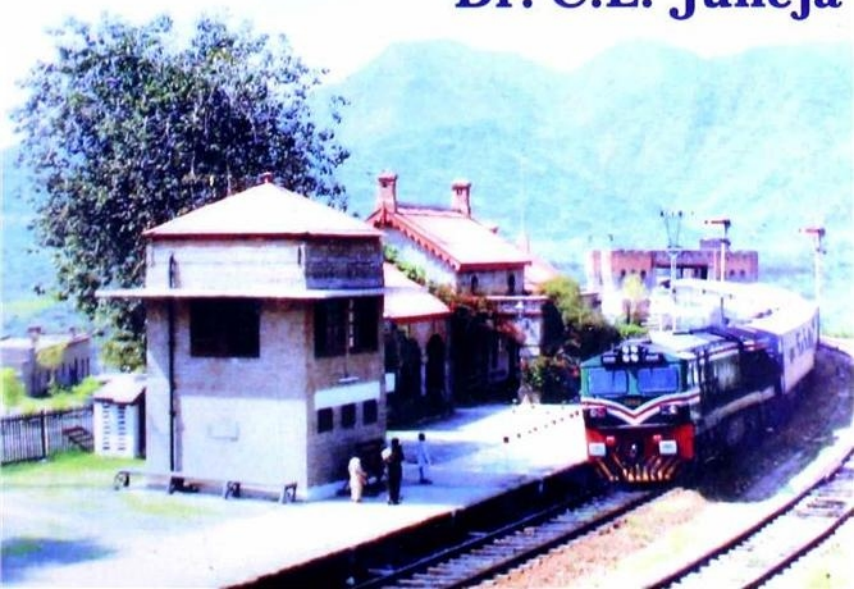


A Bond of Love

(My Passage to Pakistan)

Mohinder Pratap 'Chand'

Translated by
Dr. C.L. Juneja



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A BOND OF LOVE (My Passage to Pakistan)

By Mohinder Pratap 'Chand'

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To
Nivedita (Deetu)
my loving niece

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Foreword

It was my proud pleasure to go through Sh. Mohinder Pratap 'Chand's Travelogue to Pakistan. Such an account generally tends to be dull and insipid. However, 'Chand' Sahib's narrative is no less than a piece of fascinating fiction. This narrative enjoys fluency and felicity which can match with some of the best pieces in literature. (Prof.) Dr. C. L. Juneja has done a marvellous job in translating the piece into English. He has maintained a natural flow which generally becomes a casualty while a piece of literature is translated from one language into another.

Known for his erudition, scholarship and poetic talent, Sh. M. P. 'Chand' has transformed an otherwise casual visit to Pakistan into a piece of literature which can be read with absorbing interest. It is a graphic account which needs no glossary or foot notes.

Right from day-1, i.e. October 22 when Mr. 'Chand' along with Prof. 'Hans', a poet laureate of Haryana, and a famous litterateur, and Mr. S. K. Jain, a Hindi Journalist, stepped on the soil of Pakistan, 'Chand' Sahib experienced a thrill and a sense of ecstasy which find expression in the present piece.

I have been impressed by quite a few things which will perhaps interest all the readers as well. In the first place, the cordiality, love and warmth with which 'Chand' Sahib was received by his friends and admirers in Pakistan

is very heartening; the way he was welcomed at the border check post at Wagah on to Lahore, to Multan, Karor and other places is remarkably and intimately narrated.

Shoaib Baloch, Hakim Mian Ilahi Bux Lekhi Sirai from Layyah, his sons Mian Imdad Husain, Mian Shahabaz Husain, Kamran Yaqeen from Muzzafargarh, Zahur Ahmed Dhareja, editor of daily Siraiki Newspaper 'Jhok' from Multan, Mr. Isa Khan, Municipal Commissioner of Karor and Dr. Ashu Lal 'Faqr,' a renowned Siraiki poet and scholar all form a cavalcade of friends and well wishers who extended an unforgettable hospitality to 'Chand' Sahib and his friends. The kind gesture of Gulzar Javed, the editor of "Chaharsoo" who came all the way from Rawalpindi along with his sons to Lahore, covering a distance more than 750 KM to pay his regards to Mr. 'Chand' is rare and unsurpassable. The meeting with Mr. Imran Khan, the former Captain of Cricket Team of Pakistan was affectionate, inspiring and passionately loving. The narrative clearly speaks of affectionate and loving bond that the people of India and Pakistan cherish for each other. They have the common heritage and bear the same feelings of love and sympathy, compassion and understanding as the Indian have. They speak a language which we can speak and appreciate. There are no visible signs of hostility between them. Unaware of any political bickering between India and Pakistan, people to people relations are solid, laid as they are on sure foundations of centuries of good will and belongingness. Mr. 'Chand's pain and anguish resulting from the political conflicts presiding over humanitarian considerations are obvious and understandable in his intimate narrative.

An Urdu and Siraiki poet of no mean repute, Mr. 'Chand's scholarship was in full bloom in various Mushairas

(Poetic Symposiums) held in the honour of visiting Indian dignitaries. "Prof. Udai Bhanu 'Hans', and Mr. S. K. Jain who accompanied 'Chand' Sahib are men of literary tastes and this added to the fascinating atmosphere.

Mr. 'Chand' recited his poems both in Urdu and Siraiki which were enthusiastically applauded. In return his fellow poets in Pakistan also recited beautiful poems. The atmosphere was scholarly academic and poetic devoid of any vanity, ego, arrogance on either side.

During the functions arranged by the generous hosts in Pakistan they made thrilling speeches, welcoming Mr. 'Chand' and his friends. Beautiful gifts given to them in the form of books mementoes and sweets will remain surely seated in their memory. I am sure, these memories of their visit to Pakistan will form a happy landscape of their musings. I feel like going on and on endlessly saying things on this captivating narrative that can serve as an oasis where we may take refuge from the vast desert of life spread around us. It reminds me of John Keats' immortal dictum: "A thing of Beauty is a joy for ever." I sincerely believe that this narrative of Mr. 'Chand' will be read with increasing interest and afford immense pleasure to those who believe in peace, prosperity, and camaraderie between the two nations whose cultures are inextricably bound with each other. May this bond prevail and endure!

With that I extend my best and sincerest wishes to Mr. M. P. 'Chand' for a long life of creativity, speed and prosperity.

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(Haryana)

Dr. K.L. Johar
(Formerly Vice-Chancellor)
G.J. University Hisar)

Translator's Note

This translation is not a chance happening. When 'Chand' Saheb emailed me the Hindi translation of his voyage to Pakistan, I was so intensely involved that I immediately decided to translate it into English. One day, when we were sharing our views on the piece on telephone, he asked me if I could find time to translate it. I told him that I had already decided to do it, but I wanted to give him a surprise. Now, here it is before you.

As I have said, I read it in translation, dexterously done by one of Mr. 'Chand's old students Dr. Daljit Kaur. I thankfully acknowledge that this truly vibrant and exciting translation of hers is the basis of my humble endeavour.

Translation is not always an easy job. But one thing that helped me the most was my familiarity with the writer and his culture. I was born in Gujranwala district of the United India, now in Pakistan, and have the same affinities with and nostalgia for my motherland as does Mr. 'Chand.' At the time of migration, occasioned by partition, I was half of his age. But, he is lucky to have visited his motherland, whereas I am looking back with nostalgia. My long association with 'Chand' Saheb has enabled me to feel his

feelings, and think his thoughts, and excavate the caves of his creativity. So, the real source of inspiration of my humble attempt is Mr. 'Chand' himself.

Mr. Chand's article is both informative and creative. It opens a new window on the places he visited, and the persons he came across. Of course, the informative part of any writing leaves little space for creativity both for the writer as well as the translator. Especially, it nails the translator to 'what,' 'where' and 'when.' The creator is like a bird, sky-bound, can wing and sing together. On the contrary, the translator, being earth-bound, can some time wing, and some time sing. However, a translation well done may ring as another original, though I exert no such claim. My whole purpose has been to give a faithful presentation to 'Chand' Saheb's account.

My humble effort may encourage us to go to the original piece. A translation is only the shadow of the original. It may be read for its own merits, but it is only a help, and, in no case, should it be taken as a substitute for the original.

The touchstone of a translator's job is the reader's readiness to accept and finish the piece, especially of this length, in a single sitting, or, if in snatches, in a day or two. My express purpose is to make the reader feel involved in the narrative. If I have succeeded in my endeavour, I will feel blessed manifold.

There are certain additions which may be termed as a minor deviation from the original piece, and which are actually the result of my telephonic conversation with 'Chand' Saheb. They have been incorporated with his kind

permission. I sincerely acknowledge that all pleasantries delineated in the piece are 'Chand' Saheb's; all errors, discrepancies, and unacceptable portions, mine.

In the end, I wish 'Chand' Saheb long and wholesome life of creativity, and the reader, speed and good luck. Amen!

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Dr. C L Juneja

Acknowledgements

My passage to Pakistan is the greatest event of my life. It offered me an opportunity to perform a pilgrimage to my sacred motherland, and pay my sincerest homage. It also gave me a good opportunity to meet my friends and well-wishers whom I had not seen before. I owe a word of thanks to a number of people who made this event possible. First of all, I feel indebted to Prof. Udai Bhanu 'Hans,' Haryana Rajya Kavi, from Hisar, India, who extended me an invitation to accompany him to Pakistan, and Mr. S. K. Jain for his pleasant company.

Next, my thanks go to the authorities of the Pakistan High Commission, New Delhi that very kindly issued us the visas for our visit, and the authorities of the Indian Customs Office, and the Pakistan Customs Office at the Wagha border for their co-operation and generosity. My special thanks are due to Shoaib Baloch's friend, Mr. Saeed, for his care at the Pakistan Customs Office at the wagah border.

I am highly thankful to dear Shoaib for bearing with us at the time of our arrival at the border, and ferrying us from the Wagha border to Lahore and back at the time of our return journey. He helped us in more than one way. No doubt, we have been too bold upon his time.

I am much beholden to (late) Hakim Mian Ilahi Bux Lekhi Sirai from Layyah, who inspired and invited me to visit Pakistan, and was the greatest encouragement during my stay in Pakistan. I am also grateful to his sons Mian Imdad Husain and Mian Shahbaz Husain, and also his nephew, Mian Shamshad Husain. Dr Gull Abbas Aawan, Janab Amaan Ulah Kazim, Dr Muzammil Husain, Saleem Akhtar 'Nadeem,' Munavvar Baloch, and Jasarat Khyaali, again, from Layyah, also deserve my special thankfulness for their countless favours during my journey to Pakistan.

Also, I am grateful to Mr. Kaamran Yaqeen from Muzaffargarh and Malik Abdul Qyum Khan Jatoyi, M. P.; Razish Liyaqatpuri, Zahur Ahmed Dhareja, Editor of daily Siraiki Newspaper *Jhok*, from Multan, and Tanvir Shahid Mohd. Zyi, Hanif Seemab and Arshad Niyazi, Zulfikar Ali Khan Makhdoom, Mr. Tawakkul Husain (Headmaster), from Daira-Deen-Panah for their caring attitude throughout our sojourn in Pakistan.

My special thanks are due to Mr. Isa Khan, Municipal Commissioner and the first occupant of our ancestral house at Karor Lal Esan, and Dr Ashu Lal 'Faqir,' a renowned Siraiki poet and a scholar and Deputy District Health Officer, at Karor. Khan Sabeb and Ashu Lalji's kind gesture during my short visit to Karor, my ancestral town, will always remain an unforgettable experience.

More than most, I feel highly obliged to Gulzar Javed Saheb, the proprietor and editor of the Urdu monthly paper 'Chaharsoo' (Rawalpindi), who called everyday during my sojourn in Pakistan, and came all the way from Rawalpindi to Lahore, covering about 750km, along with his sons, Iftikhar Javed (Faari Shaw) and Ammaar Javed. Their

hospitality and affections will ever remain my proud possession.

(Late) Prof. Jafar Baloch, (Late) Iqbal Sahar Ambalvi, Hasan Askari Kazmi, Mashkur Husain 'Yaad' from Lahore, and Saroor Ambalvi & Anwaar Feeroze from Rawalpindi deserve special appreciation for extending their immense help during my work on a Research Project that I was doing for the Haryana Urdu Akademi, Panchkula. In fact, they had introduced to me so many friends living in Pakistan.

(Late) Azhar Javed Saheb, proprietor and editor of Urdu magazine *Takhleeq*, and Mr. Khalid Behzad Hashmi, the senior assistant editor and columnist of daily *Nawai Waqat*, deserve special mention for their kind consideration.

I am highly grateful to Mr. Imran Khan, the former captain of Pakistani cricket and the founder and president of *Tehrik-e-Insaf* for his kind gesture.

I am sorry if I have forgotten to mention the name of any person to whom I should have expressed my gratitude. In fact, every gentleman that we came across in Pakistan during our sojourn has been kind and gracious to us. I thank them all for their love and co-operation.

My niece Nivedita (Nivi) from UK, who is our lovely child, and has been my inspiration all along, and whose wishes are my greatest stay, also merits my very special thanks.

My sincerest thanks are due to Dr. K.L. Johar (a prolific writer and formerly Vice-Chancellor, G.J. University, Hisar) who has always been a guide during vicissitudes of my life and an inspiration in the time of distress. I am thankful to him that despite being occupied with better enterprises,

he found time to go through this humble narrative of mine and also wrote a few words that will ever remain my strength.

I am also thankful to my daughter Sangeeta Behl, her husband Dr. Ashwani Behl, their dear son Prashant, and their vivacious daughter, Mehak, for their continuous care and support in my venture. I am grateful to them for their taking care of my house and other important things during my absence from India.

My sincerest thanks go to Dr. Daljit Kaur, my old and very dear student, who translated my original travel account, "Mujhe Yaad Sab Hai Zara Zara," from Urdu into chaste Hindi so deftly.

Last but not the least, I am highly grateful to Prof. (Dr.) C. L. Juneja, who is no less than a brother to me, and, who volunteered to translate the same travel account into English. I marvel at his patience and rapidity in finishing the job so adroitly.

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Mohinder Pratap 'Chand'

My Passage to Pakistan

It was about fifteen or sixteen years ago, when my first *ghazal* in Siraiiki appeared in *Siraiiki Adab* (monthly) (Vol. 23, No. 10, 1994), Multan, Pakistan. After a fortnight or so, I received a letter from Hakim Mian Illahi Bux Lekhi Sirai from Layyah, Pakistan, with a photocopy of my *ghazal* enclosed therein. He was generous enough to write a few words of guarded praise about my poem. Above that, he expressed his pleasant surprise that after so many years, I not only remembered my mother tongue, but could also write in that dialect spontaneously.

I felt elated to have received such an affectionate letter from a stranger of my own region. Without losing any time, I wrote back expressing my thankfulness to Mianji for his so intimate and affectionate a letter. My revelation that I, too, was born in district Layyah, his love and affection for me enhanced manifold.

I was born at Karor-Lal Esan. Before partition this town fell under the jurisdiction of Muzaffargarh district. I very vividly remember the opening couplet of a poem, written on the chart, hung on the wall of our classroom, in the Primary School of the town. It read thus:

"Char taseelaan vich zile de, sun lai mere bhaiya, Allipur, Muzaffargarh, Kot Addu te Layyah.

(Dear brother, you may note, there are four Tehsils in the district, namely, Allipur, Muzaffargarh, Kot Addu and Layyah).

A few years after the formation of Pakistan, Layyah was converted into an autonomous district. At present, my native place, Karor-Lal Esan, falls under this district.

As Mianji's affections for me grew intense, he started showing my letters to his near and dear ones, which, with the passage of time, turned into a series of affectionate letters from these gentlemen. Undeniably, despite being a generous heart, Mianji was an insightful and infallible connoisseur of literature. This sagacious man had the credit of laying the foundation of a number of institutions. In point of fact, he was not only a founding father of many literary and social bodies, but also an institution in himself.

In the past, Mianji was benign enough to spend quite a sum, from his own pocket, on sending me some of the rarest and the most fascinating books published in Pakistan on Siraiki and Urdu language and literature. For me, this gift of Mianji's will ever remain as my proud possession, and a reminder of his generosity and compassion.

This sweetly soothing bond aroused in me an urge to go to Pakistan, and to meet this benevolent gentleman, as also, to see those newly introduced generous friends, who were contributing to the Siraiki and Urdu prose and poetry. Besides, it will offer me an opportunity to perform a pilgrimage to my motherland.

In 1997, my wife and I were on a visit to my younger



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son Manoj in the U. S. A. I was determined to visit Pakistan after our return from the States, and thus to fulfil my long cherished wish to see my blessed motherland. But as ill luck would have it, our family was struck with the cruelest blow of destiny. On 27 May 1997, when we were still in the U.S., our elder son Vivek was killed in a road accident in India. It was the cruelest cut of all. This bolt from the blue left us shaken to the roots. As I was not in a normal state of mind, the idea of visiting Pakistan got deferred.

Then an opportunity to come out of the oblivion of my dismal memories seemed to have occurred in 2004, when "Majlise-Arbabe-Naseeme-Layyah" and "International Bazme-Ilmo-Funn" honoured me with "Naseeme-Layyah Award" for my humble contribution to Siraiki and Urdu language and literature. Also, they sent me a letter, inviting me to Pakistan, to receive that award personally, in a function, they were planning to arrange in my honour at Layyah. At that time, Sardar Shahabuddin Saher was the collector of the district. He, too, was connected with Karor. Along with many lovers of Siraiki, he tried very hard to arrange visa for me and a few of my other literary friends from India, but somehow it did not materialize. Meanwhile, tense and strained relations between India and Pakistan made this visit unfeasible. Thus, years marched by, and my dream to visit Pakistan was shelved, at least, for the time being.

After a few years, the relation between both the countries improved, but I was destined to face yet another hard blow of destiny. After the tragic death of my elder son, my wife was never the same. As there is a proverb: "The heart knows its own bitterness." All along, she had been

keeping bad health, but after the death of our son, this little world of man became too harsh for her to continue in. After struggling with herself for a few years, and being world weary, she left for her heavenly abode, on 12 November 2009, leaving me lost and lonely. Hence, I could not think of going to Pakistan with sighs and sobs. I needed some time to come out of this moroseness.

Unexpectedly, one day, in the month of October 2010, I received a telephonic call from Prof. Udai Bhanu 'Hans,' a kind friend and well wisher. Prof. Hans is a famous litterateur in Hindi, and the first Rajya Kavi of the State of Haryana, India. He invited me to accompany him to Pakistan. The offer was a godsend. We felt so enthusiastic that we completed all the visa documents immediately, and without losing any time, submitted them with the Pakistan High Commission, at New Delhi.

Prof. Hans hails from Daira-Deen-Panah, a town in Muzaffargarh district in Pakistan. Once in 2006 also, he had the good luck of visiting his motherland. From the very beginning, his ancestral house, in his town, has been occupied by Haji Rana Jamshed Ali Khan. On his first visit, too, he was welcomed warmly by Rana Saheb. With the passage of time, this meeting developed into their intimate friendship. As for the proposed visit, the wedding ceremony of Jamshed Ali Khan's daughter was fixed for 24 October 2010. Prof. Hans had been cordially invited by Rana Saheb to participate in the ceremony, and bless his child. To make their friendship perennially memorable, Prof. 'Hans' decided, and also wanted me, to participate in the wedding, and observe the rites and ceremonies performed on the auspicious occasion. How could I decline such a cozy and

intimate invitation? Happiness was going to be mine!

When we received no information about the status of our visa by 20th of October, we were a bit exasperated. However, betimes, good luck smiled on us. On October 21, Prof. 'Hans' called, and gave me the happy news that the visa had been granted. We did not want to waste any time then. I knew, it was going to be a hectic day. As a Chinese saying goes "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." So, I finished my packing well in time, and having slung my backpack across my shoulders, with a bottle of Bisleri in my left hand, I boarded a night bus from Ambala for Amritsar, the same day. At that time, I looked like boy from a boarding school.

The same day, Prof. 'Hans,' along with his friend, Mr. S. K. Jain, a savant Hindi journalist, boarded a night train for Amritsar from Hisar. That train was scheduled to reach Amritsar at 9.30, the next morning. Before leaving from Ambala for Amritsar, I had e-mailed the details of my arrival to all my unseen friends in Pakistan.

In fact, in 2007, I was working on a Research Project for the Haryana Urdu *Akademi*, Panchkula, Haryana, India. For that project, I needed the samples of the work of literary figures, their *Bio data*, and also the details of the contributions in poetry and prose of the poets, prose writers and the journalists, not only of India, but also of those who had migrated to Pakistan during the partition. In this venture, a considerable help came from a great well-wisher, respected Iqbal Sahar 'Ambalvi,' editor of *Rushhaat*, a Monthly Urdu magazine. Equally great favour came from Prof. Jafar Baloch of Lahore, who was also a native of Layyah, and was working as a lecturer in Urdu, in the

Govt. Science College, Lahore. Also, these two angelic friends introduced me to such stalwart literary figures as Hasan Askari 'Kazmi,' Sarur Ambalvi, Mashkur Husain 'Yaad,' and Anwaar Feroze. Unfortunately, Iqbal Sahar 'Ambalvi' and Prof. Jafar Baloch are no more in this world.

In response to my e-mail, Prof. Jafar Baloch's son, Shoaib Baloch, contacted me on his mobile from Lahore, inquiring about the time of our arrival at Wagha border, so that he could be there to receive us. I reached Amritsar on 22 October at about 6.00 in the morning. The train from Hisar that Prof. Hans and his friend were travelling by was scheduled to reach Amritsar at about 9.30 that morning. So, I told Shoaib that the expected time to reach Wagha border should be between 12.00 and 12.30 p.m. He reached the border exactly at 12.00, and informed me as well. But unluckily, the train from Hisar was running behind its schedule; it reached Amritsar at about 12.15 p.m.

Hesitantly, I informed Shoaib about the delay, requesting that it was not possible for us to reach Wagha border before 3.30 p.m. Being a generous son of the Layyah soil, he did not mind it. He proposed that he would go back to Lahore, and would return at 3.30 p.m. to receive us. He said that in case, we reached earlier, his friend, Mr. Saeed will be available at the Pakistan Customs office, at the Wagha border for our convenience.

Lahore is about 35km away from the Wagha border. I felt a bit embarrassed that Shoaib would have to take the bother of coming to the border twice. But it was comforting to note that he took everything in his stride, and kept wearing a genuine smile all through the cumbersome developments. At last, we were able to reach the Wagha

border at 2.30 p.m. The distance of Wagha border from Amritsar is also about 35km. We had taken a taxi from Amritsar, and after reaching the border, without losing any time, we entered the Indian Customs Office. It took us about half an hour to complete all the formalities. All the employees in the office were highly cultured, helpful and efficient.

Coming out the India Customs office, we saw the entry gate of Pakistan towering above us. Its impressive and magnanimous façade inspired wonder and intimacy in us. In a reflex moment, we crossed the gate. I was overwhelmed by setting my foot on the soil of my motherland, after such a long time. For many a night, I had dreamt of this moment. For a short while, I was dumfounded. My eyes brimmed with tears, and my lips radiated a childlike smile professing my felicity at the miraculous occasion.

When we reached the Customs office on the Pakistan side, we found Saeed Saheb already waiting for us. He welcomed us warmly. After exchanging smiles and hand shakes, our luggage, cameras and other articles were sent to the concerned Customs authorities for clearance. Meanwhile, we were taken inside and served with sumptuous tea and snacks, etc. Treading out of the Customs office after clearance, we were glad to find Shoaib already there. After salutations and intimate hugs, our luggage was placed in his car, and we were on our way to Lahore.

I was sitting in the front seat of the car. At last, my long cherished dream of going to Pakistan and paying homage to my beloved motherland was going to be realized. While travelling, I glanced outside. The trees along the highway, the fields on both sides, the farmers working in

them, the animals grazing in the open spaces, the people travelling on the road, the pillion riders and everything else was the same as we left behind in India. We did not feel like strangers at all. Everything seemed familiar and intimate. I saw all types of birds crossing and re-crossing the border, 'the shadow lines,' without any fear of trespassing upon the foreign land. They could lay and hatch eggs in the territory of Pakistan, and go for feeding in India, and vice versa. They were diving playfully in and out of the territories on both sides freely and fearlessly. They seemed placid and self-contained, and mocking at man's limitations. I wished to have been turned into a dove, flying with a branch of olive in my beak, carrying the message of peace and goodwill towards all, on both sides of the border! It took us about 45 minutes to reach Lahore.

On reaching Lahore, Shoaib took us directly to his residence, in Wahdat Colony. His family greeted us very warmly, and served us with delicious and lavish food that rang a bit formal. On our repeated requests, Shoaib agreed to arrange for our stay in a guest house. Meanwhile, he arranged currency, mobile SIM card, and recharging facilities, etc., for us.

At the time of partition, I was barely 12 year old. During migration to India, I could see only the railway station of Lahore. So, I was feeling excited that I was in the same city about which goes a Punjabi saying: "Jiney Lahaur nai vekhiya o jamya hi nai" i.e "One who has not seen Lahore is not born." It implies that one who has not seen Lahore has not come in this world, or has seen nothing. But the opportunity to see the beauties and novelties of the City of Lahore had to wait, as we were to reach Daira-

Deen-Panah by the next evening by all means. It happened when we returned to Lahore on 30 October.

23 October 2010

(Next Morning) Shoaib again reached the guest house that we were staying in, and took us to the bus stand of Daewoo Express, from where we boarded the bus for Multan. The bus started at 10 in the morning, and reached Multan in the afternoon. The journey by this fully air-conditioned bus was very pleasant and comfortable. During the course of this journey, all the passengers were served with water, cold drink, biscuits, cake, snacks, etc. En route, the bus stopped for about half an hour at Sahiwal (formerly Montgomery) where we had tea, coffee, etc.

An old friend of Prof. Hans, Malik Abdul Qayum Khan Jatoi, lives in Multan. Jatoi Saheb is a former minister, and now an M. P. He is a thorough gentleman, and a great lover of literature. On the day of our arrival, he was away to Islamabad. However, his driver with the car was already present there to receive us. Meanwhile, Mr. Razish Liyaqatpuri, the representative of daily newspapers, and TV news channel, 'Khabrein,' along with his friends, reached there with garlands to welcome us at the bus stand. From there, he guided us to his office, where he conducted a short interview, and clicked a few snaps which he published in his newspaper next morning, and also telecast it on the TV channels at night.

After spending about half an hour or three-quarters with those well wishers, we reached Daira-Deen-Panah via Muzaffargarh in Jatoi Saheb's car. On the road there, Tanvir

Shahid Mohammed Zyi, Hanif Seemab, Arshad Niazi and Sabir Atta Thaheem, along with many of their friends, were waiting for us. They ushered us into the drawing room where we were served with tea, *pakor*as, biscuits, etc.; this warm courtesy was followed by a short *mehfil*, that is, a private poetry session. After that, we reached our destination, the residence of Haji Rana Jamshed Ali Khan. He was overjoyed to meet us, and enthusiastically introduced us to his sons and other relatives. We had conversation for sometime, and, as we were tired from day's long journey, we retired to our beds soon after having our dinner.

24 October 2010

(Next Morning) After breakfast, we went to Hazrat Deen Panah alias Hazrat Abdul Waheed (or Abdul Wahab) Bukhari's mosque, and paid our obeisance, and bowing our heads before his tomb, evoked his blessings and graces. Hazrat Deen Panah was a renowned and realized fakir of seventeenth century. That town is named after him. Janab Kashfi Multani, a celebrated poet of Urdu and Siraiki, and journalist of great standing, was also born in Daira-Deen-Panah. He died on 21 February 1976; his grave is situated facing the mosque of Hazrat Deen Panah. At noon, we participated in the wedding ceremony of Rana Jamshed Ali Khan's daughter. It was a gala ceremony with an impressive presence of guests and relatives. For us it was rare occasion of social gathering. Rana Saheb introduced us to the guests from the bridegroom's side, and also had a photo session with us.

Meanwhile, I received a call from Shahbaz Husain,

the eldest son of Mian Ilahi Bux Sirai, from Layyah. He told that the same night he was proceeding to Islamabad in connection with his studies, and will not be able to return to Layyah before ten or fifteen days. Hence, he said that he was coming to Daira-Deen-Panah to meet me the same day. In fact, Shahbaz was doing his Masters, in the subject of History, from Allama Iqbal International Open University, and he was going there in connection with some examination which was unavoidable. I tried to convince him that travelling of such a long distance to Daira Deen Panah and back would be a sheer waste of time and he should rather devote that time to his studies. But he was insistent, and reached us after half an hour or so with a friend of his. Shahbaz is a promising young guy, and we were extra glad to see him. After having exchanged pleasantries and sharing lunch with us, they left for Layyah. The meeting was short but memorable.

In the evening, dear Arshad Niazi, Hanif Seemab and Tanvir Shahid arranged a *mushaira*, that is, a poetical symposium which was also graced by the presence of a local M.P.A. Hanif Seemab conducted the proceedings of the session. Apart from us, quite a few local poets also participated in the programme. All along, they kept the audience spellbound with the recitation of their poems in Urdu and Siraiki.

Layyah and its surroundings are famous for the finest quality of delicious dates. Though it was not the season of fresh dates, yet our host friends were generous enough to present us each with a packet of Sindhi dates for which we were beholden to them. Besides, they honoured us with the memento and a citation each, on behalf of the Traders'

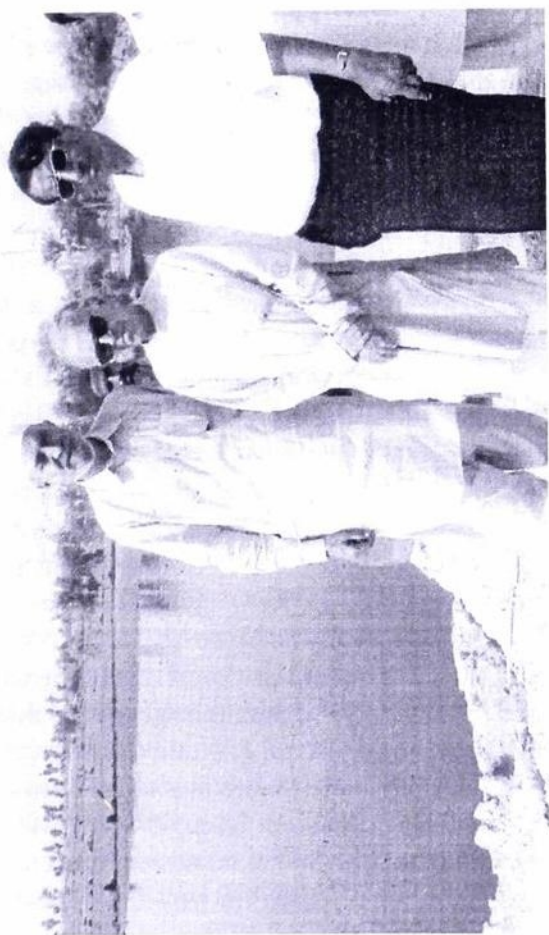
Union of that region for our humble achievements and our contribution to Siraiki and Urdu language and literature.

25 October 2010

(Next Morning) Once again, we visited the mosque of Daira-Deen-Panah. Close to the mosque resides Zulfiqar Ali Khan Makhdum, a close friend of Prof. 'Hans'. Makhdum Saheb is a famous man of riches and great landlord of the area. He is full of love and generosity. We were told that he had returned from Multan just the previous night. In Multan also he owns a residential property. Having come to know about his arrival, we went to see him at his residence. He received us whole heartedly, and served us with formal drinks and snacks.

After some time, he took us, in his car, to show us the havoc wreaked by the floods in the region. A few months ago, Layyah and Muzaffargarh districts were in the grip of devastating floods. So much so that Daira-Deen-Panah was completely submerged in flood water. We witnessed a scene with destroyed fields, demolished crops, and damaged bridges. It is beyond one's ken why nature inflicts so many miseries on the innocent and blameless folks.

On our way back, we saw 2-4 bunches of raw dates hanging from a tree. Jain Saheb requested to stop the car, and expressed a wish to have a look at them. Makhdum Saheb, with the help of a boy standing close by, got one bunch of dates plucked, and gave it to Jain Saheb. These unripe dates, with yellow, red and blue hues, are called *Dokey* in Siraiki. It was not the season for the date trees



*Prof. UB Hans and Mr. S.K. Jain with Zulfikar Ali Khan Makhdum near a broken Bridge on the bank of the River Sindh
at Daira-Deen-Panah*

to come to fruition. The dates ripen either on the tree itself and turn soft, or they are plucked raw. I can vividly recollect, how people would pluck them raw, and by sprinkling salt on them would keep them in an earthen pitcher, and would shake for a long time. Next morning, when they turned soft, they would sell them in the market. Dates represent the identity of the region. It is a great gift of nature which embodies ambrosia, fragrance, nectar, light and life. Dates represent the prosperity and freshness of the region.

In the afternoon, Makhdum Saheb took us to Govt. High School, Daira-Deen-Panah where, many years ago, Prof. Hans was a student. After meeting the Head Master, Malik Tawakkul Husain and other members of the staff, we met the students in the school compound where the Head Master had asked them to assemble. Prof. Hans, Mr. Jain, and I addressed the students turn by turn. We were glad to tell them that we also belonged to the same sacred soil to which they did.

After the dispersal of the assembly, many students approached me with their queries. One of the children asked me if I could speak Urdu and Siraiki languages so fluently why I should not accept Islam. His innocence fascinated me. I said, "Dear child, Urdu or Siraiki is not spoken solely by Muslims, and even if I accept Islam, it won't make any difference either. Besides, more important thing is that whichever religion we are born in, we should be able to venerate all religions, and follow their teachings while staying where we are." He was highly impressed with my answer, and regretted for his assertion, though I was not annoyed at the boy's innocent question, thinking that

children are the manifestations of God on earth.

In the evening, we left for Layyah in Mukhdum Saheb's car. We reached there late in the evening. Mian Ilahi Bux Saheb's second son Imdad Husain, along with his cousin, Shamshad Husain was already waiting for us on the road. They took us to Mianji's home. It was a great moment for me. On seeing him, I was so much overwhelmed with emotions that my eyes brimmed with tears of happiness.

Mianji hugged me hard with moist eyes, and kept looking at me for quite some time. Recently, his family had passed through terribly tragic times. A few months ago, his daughter, Shigufta Batool, had become a widow, and his younger brother too had expired. He could not bear the shock of his daughter's becoming a widow at a young age, and the untimely demise of his brother. This trauma resulted in the loss of his speech. He tried his best to talk to me but could not. Only his vacant and helpless eyes were bestowing his benign love and affection upon me. At times, he waved his hand over my head, showering blessings. Again, he would come, and sit beside me with folded hands. Seeing him in so helpless a state, and assessing my limitations, I was being angry at myself that why, despite Mianji's repeated requests to visit him, I could not make it earlier.

Perhaps, it was a punishment visited upon me for the lapse on my part that even though sitting so near him, I was helplessly waiting to hear his sweet voice. Whenever, Mianji tried to speak, dear Imdad Husain was trying to interpret according to his limited judgement. There was no other alternative either. But my thirst to hear Mianji

could not be satiated. I promised that when, with the grace of God, his speech is revived, I will make it a point to come specially to see him again.*

At night, many friends, whom I had never met but was in touch with, through consistent correspondence, came to see us. Among these friends Dr. Gull Abbas *Aawaan* and Mohammad Saleem Akhtar 'Nadeem' were very special. Dr. Gul/ Abbas is a scholar in Urdu and Siraiki, and is a lecturer in Urdu language and literature, in Govt. College, Layyah. He has the credit of having written many books in prose and poetry in Urdu and Siraiki. Mr Saleem Akhtar 'Nadeem' is also a famous poet and writer of Urdu and Siraiki. He is the Central General Secretary of "Bainul-Aqwami Adabi Qabila" of Layyah (Regd.), Pakistan. Mian Ilahi Bux is the Patron, and his nephew, Mian Shamshad Husain Sirai, its Chairman. Shamshad Husain is an eminent journalist.

Apart from these gentlemen, Saqib Khan, a very lively person, was with us till deep into the night. Saqib Khan

* But unfortunately, between the midnight of 31 December 2010 and 1 January 2011, Mian Ilahi Bux Saheb said good bye to this world, and my wish to visit him again remained unfulfilled.

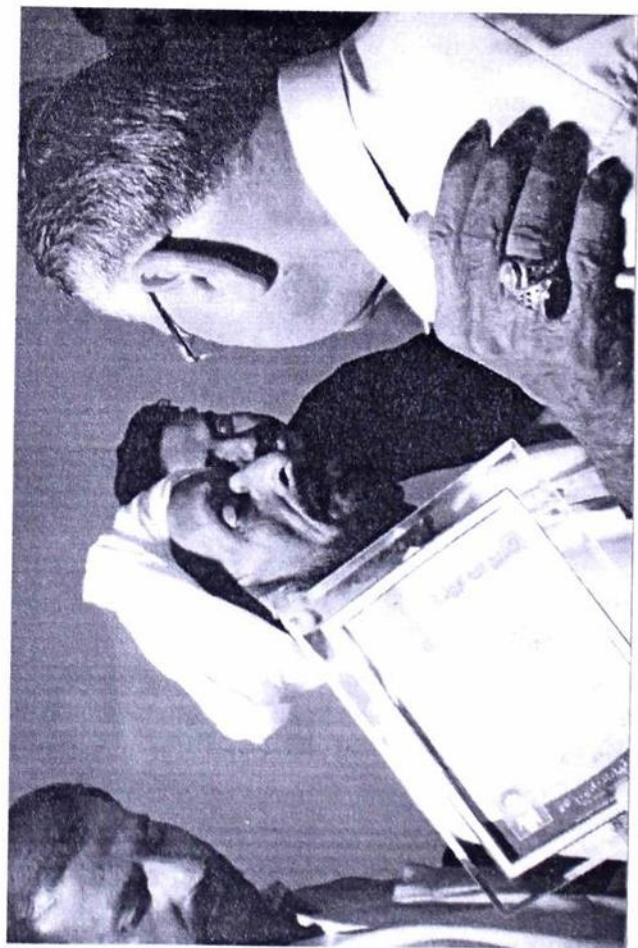
In fact, deaths of children in the life time of the parents, and the untimely demise of their younger ones, during the life time of their elders, is a heart rending occurrence that eats into the very vitals of their being. Can there be a greater tragedy than the parents cremating their own children? Tragedies in the family had broken Mianji, and he was dying by inches. Ultimately, the cruel hands of fate snatched him from us. The voice of the bard had fallen silent. The shepherd had departed leaving the pastures of Siraiki high and dry. May his soul rest in peace, and may God give him a safe haven in His cozy lap. Amen!

is one of Mian Imdad Husain's dear friends. All these well-wishers informed us that the next day, at 12 noon, they along many other friends, were arranging a magnanimous function in our welcome. It was being arranged under the patronage of "Bainul-Aqwami Adabi Qabila" and "Bazme-Danish." The organizers of this welcome function had already started distributing the invitation letters that night.

26 October 2010

(Next day) We were taken, well in time, to Khan College of Commerce, Layyah, where the proposed welcome function, to which we had been invited to participate, was arranged. On reaching there, right at the gate, we were welcome with garlands of flowers. All along the way, from the main gate, on both sides, students, including boys and girls, were showering rose petals on us. Then, we were taken inside, and led to the dais, and were made to take our seats respectfully. This gesture of the family of that institution won our heart. A huge gathering of hundreds of lovers of literature was present in the hall. Among the present gentlemen, many were known to me through correspondence. Among them, Dr. Muzammil Husain, lecturer in Urdu, in the local Govt. College, Mr. Nasir Malik, Director, *Art Land*, Mr. Barkat 'Aawan', a senior journalist, and Mr. Jasarat Khayali deserve special mention. Apart from these gentlemen, I was glad to meet a few other writers, such as, Munavvar Baloch, Makhdum Aamir, Malik Sabir Ataa Thaheem, Ali Imran Rizvi, Yasin Bhatti, Master Manzur Bhatta, and Hamid Ulfat Mulghani.

This welcome session was presided over by respected



*The author being blessed and bestowed upon with the 'Naseem-e-Layyah Award'
by Hakim Mian Ilahi Bux Lekhi Sirai, at Layyah*

Amaan Ullha Kazim, who is a high ranking poet, scholar and novelist. This session was divided into two parts. In the first segment, a citation was presented to the Chief Guest, that is, me, which included my work in Urdu and Siraiki poetry, and my biography. In the same session, Shamshad Husain Sirai, Saleem Akhtar 'Nadeem', Khalid Nadeem Shani and Ghulam Qasim 'Aariz' read their poems in my praise. Session was being conducted by Dr. Gull Abbas. During his address, he welcomed me by also reciting a poem in Siraiki.

In the concluding part of the early session, once again, I was honoured with the presentation of 2009-2010 "Naseem-e-Layyah Award" by venerable Mian Ilahi Bux Saheb himself which was a great occasion for me; my other friends were also honoured.

The second part of session was based on the poetry recitation in the beginning of which many celebrated local poets, through their poetry recitation, held the audience spellbound. To be welcomed with "wah-wah" and clapping from the receptive audience was solace giving. After that, we were invited, turn by turn, to express our views. Prof. Hans and I also recited our poems in Urdu and Siraiki, and won applauses of the audience. At times, while reciting my poem in the honour of my motherland, I was overwhelmed with emotions, and the audience too was equally moved. Saluting my motherland, while reading out the concluding lines of my poem, I was too moved to speak, and tears rolled in my eyes; I pressed my eyelids so that they might not fall. This blessed occasion provided me with an opportunity to give vent to my pent-up emotions, and express my gratitude for my motherland.

As a mark of salutation to my motherland, I recited the following Urdu poem on the occasion:

NAZRE-KAROR

*Mire Karor ki Pakeeza sarzameen ! tujh ko
Tire diyaar ka shair salaam karta hai
Jhuka ke apni jabeene-niyaaz tere huzur
Zabane-sheir mein tujh se kalaam karta hai*

*Tiri zamein pe viladat ka hai sharaf mujh ko
Tiri fazaon se rishta hai mere bachpan ka
Abhi to baraah baharein hi mein ne dekhi thein
Ke tujh se door mashiyyat ne mujh ko phaink diya*

*Khudayi qehr tha ya khel tha siyasat ka
Ye meri kamsini us waqt kuch samajh na saki
Bada hua to naya waqt tha, naye halaat
Miri nigaah tiri deed ko tarasti rahi*

*Naye diyaar mein jab jab tira khyaal aaya
To ek burq si qalbe-hazeen pe lehrayee
Mein tujh se puchta hun ai mire aziz watan!
Tujhe bhi kya kabhi bichhde huyon ki yaad aayee ?*

*Naheen,naheen,naheen, tu bhi udaas hai ab tak
Hai tere dil mein bhi qaa'im abhi miri taswir
Ye teri deed ki hasrat jo aaj tak hai jawaan
Tiri fazaon ki jazbo-kashish ki hai taaseer*

Wo ghar,wo kooche,wo gallian,wo rah-guzaar tire

*Hain dil pe naqsh,unhein kis tarah bhulayun mein!
Naseeb ho tira deedar,bus dua hai yahi
Jabeen pe khaak-muqaddas tiri sajayun mein!*

*Mire Karor ki Pakeeza sarzameen ! tujh ko
Tire diyaar ka shair salaam karta hai
Jhuka ke apni jabeene-niyaaz tere huzur
Zabaane-sheir mein tujh se kalaam karta hai*

(To My Karor)

*(O the sacred soil of my Karor,
I bow to thee, in reverence.
Privileged to be born in your yard, though
I had seen only twelve seasons I know.*

*Was it a divine curse or strategic ways?
I could not understand at that tender age.
In the new zones, I yearned to see thee,
And ask if you ever thought of me?*

*No, no, no, you too were gloomy there,
It was only your lure that brought me here.
I pined to see those abodes, avenues, and vicinities,
And prayed to be blessed with your glimpse instantly.*

*O the sacred soil of my Karor,
I bow to thee in reverence.
The bard of your yards salutes you along,
And bows before you through his song.
Familiar with your ambiance as my infancy fits;*

*I had to bear the pangs of my nest's split.
Being small, I hardly knew,
And my eyes waited sadly to see you.*

*A lightning struck my low heart,
If the severed one was ever in your thoughts?
My image is still seated sure in your heart and moods
That affirms the validity of your woods.*

*How can I cancel the sores exacted on my heart?
I'm committed to imprint your image on the earth.
The bard of your woods salutes you along,
And bows before you through his song.)*

This sweet and memorable session came to a conclusion at about 4 p.m. After that, Dr. Gull Abbas took us to his residence where he had arranged a formal lunch in our honour. He also gifted a few of his books in Urdu and Siraiki. Previously, during the function also, many friends gifted us their books in prose and poetry. It is heartening to note that from Multan to Mianwali, and possibly, even beyond that, the whole area has been extraordinarily fertile in literary activities.

The long list of poets and litterateurs in the cavalcade, whose mother land, like me, is Siraiki, includes, Munshi Tilok Chand Mahrum, Jagan Nath Azad, Azad Gulati, Harcharan Chawla, Amir Chand Bahar, Shabab Lalit, Rajendar Bani, Gopi Chand Narang, Ashu Lal Faqir, Jafar Baloch, Kashfi Multani, Naseem-e-Layyah, Udai Bhanu Hans, Kumar Pashi, Sarojni Preetam, Jai-Muni Sarshar, Satya Pal Bedaar, Naz Sonapati, Bhagwan Dass Eijaz, Tabassum

Alipuri, Fikr Taunsvi, Tahir Taunsvi, Sarvar Taunsvi, Naqsh Sehrai, Puran Kumar Hosh, Uttam Chand Sharrar, Shaheed Alipuri, Hira Nand Soz, Azad Sonepati, Rana Ganauri, Darvesh Bharti, Akghar Shahani, Munavvar Sarhadi, Kumar Panipati, Krishan Nanda, Atish Bahawalpuri, Mehar Geṛa, Bodhraj Zafar, and Betab Alipuri.

A special thing that we noted during this pilgrimage to our motherland was that much more literary activities were taking place in Siraiki than in Urdu. In many colleges and universities in Pakistan, Siraiki is being taught formally, so much so that facilities are being provided for research in Siraiki. Siraiki language is being taught in Islamia University, Bahawalpur, and in almost all the colleges under its jurisdiction. In Bahauddin Zakaria University, Multan, Siraiki language and Siraiki literature are being taught up to M.A. Similarly, Allama Iqbal International Open University, Islamabad, and Punjab University, Lahore are extending facilities for the teaching of Siraiki language, and research up to Ph. D. level. All these developments show the growing popularity and progress of this lively language.

In the late evening, on the invitation of Saleem Akhtar 'Nadeem,' we reached his residence. His wife welcomed us, and served us with tea and *pakorās*. Their daughter, Humera, who used to talk to me on the phone regularly and seek my blessings, was away to some other city to attend a marriage. So, my wish to meet her remained unfulfilled. Later on, she regretted for not having met me, and begged for forgiveness.

As Amaan Ulla Kazim Saheb had invited us to dinner at his residence, we took leave of Nadeem Saheb's family,

and, along with Dr. Gull Abbas, reached Kazim Saheb's residence. At dinner, a detailed and lively discussion on literature was initiated. Amaan Ulla Saheb is a top ranking scholar and literary figure. Also, he gifted us one or two of his books.

The same evening, Dr. Muzammil Husain and his friends had arranged a poetry session, and a grand musical performance in which I was to be honoured with *Dastaar-Bandi*, that is, the turban wearing ceremony. I had also promised to be present there. However, because of some unavoidable developments, I could not participate in the function, and for which I was highly regretful. Dr. Muzammil Husain too was very disappointed, and was irate with me for this unfairness, and which was very apt. But we were helpless. We felt sorry and asked for his forgiveness. However, for days together, he remained highly perturbed and morose, and for which I still feel guilty.

27 October 2010

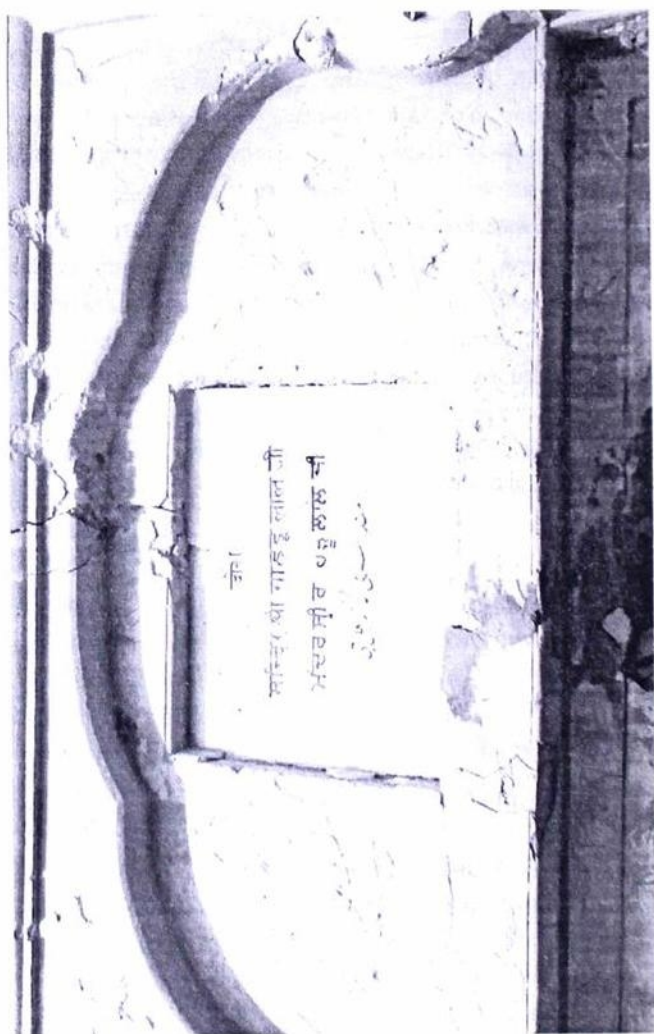
(Next Morning) In dear Munavvar Baloch's car, we left for Karor-Lal Esan, my blessed motherland. About seventy five years ago, I was born on this sacred soil. But in 1947, perforce, at the time of the partition, I had to migrate to India. Even now, the memory of the scenes of bloodshed, during the partition, makes my hair stand on end, and my heart bleed. But today, after 63 years, my long cherished wish of having a look at my motherland, and my yearning to wear its soil on my forehead, was going to be granted. The very feeling of that experience was soul satisfying.

The distance of Karor from Layyah is about 25-26km. There are two routes to reach there. On my request, Munavvar Baloch took us by the route on which were situated the temple of Shri Gadhu Lalji and the mosque of Hazrat Rajan Shah Bukhari. Both the sacred places are very close to each other.

The construction of the temple of Shri Gadhu Lal started in the first decade of 16th century. According to a public view, the construction of that temple was done under the supervision of Shri Gadhu Lal, the son of a Brahmin. After his death, his progeny too was known under this name. After the partition, this temple came under the jurisdiction of Waqf, and was taken on lease by a man named Fida Husain. At present, the main building and the boundary wall of the temple are crumbling. No doubt, at the entrance, the marble slab with Shri Gadhu Lal's name engraved on it in Urdu, Hindi and Gurumukhi is still there. Inside the temple, apart from the other signs of construction, some of the sacred idols of Hindus have also survived.

After the partition, the followers of Shri Gadhu Lal have established his seat at House No. 32, Tehsil Camp, near Fatehpuri Chowk and Mitthan Halwai, Panipat, Haryana, Indian. At present, Shri Ved Prakash Gosain is the Mahant, who is doing commendable job in the service of religion. One of the temples of the followers of Shri Gadhu Lal is also situated in Old Faridabad, Haryana, India.

We were surveying the temple from outside, when Munavvar Baloch went inside the temple, and sat in the *dhyana* (meditative) posture, and started meditating. On going inside, we were pleasantly surprised to see him in



The marble slab at the entrance of Shri Gadhu Lal's temple.

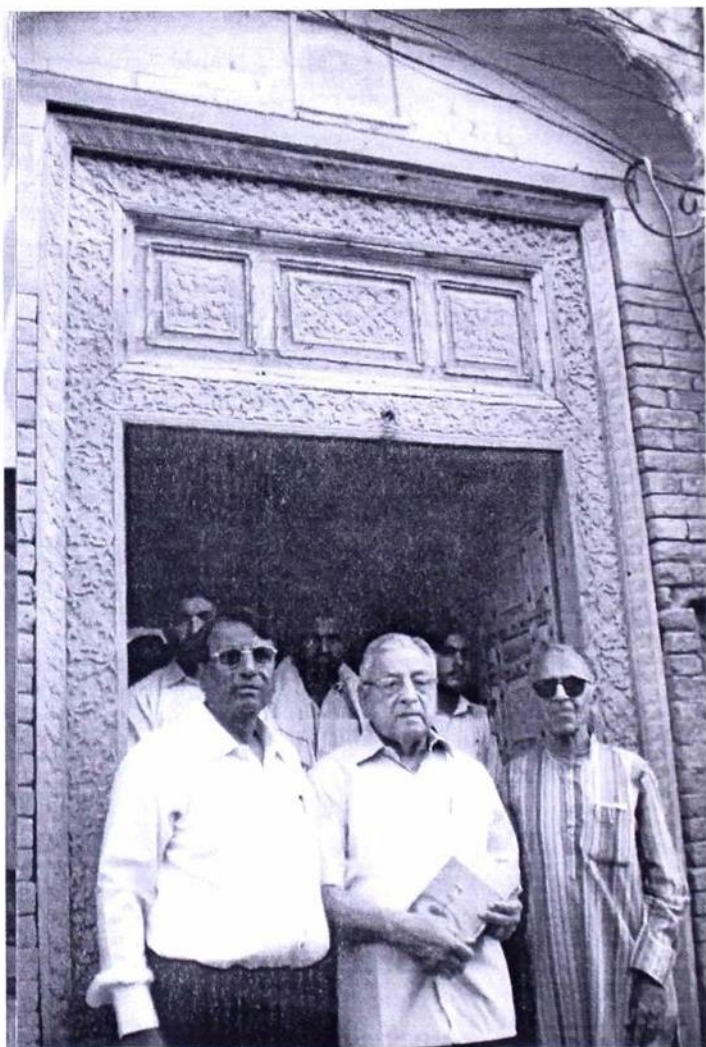
that posture. Later on, he told us that he came to this temple twice a month, and it gave him inner peace and solace. Undoubtedly, Shri Gadhu Lal was a highly realized soul.

After having offered our obeisance, we came out, and proceeded further. Now, we presented ourselves at the tomb of Hazrat Ali Rajan Shah Bukhari alias 'Sadabhaag' which is situated at a short distance from Shri Gadhu Lal's temple. Hazrat Ali Rajan Shah Bukhari was one of the decendents of Syed Jallaluddin Uchvi Bukhari. His tomb is extremely colourful and imposing.

Hazrat Rajan Shah was born in 950 Hijri at Uch Sharif. His father's name was Syed Hamid Kabir Sani. His forefathers left Uch Sharif and settled near Kot-Karor (Karor-Lal Esan). Hazrat Rajan Shah got his tomb erected during his own life time. His devotees stand queuing up unendingly here to seek his graces. People say that on the occasion of Muharram, the place is filled to its full capacity, with no room for the pilgrims to stand even. Hazrat Rajan Shah gave up his physical frame in 1000 Hijri. Humayun, the contemporary Mughal king, too, used to respect Hazrat Rajan Shah for his miraculous abilities and spiritual powers.

After bowing our heads before the tomb, we proceeded towards Karor-Lal Esan. After about half an hour, we reached the sacred soil of Karor that I was waiting so impatiently to kiss.

As soon as I set my foot on the soil of Karor, I, for a moment, could not believe that it had happened. My heart throbbed violently. I bowed to touch the soil of my sacred land, lifted some powdery soil, and wore it on my forehead. Dr. Gull Abbas is acquainted with many friends



*The author with his two companions at the front of his ancestral house
at Karor-Lal-Esan*

in Karor. So, he had already informed one of his friends, about our arrival. On our reaching Karor, Mr. Isa Khan Zargar welcomed us warmly. He served us first with much needed tea, and then with nutritious breakfast. Afterwards, we had a very sumptuous and delicious lunch. It was a happy revelation to me that in the very beginning, our ancestral house was occupied by Isa Khan Saheb himself. After the lunch, he asked me if I remembered anything about my house in Karor. I smiled, and told him that everything was imprinted on my mind. And, on his asking, I assured him that I could reach my house on my own.

To stir their curiosity, I described certain prominent locations and directions around there. I told them that, on the Main Road, there was a hospital, and adjoining it, there was the Sadar Police Station. And at a short distance on this side, there was a Government Middle School. On the left side of the street, facing the school, there was our three-storey house. My graphic description of the locations not only aroused their wonder, but also made them feel pleasantly surprised. They told me that the street referred to was near at hand. They further asked if I could spot my house in case I was taken there. I replied confidently in the positive. When they took me there, I walked directly towards my house, and stopped right in front of it. Indifferent to their reaction, my heart was beating fast. With reverence, I bowed my head at the threshold of my house, and pressed it fondly with both hands for quite some time.

I was overjoyed to see that even today, the front of our house adorned a marble slab which was got installed by my father himself in 1934. On the slab were engraved,

both in Urdu and Hindi, the words, 'Prem Niwas.' Actually, the house was named after Prem, my elder sister. The house was locked, and there was nobody inside, as the present owner of the house lived in some adjoining town. However, before our arrival, Isa Khan Saheb had collected the key, and kept it with himself.

Before Khan Saheb opened the lock, I told that even the map of inside of the house was recorded in my memory. I explained that as we entered the house, there was a bathroom on the left, with a hand pump installed in it; on its right side was our *baithak*, that is, a kind of living room; there was a courtyard inside, on its one side used to be a kitchen and a store; and at the back was a big hall. Yet at their back there were two rooms. On the left side of the courtyard inside, at the back of the bathroom, there was a flight of stairs leading on to the roof of the house. On the first floor, there was our *mari*, that is, an upstairs living-cum-bed room; enough open space on the roof was available. From the left side of the roof, there was another flight of stairs leading to the third storey where a *parchhatti* existed, that is, some covered area; and some china vases of black colour were fitted on the outer boundary for decoration. Isa Khan Saheb and all those accompanying him were wonderstruck at my graphic description of the house.

The lock was opened, and we entered the house. I was inside my ancestral house, my home. The impossible had happened. Thanks God. I was overjoyed that it had come to pass. Now, the things were precisely in the same order as I described. No doubt, all the roofs had been dismantled, as the new owner was renovating the house. After

a protracted absence, it was certainly a happy home coming for me. The native had come to pay his homage. I felt elated that at last my wish had been granted. While going around the house, I felt a cozy closeness, and was glad to be reunited with the memories of my childhood that came rushing in. I was impatient to embrace and kiss every particle of my nest. The occasion was both sweet and sad. Sweet, because it had happened; sad, because very soon, I will be separated, once again, wondering whether it will ever happen again during my life. Perhaps, yes; perhaps, no. Whereas my heart was searching for the intimacy, my mind was going through the pangs of imminent separation. I thought to myself, "Ah! Mother, Mother! How can it be that I will have to part from you?" And then came the agonizing moment of saying farewell. It seemed to have come too soon. I collected a little soil of my ancestral house in an envelope that I had brought with me. On coming back to India, I placed it along with the icons of worship at my residence as an emblem of my enduring bond with my beloved motherland.

With a heavy heart, I came out of the house. Many friends were waiting for us outside, among whom the name of Dr. Ashu Lal '*Fakir*' deserves special mention. Dr. Ashu Lal, too, was born in Karor. His real name is Mohammed Ashraf. His mother, Bakht Bibi affectionately called him 'my Lal Ashu'. Later on, that name became his identity. Dr. Ashu Lal is a man of great ability and rare intelligence. After attaining the degree of M.B.B.S., he joined government job, and was appointed Deputy District Officer (Health) at Karor. He is also a renowned Siraiki poet. Many of his *lohris*, *kafis*, and folk songs are very popular among



The author flanked by Dr. Ashu Lal 'Faqir' and Mr. Isa Khan with Mr. SK Jain

the people. During the meeting, he gifted me his two Siraiki anthologies. He has special love for Sind River; he has described it in his poetry with great love and reverence.

Once again, saying goodbye, I had the last glimpse of my ancestral house. I wanted to believe that it weren't true! But facts are harder than fiction. I was going away. By departing from it, I was going to be all the more poor, a pauper. While looking around, my mind's eye went back seven and a half decades. I told the gentlemen present that in front of our house there used to live one Master Bhoja Ram 'Hairat,' who said beautiful, verses in Punjabi and Siraiki blended together. I told them that at a short distance, there was a well which was called 'Haunsla Khuh' (In Siraiki, *hausla* is pronounced as '*haunsla*,' and well is called *khuh* both in Punjabi and Siraiki). There was a temple near that well, and its street too was called 'Haunsla Gali' (*gali* in Siraiki and Punjabi means 'street'). I am unaware of the origin of these terms as to when and why these places acquired those nomenclatures. However, all the friends present were unfamiliar with those names. On the way back, they showed me the well and the temple that I had referred to. At a short distance, there was a market. Reaching there, I told them that there used to be a shop of soda water, and adjoining it, there was a sweets seller named Murla, who used to make *pakorās* in the evening. They wondered at my sharp memory, though there was no one amongst them to vouch for my claims.

Extending our thankfulness to Dr. Ashu Lal, Isa Khan Saheb and other friends, we asked their permission to leave. From there, we went directly to the sacred tomb of Hazrat Makhdum Shaikh Lal Esan to register our presence. This

tomb is situated at a little distance ahead, on the left side of the *Hospital* and the Sadar Thana. The building and the name of this sacred tomb is still imprinted on my mind, and I also remember that every year on 14th of *Bhadon*, a great fair named as 'Chaudvin-Fair' takes place at the spot, in which a large number of people come from far and wide to participate.

According to Nasir Malik Saheb's book, *Layyah Di Tareekh* (that is, *History of Layyah*), and Mehar Nur Thind's book in Urdu, *Ouliya-e-Layyah*, Hazrat Lal Esan's real name was Shaikh Mohammed Yusuf. His father, Hazrat Makhdum Bahauddin Sani, apart from being a kind hearted person, was a famous scholar and a realized person living in Multan. After the death of his father, he left Multan, and adopted Karor as his field of action. Otherwise also, a long time ago, his ancestors lived on this soil.

It is held that Hazrat Makhdum Shaikh Mohammed Yusuf adored Hazrat Shah Esa Balot, and was highly devoted to him. Out of love, his *guru* used to call him 'Lal,' meaning a Jewel. When Hazrat Shah Esa Balot bade farewell to this transitory world, people started calling him 'Lal' which it was added as prefix to the name of his *guru*, and thus, he came to be known as 'Lal Esan.'

When he came to Kot Karor in 1545 A.D., he observed that the whole region was in the grip of draught, and the people were dying of hunger. There was little water in the Sind River, as there had been scarce rains. When the people told him about this natural calamity, lifting his both hands towards the sky, he prayed to God. His prayer was granted, and the Sind River was filled with water. The



The author & his companions with Mr. Munavver Baloch, Mr. Shamsbad Husain Sirai & the station master at the Karor railway station.

river brought with its flow fish as well which was the staple food of the region.

As Hazrat Sheikh Lal Esan rid the people of the curse, a Siraiki saying had come to stay:

Lalan aaya Kachhi

Hik hissa pani te du hisse machhi.

That is, Hazrat Lal Esan came to *Kachhi*, and with his blessings the river was filled with one part water and two parts fish. (In Punjabi and Siraiki, armpit is called 'kachh.' Here '*Kachhi*' means the area which is the armpit of Sind River, that is Karor). Many more miracles are associated with his name.

After bowing before that sacred tomb reverently, we proceeded towards the railway station from where, many years ago, I was, perforce, separated from my motherland to embark upon a journey of another kind. I remember since my childhood that on both sides of the road to the railway station, there stood numberless trees of *Khaggal* and *Shareenh*. I have not seen the former kind of trees in India. Reaching the station many old memories were revived. As far as I can recall, before partition, at the station the full name of the town, that is, Karor-Lal Esan, was written, but now only 'Karor,' exists, both in Urdu and English.

It was already evening, and considering our wishes, Munavvar Baloch Saheb had been taking us from one place to the other. It had been a hectic day for him. Besides, it was getting late. So, we left back for Layyah. On the way, our car stopped, as it developed some technical snag. However, with the earnest help of some car-travellers and

scooter riders on the road, we were able to reach a nearby town, and after getting the car repaired, we reached Layyah at about 9 p.m. We had our dinner, and then many friends came to see us. We had pleasant literary and general discussions and deliberations. Then we began packing up, as we were to move from Layyah the next day to commence our return journey.

We decided to cover this journey by train. In this way, Prof. Hans and I wanted to revive the sweet memories of our childhood. Before partition, during my early adolescence, in summer vacation, we used to travel by the train on this route from Kaloorkot, district Mianwali, where my father was working as Head Master in the High School, to Karor-Lal Esan. At that time, on the railway compartment used to be written NWR, that is, North Western Railway. Now it is written PR, that is, Pakistan Railway, though the shape and size of the compartments is the same.

Even now, I vividly remember the names, and to some extent the sequence of most of the stations that fall between Kaloorkot and Karor-Lal Esan: Kaloorkot, Maibal, Shah Aalam, Panchgirain, Daria Khan, Kotla Jaam, Bakhhar, Notak, Behal, Karor. Prior to my father, late Munshi Tilok Chand 'Mahroom' had been the Head Master in the same school. Mahroom Saheb had also written a poem entitled "Kaloorkot ki Aandhi." The now world famous 'Pachranga Achaar,' that is, the blend of five types of pickle, introduced by a small firm, 'Murli Dhar Ram Narain,' began as a small shop at Kaloorkot.

28 October 2010

After having accumulated a large amount of love and adoration of all the friends in Layyah, and especially those of Hakim Mian Ilahi Bux and his kith and kin, we said goodbye, and with moist eyes, we set out on our return journey. Imdad Husain, Shamshad Husain and Saqib Khan escorted us up to the railway station from where we were to leave for Kot Addu. Shamshad Husain bought our tickets for Kot Addu from his own pocket. So much so, Imdad Husain accompanied us right up to Kot Addu, and after our arrival there, returned to Layyah by another train. This journey was quite comfortable and enjoyable; it revived many of our childhood memories. During the journey, we were pleasantly surprised to observe that the name of 'Jamman Shah' Station was written both in Urdu and Hindi. Imdad Husain revealed another strange thing. He told us that in Pakistan, one could travel both in passenger or express train using the same ticket!

Dear Arshad Niazi was already waiting for us at Kot Addu railway station. He placed our luggage in the car, and took us to the office of his friend, who is an Executive Engineer there (I regret to say that I have forgotten the good name of his friend). After some time, he took us to his residence where we had our meal. A small *mehfil* was also held. Prof. Hans and I presented our poems in Urdu and Siraiki. After that, Arshad Niazi played at flute dexterously, and also recited his poems in melodious voice that kept us engaged throughout. Arshad Saheb hails from Daira-Deen-Panah, and is a teacher in music, in a school at Kot Addu. He is a highly loveable person and a top ranking artiste. In the same meeting, Qaisar Khan, a young

singer, recited his poems and songs in Siraiki in fascinatingly sweet voice, and presented us each with a CD of his songs for which we expressed our thankfulness.

Meanwhile, Zulfiqar Ali Khan Makhdum Saheb reached from Daira-Deen-Panah. He was to take us, in his car, to our next destination. In the evening, along with Zulfiqar Ali Khan, we arrived at Muzaffargarh. At night, we stayed with Rao Kamran Yaqeen, an old friend of Prof. Hans. Yaqeen Saheb and his sons own many shops, under the name 'Jibran Garments,' in the Faisal Market of Muzaffargarh . After having said good bye, Makhdum Saheb left for Multan the same night to come back the next morning.

29 October 2010

(Next Morning) Again, in the morning, Makhdum Saheb reached to take us to Multan. After having our breakfast at Yaqeen Saheb's, we left for Multan. From there, we were to head for Lahore by the bus that leaves at 11 at night. And from there we were to start our return journey.

On reaching Multan, Makhdum Saheb took us directly to the office of *Jhok*, a daily in Siraiki. The proprietor and editor of that news paper, Janab Zahur Ahmed Dhareja and 30-40 other lovers of literature were already waiting for us. After tea and snacks, a poetry session was organized. Apart from us, many local poets kept the audience captivated throughout. Meanwhile, for a while, I went to Dhareja Saheb's office. Following me, another gentleman came, sat beside me, and started conversing. On asking, he told me that his name was Chaudhary Ghulam Sarvar

Arain. Before partition, his father was the Nambardar in Udaipur, a village in the district of Ambala, India. At present, they are living at Rangeelpur, a town near Multan.

The memory of Sohan Halwa of Multan is still fresh in my mind, and its very recalling waters my mouth. I asked Ghulam Sarvar Saheb if there was any good sweets shop accessible nearby. At that moment, one other gentleman came in and sat beside me, and during that period, Chaudhary Ghulam Sarvar slipped away. After about fifteen minutes, he came with 3-4 packs of the famous 'Hafiz ka Multani Sohan Halwa,' and affectionately presented them to me. I insisted for payment, but he did not agree, and asked me to accept the sweets as a token of his love and regards. Later on, I was a bit regretful that I subjected him to so much trouble. Certainly, his charming gesture was another testimony of the incalculable love and adoration of the people of Pakistan that kept us steeped in for about a week.

After the session of poetry, we had our dinner with Dhareja Saheb, and later on, he took us to his residence, adjoining the office of *Jhok*. He introduced us to his wife and other members of his family. One of his daughters, Asima Zahur, is associated with media. She gifted us each a book, entitled '*Siraiki, Urdu, and Angrezi Bol chaal*' written by her.

Later on, Dhareja Saheb took us to his library which is situated outside the office of *Jhok*. In the library, apart from the publications of *Jhok*, many rare books were available. Dhareja Saheb gifted us 3-4 books from the rich stock of his publication for which we were indebted to him. Out of these invaluable books, one was *Deewan-e-Farid* and the

other was an anthology of poems by Shakir Shujabadi, a celebrated Siraiki poet. Otherwise, besides being physically debilitated to a great extent, Shakir Saheb is a top ranking and famous poet of Siraiki.

Our passage from Multan to Lahore had been booked in the bus that was to leave at 11 P. M. So, Dhareja Saheb arranged for us to leave at about 10.30 p. m. for the Daewoo Bus Stand. With our hearts full of love and honour, we said goodbye to Multan, and reached the bus stand well in time, and boarded the bus. It was the same Road Line that we travelled by while coming from Lahore to Multan. Our return journey by that bus was also immensely comfortable; though, it being a night journey, there was little chance for us to have a nap.

30 October 2010

(Next Morning) We reached Lahore at about 3.45, in the morning. After some time, dear Shoaib Baloch came to receive us. We had our breakfast in a restaurant together. After that we came to the same guest house, where we had spent the night when we entered Pakistan on 22 October.

After having relaxed for a while, we had a bath and were ready to go out. Meanwhile, a friend of Prof. Hans came, and he went with him. Jain Saheb and I took an auto, and straightway reached 'Bhagwan Street' in Anarkali Bazaar. The office of Urdu magazine *Takhleeq* is situated in this street. We met Azhar Javed Saheb, its proprietor and editor. (Alas, he is no more with us in this world!). He informed the officials of the daily *Nawai Waqt* and *Jang*

about our arrival. Mr. Khalid Behzad Hashmi was kind enough to reach there, in a short while. He is the senior assistant editor and columnist of *Nawai Waqt*. He interviewed us, and the photographers accompanying him, took some photographs, and, later on, published them in the newspaper with our special mention.

Some time ago, Khalid Saheb had published an excellent review written by Dr. Anwar Sadeed Saheb on the famous historical book, *Kala Pani* written by Wasim Ahmed Saeed, who lives in Delhi, is a scholar and man of literature, and an intimate friend of mine. So, we had a lively conversation on the subject. Meanwhile, Hazrat Azhar Javed had arranged a lunch for us. After the lunch, our discussion with Azhar Javed Saheb was still in progress when Jain Saheb received a call from the P. A. to Mr. Imran Khan, the former captain of Pakistani cricket and the founder and president of *Tahrik-e-Insaf*, a political party of Pakistan. We asked leave of Azhar Javed Saheb and Behzad Saheb, and left for Imran Khan Saheb's residence, promising that we will be back soon. Azhar Saheb accompanied us up to the road outside. He not only arranged an auto for us, but also paid the fare, in advance from his own pocket, despite our repeated requests not to.

During our conversation, I told Imran Saheb that I hailed from district Layyah, and that I had come to have a look at my house and ancestral town. He suggested that if we had told him before, he would have taken us up to Mianwali himself to show us around. I asked him that I have been told that he hailed from Jalandhar to which he replied that his mother was a Pathani from Jalandhar, whereas his father hailed from Mianwali.

After having spent about an hour with Imran Saheb, we came back to Azhar Javed Saheb's office, as promised. In a short while, Khalid Behzad sahib also reached there again. We exchanged views on many topics. When we asked leave of Azhar Javed Saheb, he gave me two latest numbers of *Takhleeq*, along with two-three lovely books.

Leaving from there, we roamed about in Anarkali Bazaar, and later, returned to the guest house by an auto. Hansji had already reached there. After some time, dear Shoaib, along with his friend Irfan-ul-Huq, came. For some time, we had a general conversation. After dinner, we went to sleep.

During our journey to Pakistan, almost every day, I had been receiving a call from Janab Gulzar Javed. Gulzar Saheb is the proprietor and editor of the Urdu monthly paper *Chaharsoo* (Rawalpindi), and is a very dear friend of mine. He is well known for his generosity and affections amongst all his acquaintances. In the evening of 30 October 2010, also, he called, and informed that he was coming to Lahore to see me, the next morning, that is, on 31 October 2010. The distance of Rawalpindi from Lahore by road is about 370km or so. Considering the distance and the fatigue involved, I requested him not to take the trouble of coming all the way to Lahore, but there is no one to match Gulzar Javed. He paid no heed to what I suggested, and said that the next day, we were going to have lunch together. After an hour or half, I received another call that 'taking lunch together' meant that it would be from his side. O God, can such an unfathomable love ever be recompensed?



*Jand Gulzar Javed flanked by his two very promising sons Iftikhar Javed
(Fari Shaw) and Ammar Javed, at Lahore*



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31 October 2010

(Next Day) At about 11.45 A. M., Gulzar Saheb, along with his two promising sons, Iftikhar Javed (Faari Shaw) and Ammaar Javed reached our guest house. Hugging him my wish of many years to meet him intimately had been fulfilled. No doubt, I still felt embarrassed to think that he had undergone the trouble of travelling such a long distance for a humble person like me, though, at the same time, this gesture of his gave me boundless joy.

For some time, the sequence of conversation continued. Gulzar Saheb had brought a number of rare books that he gifted me affectionately. After that, in his car, we went to a hotel to have our lunch. Meanwhile, dear Ammaar brought *kheer* from somewhere, in an earthen container for us. After having enjoyed the delicious *kheer*, Gulzar Saheb and his sons took us around many places in his car. Ultimately, he took us to Minar-e-Pakistan. It was getting late, and they were yet to cover a long distance back to Rawalpindi. Once again, we embraced each other and after bidding them goodbye, we came back to the wide spaces of Minar-e-Pakistan. We clicked a few photographs, and went to see Shahi Masjid across the road.

At short distance before we reach Shahi Masjid, there is *Smadhi* of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in the expansive area of which is also situated a Gurudwara. After having bowed in the Gurudwara, we came out, and entered the open area of Shahi Masjid which, besides being spacious, was full of grassy spaces and flowers of various hues. In the same open space, on one side of the flight of stairs of the Masjid, there is the tomb of Dr. Mohammad 'Iqbal.' With our visit to this tomb, our short but very sweet journey

of Lahore came to an end. On the way back, we went to Anarkali Bazaar for a short while, and then returned to the guest house. After having our dinner, we packed our baggage, and went to sleep.

1 November 2010

(Next Morning) After having bath and breakfast, we started preparations for the return journey. At about 11 a.m. dear Shoaib arrived. Also, he brought some invaluable gifts for us. Shoaib is working as Network Administrator in the Customs Department of Pakistan. It was Monday and a working day. He had already exhausted many leaves for us. Otherwise also, from time to time, he had been at our beck and call all the time. So, I asked him to arrange a taxi for us up to the border, but he did not agree, and said that he would take us to the border himself. There was no alternative except surrendering before his boundless love. We cleared the guest house bill, and at about 12 noon, in dear Shoaib's car, we left for the Wagha border. We reached there in about 45 minutes or so.

After having warm hand shakes and intimate embraces, we thanked Shoaib for all his cares and considerations. We bestowed untold blessings upon him, and wished for his long life. Before leaving, he touched our feet seeking our blessings and requesting us to visit Pakistan again. Also, we cordially invited him to India. It was too hard for us to say goodbye to Shoaib but we had to, though with heavy heart. It was a very emotional leave-taking.

At the border, once again, we had an opportunity to see Saeed Saheb at the Pakistan Customs office. After having gone through the formalities, when we reached near

the gate, the security personnel informed us that in a nearby room, the souvenir of Pakistan and other articles were available. Our curiosity to see those exhibits was aroused. We went in and bought some articles as tokens of sweet remembrances.

Now we headed towards the gate on the Indian side of the Wagha border. We showed our passport to the authorities in the concerned department, and reached the Indian Customs department and returned the balance from the currency of Pakistan, and got the Indian currency in exchange from the branch of the State Bank of India there. After having fulfilled all the formalities, we came out. Again, the behavior of the officials, on both sides of the border, was very amicable and deserves our praise and gratefulness. They also added to the count of the honeyed memories we had aggregated during our unforgettable journey to Pakistan.

Now we were impatiently looking forward to reaching our sweet homes. Coming out of the main gate of Wagha border, we hired a taxi and reached Amritsar railway station. There I bought one railway ticket for Ambala for myself, and two tickets for my friends for Hisar. We carried our luggage, and went to our respective platform. Both the trains had been parked at the railway station. After having affectionate hand shakes and endearing hugs, we occupied our seats in the trains. My train was to steam off at 4.00 p. m., whereas the train for Hisar was scheduled to leave at 9.30, at night.

Having cherished infinite lively memories and solace giving experiences of about two weeks' passage to Pakistan, we returned to our respective sweet homes. The warm

affections and the kind gestures bestowed upon us by friends and well-wishers during our passage to Pakistan will always remain with us as an asset and a keepsake of the memorable journey which began with sweet experiences and ended with sweeter remembrances.

During our brief passage to Pakistan, wherever we went, all the friends and acquaintances extended to us warm welcome. Their boundless love and intimate hospitality moved us so much that I wondered who those callous people that became blood thirsty, and were at one another's neck, at the time of partition of the country, were. It is beyond my ken what made those malicious people, on both sides across the border, butcher so mercilessly the innocent folks, disgrace the hapless women, and swing the innocent children on to their spears.

But no, all was not dark and gloomy even at that time. Many angelic people with kind conscience were still present in the world. Even today, I vividly remember that our town was saved by the Muslim Station House Officer. of the local police station. All along, he convinced the Hindus of the town that as long as he was alive, none could touch any one amongst them. And he kept his word. He helped us in yet another way. When the train arrived at the Karor railway station to transport the non-Muslim population of our town, that kindly S.H.O. asked us to load as much luggage as we could, during the night. The train was to leave in the morning. My salutation to that braveheart!

One more kind gesture of the common people of Karor

deserves a particular mention here. Our household goods were transported by four to five Muslim washer-men, on the back of their donkeys, and also loaded by them on to the train, the same night, and that too without charging a penny. Thinking that it was their last meeting with us, they were weeping inconsolably that showed their consciousness of collective pain of separation, and held testimony to their basic humanity. People generally term them as 'lows' of life. But could there be more 'highs' ones than those at that moment? I bow to their simplicity and large-heartedness. May they prosper where they are!

After leaving Karor, we reached Jalandhar, India, and took refuge in Gadha camp. After a few days, when my father was appointed Head Master in the Jeevan Mal District Board High School at Zira, district Ferozepur, Punjab, we moved to that place. I was 12 year old at that time.

After a few months, I read a heartrending article of rare sacrifice, written by Saqib Zirvi, an eminent writer, in an Urdu magazine, available in our school. In that article, he narrated a tale of his miraculous escape from the very jaws of death. He tells how a Sikh friend of his, Sardar Gurmukh Singh, a tailor, saved his life. During communal riots, consequent upon the partition of the country, Saqib was hiding himself in Gurmukh Singh's house. When the arsonists came to know, they stormed into the house to butcher him. When Gurmukh Singh could not think of any alternative, he let Saqib lie alongside his ailing wife, on the same cot. He covered Saqib with the blanket that his wife was wrapped in because of high fever. The assailants searched the entire house. When those murder-

ous men entered that room, Gurmukh Singh assured them that there was no one there except his ailing wife lying in the bed. His wife's face was partially visible from the fringe of the blanket. Those cruel hearted slayers could never have thought even in their dream that a non-Muslim Sikh would make such a unique sacrifice for a Muslim friend. Anyway, those denizens of the dark went away, and Saqib was given a new lease of life. When things calmed down, Saqib migrated to Pakistan.

After reading that article, an urge to see and salute such a person as Sardar Gurmukh Singh took hold of me. The same evening, I went to Bazaar, and spotted his shop. As a mark of recognition for his humanity, I bowed before him reverently. Afterwards also, whenever I passed by that way, I made it a point to visit him, touch his feet, and seek his blessings.

I am of the conviction that even today, in every community, and in every nation such angelic people as Gurmukh Singh are present. Their language is the language of love and empathy. Voice of love is voice of God. It is beyond all narrow confines. The passion of sympathy transcends all restrictions, and knows only the idiom of love. And, as long as such godly people, the enduring props of mankind, dwell on this beautiful Mother Earth, humanity will not only endure, but also prevail. Bond of love alone can rid humanity of all narrowness and hatred, and propagate friendliness and fellow feeling. *Amen!*

□□□



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Having done his M. A. and Ph. D. in English Literature, from Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, the translator, Prof. (Dr.) C. L. Juneja, has taught Undergraduate and Post-graduate classes, and guided research in his subject. He retired as Principal from Haryana Higher Education Service, in 1999. At present, he, along with wife, is residing at Faridabad, and whiles away his time by reading, writing, and thanking God for His graces.



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