, one cannot choose one's parents. Therefore, you are subject to this accident of happenstance from the very beginning, which effects your whole life. And then inherent personal aptitude is to some extent dependent on one's 'Bio-Chemistry'. These are the cards one is dealt by nature, and as a result the conditions that one faces as a result, one does not have any control over. And these accidents influence your personality. Indeed, these accidents are what you can call 'kismet'. Now whether these accidents are all one's unchangeable fate – well that is a difficult question to answer. In any case, some are born into circumstances that give them a huge advantage – that is being 'born with a silver spoon in your mouth'. However, there is no doubt that hard-work and dedication towards a goal does lead to success.

I have always detested religiosity, and am of the opinion that religion is a personal matter related to one's spiritual and mental well-being, and there is no place for unnecessary passion and fervor. Islam brought forth a logical concept for the existence of one God, with an absoluteness not seen before, and as such holds an attraction. This unique concept was brought by a messenger of God, and therefore one cannot deny the prophet. Therefore, believing in these three, namely God, the Prophet and Quran is logical. Beyond this are affairs that I consider ancillary details. As far as the details around the Day of Judgement, heaven, hell, angels and the like, that I consider as topics related to one's belief structure. But there are basic rules that Islam shares with other religions that are necessary in the proper functioning of a society. The problem is that when religion has fallen in the hands of those that profess a hypocritical piety is where mankind has suffered in the name of religion. Is this an indication of a narrow-mindedness that is part of the inherent ignorance of man? And will man ever rise above this? I have always believed in Ijtihad⁵⁶, because life is nothing but change, and the passage of time brings with it

⁵⁵ Loosely translates to 'fate' or 'luck'.

⁵⁶ A concept in Islamic jurisprudence, that allows for changes in the rules as befits current times and conditions.

changes to the society. This doesn't mean that the basic rules that light the way for a leading one's life be disregarded, and one ignores the difference between truth and falsehood. Ways of living have to change due to societal changes. The problem is many people cannot accept this. Even though time does force these changes onto them.

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Suppressing progressive thought in the name of Islam has been going on for centuries, and many religious scholars have thought that Muslims have no need for modern knowledge and technology, since the goal for a Muslim is to enter heaven, and to that end there is nothing better way than worship and prayer. Now if achieving heaven was one's only goal, then there would be no need of anything but places of worship in this world. In this era where some nations have achieved such heights of material progress, there really is no place for such obsolete thinking. Unfortunately, it is this mind-set that has pushed the Muslims backwards.

To keep Islam alive and viable, to make it an exemplary way of life and attract others to it, it is necessary for us to have harmony between the spiritual and the material aspects of our lives, which allows us to achieve progress and material well-being. Unfortunately, we have not been able to find a way to do this. Our actual contribution towards this goal amounts only to empty rhetoric.

If Muslim nations, and specially Pakistan, want to be first and foremost among the nations of this world, they will have to embrace progressive thought, and that is only possible through education. Therefore, the greatest emphasis should be on education. It is a good omen to see that all over the country the realization that education is a must for progress is taking hold. Many such parents who themselves could not get an education are in favor of educating their children. This mind-set is what is needed for society to get on the path towards progress.