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THREE SUMMERS IN PAKISTAN

May 1958 to October 1960

by

K V PADMANABHAN



***K.V. Padmanabhan** was in the Indian Foreign Service for two decades. He served as Deputy High Commissioner and later Acting High Commissioner of India at Karachi, Pakistan during May 1958 – October 1960. During this period, K V Padmanabhan was witness to what is now called 'The Honeymoon Period' in India-Pakistan Relations.*

K V Padmanabhan hailed from the former French Enclave of Mahe and the adjoining town of Tellichery (now Thallassery) which was later absorbed into the Madras Presidency. He studied at Presidency College, Madras and was a Distinguished Lawyer due to which he also became a part of the team under Sir B N Rau in the drafting of the Constitution of India.

Born in 1911, K V Padmanabhan passed away in 1992.

The following extracts are from his unpublished notes which have been transcribed by his daughter Geeta Doctor who has also given some additional inputs.

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Karachi – May 1958-October 1960

My six weeks home leave expired in no time.

I had barely had time to pay my respects to my large family that had been dispersed all across the country when there was an urgent summons to me to join my post at Karachi the capital of Pakistan at the time. I tried desperately to extend my leave.

My wife's family had settled down at Bangalore. At that time Bangalore was a sleepy Cantonment that attracted a large number of retired persons from the Services because of its mild climate and provincial English style way of life that seemed to thrive under the guardianship of a predominantly Anglo-Indian elite. Padma and I decided that this would be an ideal place to park our two older daughters Geeta and Surya, who were just about to enter their teens. Maybe even establish contacts with their roots such as they were. Our youngest daughter Manjula was just six years, she would remain with us.

Padma's father had died just before our return from Geneva. Her Mother whom everyone called Ushamai lived in a large Bangalore style garden house in a very quiet locality called Shanthinagar. The house also called "Ushas" was located at the dead end of a street named Andree Road. It had a beautiful garden with a number of fruit trees, planted by her husband who had spent many years in the Indian Forestry Service. My Mother-in-law was a keen gardener and the flower beds were overflowing with the colorful seeds from a company known as Pochas. These attracted all manner of birds, bees and butterflies all of which were tended with care by the various members of the family assisted by two gardeners. There was a large contingent of servants. Two of her grown-up Sons were still unmarried and living at home. Her youngest daughter, Padma's sister Girija whose husband was a Naval Officer, often lived there with her two young children who had just started school.

Bangalore was at that time a very charming British style cantonment town, not yet the city it would become. On Sundays, people would dress up in their best clothes and take a leisurely walk to Cubbon Park where a red and gold liveried Band would be playing. At the entrance to the Park, a splendid statue of Queen Victoria in her full imperial regalia sat in state on her marble throne and made sure that at least in this last vestige of the colonial empire things continued as they had always done. It was the high noon of retired army colonels and a richly gifted Anglo-Indian community.

For us of course as parents, the main attraction of Bangalore were the Anglo-Protestant schools run with strict discipline with the senior staff and teachers still coming over from England. We were able to get admission for the girls at the Bishop Cottons School for Girls, get their green uniforms with white shirts stitched, their white canvas shoes, known as 'keds' and green and gold striped ties bought from the local shops on Commercial Street and left under the care of my Mother-in-law.

One of the reasons for my precipitous move to Karachi was that the Indian High Commissioner at Karachi was anxious to wind up his affairs as his term was over. There was no one to whom he could hand over since his deputy had already left. I had no other option but to comply. I however decided to leave Padma and our youngest daughter, Manjula, home for a little longer so that they could savor their home-coming a little longer.

I took an S.I. liner Bombay S.S. Dumra. It was a far cry from the luxury liners on which we had journeyed to Europe and back but there was nothing to complain about the First-Class accommodation or the food. I was however appalled at the way that the deck passengers travelled. Before the boat left the port there was a wild scramble for accommodation. People fought over every vacant corner or hidden space that might provide some protection against the sun, the seas and the

rain. Families huddled together in small groups with their worldly possessions and whatever bundles of food that they had been able to carry with them determined to rough it out till they reached their separate destinations in the Gulf area. Amongst them I noticed some very decent looking people also. I could not imagine how they would withstand the ordeal by sun and sea.

At Karachi a whole lot of people came to greet me. One of them was Thakur Sahib of Kotda Sanghani, First Secretary, who offered me temporary accommodation at his home. Since my family was away, I stayed with him for about a month till I set up my own establishment. This saved me from a lot of worries about setting up house on my own. Rajah Saheb was a good friend and an excellent host. He also helped me to get acclimatized with my new milieu.

Our mission at Karachi was a very large one. It has almost 230 members. In size it was second only to our High Commission in London. It had all the wings of a full-fledged diplomatic mission- the Chancery, the political and commercial consulates, the information and commercial sections, the Defence wing with its separate units for the Army, Navy and Air-Force. There were more than a dozen officers of First Secretary Rank. I was initially the only Counsellor, but when I was promoted to the rank of a Minister, a new post of Counsellor was added.

The Karachi Mission had supervisory jurisdiction over the other missions we had at that time in Pakistan; the Deputy High Commission at Lahore and the Deputy High Commission at Dacca; besides the Assistant High Commission at Rajshahi. These offices functioned more or less as independent units under the remote control of the head at Karachi.

My High Commissioner was a real boss. He belonged to the I.C.S. and had served under the State's Ministry under V.P. Menon. Before coming to Karachi he had been India's High Commissioner at Colombo. At the time I arrived at Karachi he

had become a widower. He had a son and a daughter, but they were not with him. He seemed to be a lonely man.

Nor was he very communicative. He did not consider it necessary to tell me anything about the current situation in Pakistan; what his assessment of what it might be, or how I should tackle it at my own level. He assumed that I knew my job, little realizing that I had not received any prior briefing from the Ministry. The only indication he gave me about my duties was that I should devote myself to the more mundane activities involved in administration while he would himself handle all the political work. He did however expect me to send the periodic reports on political issues to New Delhi. I knew that I had to learn my job the hard way.

As it turned out, I had to handle quite a lot of political work myself. Those were the days when relations between India and Pakistan were at a low ebb. There were border incidents in both East and West, each side blaming the other in attacks which often resulted in firing by the border forces. The MEA sent us details of each such incidents by telegram and we immediately lodged a protest or made representations verbally to the Pakistan Foreign Office, depending on the gravity of each incident. Most often these demarches were made at the level of the Deputy High Commissioner, but in very serious cases the High Commissioner was expected to go to the Foreign Office himself and meet the Foreign Secretary, or in some cases the Foreign Minister.

I found that my counterpart in the Foreign Office was Itat Hussain, Joint Secretary who was in the Government of India Secretariat before the Partition. We discovered that we had a number of common friends and I got on fairly well with him. Sometime after the official palavers were over we spoke about the old times in Delhi. The Foreign Secretary, Sikander Ali Beg was also an officer with loose Indian links. He was formerly of the ICS cadre and had a brother in the Indian

Foreign Service. His own mother was in Poona (Pune) at that time. He was affable and pleasant on the surface, but when it came to business a completely different individual. He had to continually assert his Pakistani affiliations because of his links to his former country of birth. Despite such meticulous devotion to duty a number of these officials who had migrated from India forfeited their tenure when the political tide turned at a later state. Beg survived the tide.

We lived in a hostile atmosphere. No Pakistani, lest of all the officials, except for some from the Foreign Office were allowed to come to our residences or able to attend our parties. If any one transgressed this rule he was immediately reported to the Police. So we were careful not to embarrass our friends by calling them to our homes. We could always meet them in some neutral location, another Embassy, or the house of a common friend.

In this way I was able to meet a number of old friends whom I had known before Partition in New Delhi. Most of them were Muslims, but there were non-Muslims too. One of them M.J. Abdullah embraced me and kissed me on both cheeks with tears trailing down his face. We had sat in the same room in the Reforms Office of the Government of India for many years, until a cruel fate drove him out of India. He told me that he had tried his best to stay on in Delhi, the home of his ancestors, but he had no alternative because of the compelling situation at the time. I was to hear the same story repeated to me by many of the people that I met during my stay.

M.J. Abdullah told me that he had been caught up in the communal turmoil that took place in Bombay. Someone told him that the Police were after him for an alleged murder of someone and advised him to leave as early as possible to Pakistan, which he did. He managed to get a job in the Government but was unhappy at the way that Pakistan was going. Subsequently, he brought his family to Karachi, but his wife did not like to remain there at all. She felt an alien

amongst the local people, the food and the locality where he had been forced to choose to live. Then she fell out of tram one morning and sustained a head injury that damaged the olfactory nerve. That left her feeling even more unhappy with her surroundings and every day was spent pleading with her husband to be allowed to go back to her native place in Kerala.

I explained to Abdulla that it was impossible for a Muslim to re-migrate to India from Pakistan. The rule was different in East Pakistan where rules permitted the return of Muslim immigrants. But Abdulla would not accept a “No”. One day he brought his wife to see us and to plead her case. I wrote to the GOI about this family and requested them to grant them a long term visa so that they could be on probation till they could become eligible for the grant of an Indian citizenship. Normally, such long-term visas are not granted and the Government had to be satisfied of the bona-fides of the person concerned. Sometimes, spies and infiltrators are planted this way.

After some months had passed, I was able to convince the authorities in India about the genuineness of the case and Abdullah was granted a long term visa. The miracle had happened and both the Abdullahs were very grateful and happy. He gave up job and the provident fund benefits that he had earned and sailed hopefully to his true home-land in Kerala.

But as I was to learn much later, ill-luck dogged his steps in Kerala also. Under the visa granted to him he could only visit certain places and he had to report to the Police at stated intervals. When the time came for him to apply for a permanent Indian citizenship the authorities demurred and agreed only to extend his visa. So for many years, he had to continue as a Pakistani national under surveillance – a horrible ordeal indeed for a person who had risked everything to escape from Pakistan. This was another example of the cruelty that lingered and

destroyed the lives of those who had been caught in the ruins of the two-country theory.

Then there were my Moplah friends. Moplahs are from the Malabar region of Kerala. The word Moplah is a variant of Ma-pillai, that is to say honoured son-in-law, since most of them had married into the local families. Originally they were the descendants of the Arab traders who settled down in Kerala. There were many converts too. They are an enterprising lot and had established themselves as shop-keepers and traders. They settled down in nodal towns like Rangoon, Colombo, Singapore, Karachi and so forth. At the time of Partition there were about 40,000 of them in Karachi. One fine morning they were told that they were Pakistanis and that they could not return to their native towns in Kerala without a visa and that too only on a temporary basis.

The Moplahs in Pakistan were stunned when they realised the situation. It was an arbitrary decision taken at the time of Partition that all Hindus in India would be deemed to be Indians and all Muslims in Pakistan would be Pakistani. The Moplahs in Pakistan were given no choice as to whether they might like to continue in Pakistan or return to India. They simply got stuck in Pakistan which for many was an alien place. True, it was an Islamic country, but the people spoke a different language, ate wheat, not rice and they knew that they were considered to be second class citizens. They wanted the right to return to India which they called "Punya Bhumi" or sacred land, where their ancestors were buried. Since travel facilities were restricted some Moplahs even risked the hazards of returning to Kerala by walking across the Makran coast to the Persian Gulf and taking a boat. How many of them perished on the way, only Allah will know.

Since I am on the subject of migrations, I may mention that I had helped a Parsi family migrate to India. They had decided to remain at Karachi since their family roots were there but they eventually decided that the way things were going in

Pakistan this was not the place where they wanted their children to remain. Formalities were easier in their case and the family settled down very comfortably in Bombay.

There were also other cases of migrations which came to my notice in later years. One of them was that of Mohammed Anser who was a classmate of mine at the Presidency College Madras in the Honours Course. He had passed out creditably and had joined the Accountant General's Office. When Pakistan came into being, he had opted for service in that country and was sent to Dacca. He soon found the atmosphere there not at all to his liking and contrary to all that he had hoped for when he opted for service in the newly created country of Pakistan. So he decided to return to India, even though it meant losing his seniority and prospects of service. Being in East Pakistan it was easier to get back, but he found that he had to start at the bottom rung of the ladder. Being a man of determination he plodded on and had reached a reasonably senior position. All through those years he had tried to get the bread in his services condoned so that the previous years of employment in India would count towards his pension, but he struggled without much success. When I got back to India and was in the Ministry, I came to know about this and was able to get this done. He returned to Madras and in due time when he retired it was with a decent pension that allowed him to finally be at peace. He would come and visit us with his wife when I too retired and settled down at Madras.

At the time of Partition, many Indian Christians and Anglo-Indians were drawn to Pakistan for a variety of reasons, mostly in the hope of improving their prospects in a new country that would require their talents. They soon realized that Pakistan was for Muslims only and that too for Punjabi Muslims. Members of the minority community stagnated in the post in which they were recruited with no prospects of promotion. A friend of mine from Delhi, Phillip was holding the identical post that I had when he came over to Pakistan. He was sticking it out

in the hope that things would improve. Another person whom I knew John, who was more or less in the same predicament, got away to India, via East Pakistan and presumably was able to re-connect with his old contacts. There were telegraphists, who if they had remained in India would have become Telegraph Masters and even Superintendents. They were all what one might call the 'doomed generation' who had been lured to the idea of Pakistan. They had no one to take up their cause either in Parliament or in the Press.

There was one person who could have helped these disappointed men- C.E. Gibbon, the Anglo-Indian leader who had decided to migrate to Pakistan with much fanfare and publicity. The Pakistanis made him the Speaker of the National Assembly and gave him a flashy car and other perquisites. Gibbon took full advantage of these privileges and was seen everywhere with his grand car flying an oversize Green and White Pakistan flag as he was above suspicion. But these halcyon early days did not last very long as we shall see later.

Meanwhile, my Chief was paying his farewell calls and preparing for a graceful exit from Karachi. Among the parties I attended in his honour was one given by the Prime Minister, Feroze Khan Noon. He was a prominent figure in the pre-Partition days in India and was knighted by the British. When he was in Delhi he got himself a European spouse whom many called "Lady After-noon", a reference to the fact that there was already a lady Noon who had preceded her. Sir Feroze as everyone called him in Karachi was the soul of courtesy and decorum on the occasion of my High Commissioner's farewell and treated his Indian guests also with extreme cordiality. I remember that he had specially got down some delicious honey-dew melons from the North West and these were served to us for lunch. Pakistan could be justly proud of this fruit. Many private parties were also arranged in honour of my High Commissioner which were invariably well attended. He had a vast circle of friends who apparently did not

mind the official opprobrium that might descend on them for their open defiance of the Government policy of boycotting the Indian Mission.

Because of the official policy, we had wondered whether many people would turn up at the High Commissioner's farewell party which was arranged at a well-known Karachi hotel. Except for a number of officials, almost all the invitees attended the function. Amongst them were Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai, both venerable figures in their traditional salwar and kurta. They were calm and sedate and represented the indomitable spirit of the Pathan. I recall very vividly Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan telling the High Commissioner how much he opposed the Partition of the country and how the Indian leaders had let down the Pathans. He had come to the party to show his regard for India, he said to which despite everything he was still very much attached. I was struck by the great sadness in those eyes. He never came again to the Indian High Commission.

My High Commissioner was a man of feverish activity and just before relinquishing charge he got through a project which was to prove questionable in the light of what happened in later years. He was determined to force Pakistan to close their mission in Bombay as it was reported to be indulging in various undesirable activities. But he failed to appreciate that such a move would also involve the closure of our mission in Lahore. It is necessary to explain here that India and Pakistan had established their mission in either country in pairs on a basis of reciprocity. Thus New Delhi against Karachi (that was then the Capital); Calcutta-Dacca; Bombay-Lahore; Shillong-Rajshahi. It was agreed that the closure of any one of these missions would entail the closure of the mission in the neighbouring country with which it was paired. This right need not necessarily be exercised but the option was there.

When India asked Pakistan to close down their mission at Bombay they readily agreed and demanded the immediate closure of our Deputy High Commission at Lahore. This was a well-established office which was doing a lot of good work for the benefit of Indians and Pakistanis particularly in the consular field. Lahore was the nerve centre of the Punjab region of Pakistan where it was imperative to have a presence. But none of these considerations weighed with our policy makers of the day and “Operation Closure” was put into motion with unseemly haste. India was to regret this step when Pakistan mounted an unwarranted attack on her borders in 1965.

The local people somehow one way or the other came to meet us. Most often it was for visas or to enquire about the various possibilities of acquiring a visa for some special occasion for their families. Many others came to our Library and reading room. Indian newspapers were in great demand. Above all they came to see Indian films. Since the cinema houses in Karachi were not permitted to show Indian films, the Indian High Commission had begun the practice of screening Indian films with select audiences. Such shows were arranged at selected local theatres. Since many of the famous Indian actors of the time had belonged to Lahore in the pre-Partition era there was a special emotional connection for the spectators that was very real. Since there was such a demand for Indian films we started arranging shows within our Mission premises.

One particular film “Mother India” that had Nargis, Rajendra Kumar and Sunil Dutt as the main actors drew such enormous crowds we decided to have a large screen erected high up on the compound wall so that people could watch the film from both sides. (*Mother India was released on the 14th Feb. 1957 when the country was still recovering from the turmoil of Partition. Nargis was born to both Muslim and Hindu parents and named Fatima Rashid 1929- 1981. Her Mother Jaddanbhai Hussain was a famous singer born in Benares and reputed to be one of the most famous courtesans of Allahabad. Rajendra Kumar Tuli was*

born in 1929 at Sialkot in Pakistan. Sunil Dutt was born the 6th of June 1929, Jhelum Punjab). News about such screenings got around from far-away places like Hyderabad (Sind) and more and more screenings had to be shown.

Soon enough the local authorities began to feel threatened by the popularity of “Mother India” which despite its name had a deep resonance within the minds of the people who came to watch it. Once when a capacity crowd of about 10,000 people were watching “Mother India” and roaring their appreciation at some of the unforgettable scenes and dialogue being spoken out loud into the night, stones were thrown at the crowd. There was a stampede. We had a protest from the Foreign Office over the incident stressing that our shows were becoming a source of disturbance and should be discontinued. Thus ended our efforts at entertainment. We had to wait for more favourable circumstances to resume our cinema shows.

Some of the anti-Indian papers in Pakistan, especially the vituperative “Dawn” had been carrying out a campaign against the Information Wing of the Indian High Commission. These papers made exaggerated allegations that the High Commission was undermining the morale of the Pakistan elite by giving them gifts, costly Indian sarees, handloom products, Indian mangoes which were in great demand especially the Lucknow *Dusseri* and *Benarasi paan*. They derided the High Commission for practicing what they called ‘saree diplomacy’. They avoided the words ‘India’ and “Indians” and only used the words, “Bharat” and *Bhartis*”. The Dawn, a pro-Nationalist newspaper excelled itself in coining abusive and derogatory adjectives when referring to us. One of the most spiteful but regular terms of abuse and caricature was to describe Indians as “pulse-eating, gas-filled Babus.” In their cartoons which were invariably offensive, the average Indian was shown as a puny *banian* and *dhoti* wearing shopkeeper, who had to keep tugging at his lower garment to keep it up.

We were certain that decent people in Pakistan would have been appalled at such a low level of lampooning, but no one had the ability or the courage to curb such activities. We on our part did lodge protests when a cartoon or opinion piece went too far in criticizing or reviling our country or our leaders. We immediately received a standard reply that nothing could be done to curb the freedom of the Press in Pakistan.

When we came across such instances of anti-Indian sentiments we used to discuss them amongst ourselves about the mentality that gave rise to such writings and cartoons. We could not believe that there could be persons consumed with such hatred for a neighbouring country of which they had been such an integral part. For me, coming as I had direct from assignments in Western Europe it was a novel experience. Gradually, I began to develop an attitude of impartibility and would only discuss such intransigencies with my diplomatic colleagues with an air of detachment.

Then, one day I got a rude shock. I had gone to a meeting with the Pakistan National Assembly, the one and only meeting I had the opportunity to attend. The subject was Foreign Affairs and naturally there were many other Diplomatic invitees from other nations in the Visitors' Gallery. I soon realized that I was in a rather unenviable position, as most of those who took part in the debate were highly critical of India.

Eventually, a dour looking man with a bald pate like that of Yul Brynner who was the rage at the times stood up and started speaking in a low mumble. At first we could not follow what he was saying, he seemed to be speaking to himself. He was working himself up to start a tirade against India, His main contention was that having agreed to the forced partition of India, we were only interested in restoring the status quo ante by destroying Pakistan.

Pakistan should be vigilant about preserving its sovereignty by whatever means available. The principal target of his attack was Pandit Nehru, whom he called the “Brown Imperialist”. Amongst other things he alleged was that Nehru was the real descendant of Queen Victoria. It didn’t appear at all funny when this fanatic continued his rant.

“I would like to warn my fellow leaders here that those who are plotting for our destruction will soon repent. That is if they so much as raise a finger to bring about the destruction of Pakistan, it will give rise to such a conflagration that the whole continent will burn to ashes”.

He sat down in silence. Even his fellow members were stunned at the ferocity of his attack.

In the midst of all these events, my High Commissioner left. His departure marked the end of an era in Indo-Pak relations as future developments were to show. He was a man who advocated the policy of being tough with Pakistan. He believed that the Pakistanis only understood strong language. Perhaps he was right the conditions being what they were during his time. Despite this posture he had many friends as the farewell function in his honour at the Karachi airport demonstrated.

Karachi- Background History

During the ten years of its existence, Pakistan was moving from one political crisis to another. After its founder Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah passed away in 1948, almost immediately after the establishment of Pakistan, hopes were pinned on Liaquat Ali Khan to give the country a new constitution as well as the leadership and sense of direction that was the need of the hour. Unfortunately, he got involved in the struggle for power in the Punjab. He lent his support to Mian

Mumtaz Dalutana as against a rival the Nawab of Mandot. This led to hostile demonstrations against him and before long he was felled by an assassin's bullet while addressing a crowd in Rawalpindi. The assassin was caught and lynched on the spot but no one knows to this day who the real killers were. With Liaquat Ali Khan's removal the situation worsened. The central government was at loggerheads with the provinces and a power struggle developed at the centre itself. Ghulam Muhammed who was a civil servant at the time of Partition and who had also become the Finance Minister at the inception of Pakistan, manoeuvred to become the Governor-General of the country. Thereafter it was a tussle between the Governor General and the Prime Minister. No one bothered about the country's interests.

In the welter of these chaotic conditions, one of the ephemeral Prime Ministers, Chaudhuri Mohammed Ali succeeded in getting a new Constitution promulgated on the 23rd March 1950, which date continues to be the National Day of Pakistan. By the time, Ghulam Mohammed had disappeared from the scene and Iskander Mirza another promoted civil servant had got onto the Presidential *gaddi*. He proved himself to be more adept than his predecessor in political manoeuvring. As soon as he got himself elected as President of the Republic under the new Constitution, he managed to get rid of Prime Minister Chaudhuri Mohammed Ali. He brought in Suhrawardy who had been angling for power all along. Suhrawardy lasted for about a year. He was succeeded by another celebrity, Chundrigar who remained in power for a paltry 59 days and was replaced by Feroze Khan Noon.

The situation was no better in the provinces. In the Western Wing, Dr. Khan Saheb the brother of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and a politician of great integrity and courage had tried to remain as Chief Minister with the help of Iskander Mirza. There was a perpetual tug-of-war between the Republican Party that Khan Sahib had formed, the Muslim League and the National Awami Party. Floor crossing was the rule of the day; and on one occasion many from the Republican Party

crossed over to the Muslim League. Iskander Mirza imposed Muslim rule under Section 193 of the Constitution. When the statutory two months period of direct rule ended the Republican Party returned to power, but Khan Sahib declined to lead the Party and Sardar Abdul Rashid was appointed in his place. Soon after, even Sardar Rashid had to resign, allowing the Muslim League to assume power with Muzaffar Ali Khan Qazilbash as the Chief Minister, the third in the row.

In East Pakistan a more tragic situation was developing. In March 1950, the Governor of the Province, Fazlul Haq dismissed the Chief Minister Aaur Rahman Khan. Later that night Fazlul Haq was himself dismissed by Iskander Mirza. Abu Hassan Sarkar who had succeeded Aaur Rahman Khan was in his turn dismissed and Aaur Rahman Khan was back in power within twelve hours. The farce did not end there. As in West Pakistan and the National Awami Party was at its pernicious game of toppling Ministries. On June 19th it withdrew its support to the Awami League Ministry and brought in an United Front Ministry. The same day, the N.A.P. switched its allegiance back to the Awami League and forced the United Front Ministry to resign. The situation became so intolerable that Iskander Mirza brought in the President's rule on June 24th. When the mandatory two months period expired he brought Aaur Rahman Khan back into power. Then trouble broke out in the provincial Assembly. It took the unprecedented step of declaring the Speaker of 'unsound mind' which led to a pandemonium in the House in the midst of which someone hurled a wooden armrest at the Deputy Speaker Shahid Ali who succumbed to his injuries. The outrage shook Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the country was faced with a serious economic crisis. Foreign exchange reserves were dwindling and there was a danger of a breakdown of the monetary and banking systems in the country. Politicians glibly talked about setting things right after elections under the new Constitution which were to be held in the near future. But now even the man in the street was worried. There

were rumours that some of the political leaders like Abdul Qayyum Khan were organizing private armies to bolster their claim to rule the country. There were incessant rumours of a military take-over but no one took these seriously. Malik Feroze Khan Noon seemed to be playing bridge with his cronies.

Then suddenly, the Prime Minister was faced with a cabinet crisis. To bolster his Republican Awami League coalition, he had agreed to induct seven new ministers in the Central Cabinet, but an unseemly wrangle started over the distribution of portfolios. After much argument over the portfolios were re-distributed at 1pm on the 7th of October. The Awami League was not satisfied and resigned. There were more frenzied negotiations and a fresh allocation of portfolios was announced at 7pm the same evening. But by then Iskander Mirza had decided to sweep away the whole fabric of the administration.

The First Military Coup had begun in Pakistan

I heard about the coup at 2 am. A friend of mine had woken me up to give me the news. I got in touch with Maitra. We decided to wait for the morning.

The next morning I had a problem. We had a guest from Sweden, a lady who had to catch a plane. Would there be any flights taking off from Karachi? I rang up the Airport. The Air Traffic Control said that planes were leaving according to schedule. I told the lady that I myself would take her to the Airport. Fortunately, she was not the worrying type. On the way we were on the look-out for military presence or any other signs of the military take-over. But there was none. The streets had a deserted look, that was all. Everything was apparently under control. It was a smooth transition from the civilian to the military.

As soon as our guest's flight took off, I hurried to the meeting at the High Commission. A.H.C. had summoned a few of the senior officers also. Every one confirmed that there was no disturbance in any locality in Karachi; we also got the reassurance that all the members of our staff were safe. We decided to wait and see whether there would be any resistance from the 'Old Guard' and also took some precautionary measures in case trouble broke out. But nothing happened. President Mirza was solidly in position with the support of his military backers.

The situation did not however last very long. The Military junta did not like the tutelage of a civilian. They began to find many faults with President Mirza. They began plotting for his ouster. Since they had their tanks behind them, this was quite easy.

As it was revealed later, Mirza had been in touch with Ayub Khan and had asked him to take over the administration of the country as the Martial Administrator and himself as the Constitutional Head. Ayub fell in with the suggestion and made the necessary dispositions without arousing the suspicion of the civilian authorities. It was said that only one extra brigade was moved to the Karachi area as Ayub did not expect any opposition to the coup. He was right. It was a neat operation, not a dog barked. Malik Feroze Khan Noon was as usual playing cards with his buddies when the news was relayed to him that he was no longer Prime Minister. He must have been greatly relieved.

(My most vivid memory of the coup was to find myself and my sister Surya stranded at our School, St. Joseph's Convent. The nuns had shut the gates and asked us to find our way home the best we could. I marched out with Surya and walked to a Police Station that I knew was close by. Being either very naïve or very reckless I went straight into the local Police Commissioner Office and demanded that I should be able to use his phone to call my Father, the Indian Deputy High Commissioner.

“You’re Indian, aren't you?” asked the Police Chief with what seemed to me even so many years later a strangely menacing smile behind his thick army moustache. I realised that I had walked into a lion’s den. He was a large man with a number of stripes on his khaki uniform and a stick on his table. Behind him I could see framed pictures of the Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Jinnah.

“Yes, I want to call my Father to come and collect us as we don’t know how to get home.” I said standing my ground. “We are students of St. Joseph’s Convent.”

For a few seconds that seemed to last much longer he just looked at both my Sister and myself.

Then relenting he said: “Make your call.”

I made the call and went back to wait for our car to take us home.

My Father was suitably alarmed at what could have happened. “We would never have seen either of you again except for the fact that there is now a military regime in charge as of today.”

We had always been cautioned never to talk or take any hospitality from strangers if at any point we left the safe confines of Shivaji Park, or the Convent of St. Joseph's. – Geeta Doctor)

Iskander Mirza did not last long either. When he abrogated the Constitution, he had also destroyed the legal basis for his continuance. This was what the Chief Martial law administrator was told by the lawyers whom he had consulted. It was in the nature of things that there could not be two power centres in the country.

Mirza must have realised this once the irrevocable step was taken. He tried to resume his old methods of divided loyalties. It was rumoured that he tried to persuade Air Commodore Rabb of the Pakistan Air Force to defect. There were stories about Begum Mirza starting a campaign vilifying the personal lives of the top generals. The situation was getting tense again. One evening, three Generals, Khalid Shaikh, Azam and Burki drove up to the Presidential Place and stroked into Mirza's study and told him in no uncertain terms that the Army did not want him and that he should resign. That was the end of the road for Mirza. Some sources whispered that the Generals achieved their success at gun-point. Also that they forced the President to surrender his cheque book and other documents relating to his assets held at home and abroad. Then they whisked him and his wife off to an undisclosed destination.

This was the Second Coup

Again, not a dog barked. No one it seems had any sympathy for Mirza and his Iranian wife. Only some members of the Diplomatic Corps felt perturbed at the plight of the deposed President. General Cawthorn, the Australian High Commissioner who was a personal friend of Mirza called on Ayub Khan, to enquire about Mirzas' whereabouts and that the Generals had no plan to do away with him.

Later on, it transpired that the Generals had shifted the Mirzas to Quetta pending their search through his residence while they finalized their plans for their future. Thereafter, he was quietly brought to the Mauripur Airport in Karachi and bundled off to London. The American, British and Australian envoys were allowed to meet him and say their goodbyes.

So the curtain had finally rung down on this cloak and dagger episode. Mirza left Pakistan more or less a pauper. The vast wealth he was reported to have amassed

was confiscated by the Government, so much so that he was forced to take a job as PRO to Veeraswamys, the famous Indian restaurant in London. This was a sad come-down for the erstwhile king-maker of Pakistan.

The second coup spread terror among the people at large. For the military junta had threatened to rout out corruption and black-marketing by all the means at their command. There were some spectacular arrests and some shop-keepers were marched through the streets in chains to show the common man that the Army was in earnest. Some of the top smugglers were arrested and the newspapers came out with a wonderful story of the discovery of the gold haul from below the seabed off the Karachi coast. Overnight every-one wanted to be upright and honest. We heard stories of hoarders of foreign liquor pouring the drinks down their water-closets. This panic situation did not last long. Gradually things reverted to the normal pattern. The Military officers were, people found out, human after all. The Colonel or the Captain in the Army was the brother or cousin of the District Collector or the Police Official. They were all tarred with the same brush. So the Army Officers also slid into the same kind of soft easy-going life of the civilians and in the process started taking money for favours granted. The terror the Army take-over had evaporated before the year was out.

Whenever there is an upheaval in Pakistan, the group that suffers the most is the Hindu community. They are very careful not to offend the susceptibilities of their rulers in any way and go about their business activities in an unobtrusive way. They are mainly businessmen but there are Hindus in other fields also. One of the leading advocates of the day was a Hindu, who was greatly respected and sought after. The tolerance shown to the Hindus was a measure of the broad-mindedness of the Sindhi Muslim, many of whom were influenced by the Sufi philosophy. In Sind, there was perfect harmony between Hindus and Muslims, until the onset of the Partition disruption. Even these many persons attributed to instigation by mostly the Punjabi elements.

The sudden emergence of the Military Rule unnerved some of the Hindus. They did not know how the new rulers would treat them. So some of them decided to migrate to India. One of them, a prominent contractor made a bee-line for the airport as soon as he heard of the Coup and took a plane to New Delhi. He did not even tell his family of his plans, he was in such a hurry. Subsequently he built up a fairly prosperous business in India, like many of his enterprising brothers. I was sorry of what happened to another Hindu gentleman. He was a man of large proportions and was appropriately named Motan Das. He was the proprietor of a popular hotel in Karachi. He was a very generous man and was known to have befriended many Indians. He had good relations with the local official hierarchy too. So, it was with surprise that we learnt that Motan Das was taken into custody by the military administration. Since he was a Pakistani national, the High Commission was not in a position to intervene on his behalf but we did try to find out why the old man was arrested. But we did not get very far; the genial and friendly Motan Das was still behind bars when I left Karachi two years later.

Some of the other minorities were also rather jittery with the turn of events, particularly the Indian Christians and the Anglo-Indians. They had the assurance that their life and property were not in danger, but they had little hope of a future in Pakistan. Those who had migrated from India made tentative enquires whether they could go back, but this was difficult. One of the victims of the new regime was C.C. Gibbon. With the suppression of the Legislature he had lost his job. Since he had little or no savings, he found it increasingly difficult to make both ends meet and he had to depend on the help he received from friends. Then his wife had to undergo an operation that went wrong and he had to send her back to the U.K. for further treatment. The Government financed the trip, but later the authorities went back on the undertaking and asked Gibbon to refund the money which was advanced to him. This placed him in a very difficult situation. His

appeals to the Government for a reconsideration of their decision fell on deaf ears. Ultimately, he decided to migrate to the U.K.

NOW, A WORD ABOUT THE PARSIS...

At the time of the Partition, Karachi had a sizeable Parsi community. In fact, Karachi owed a lot to the enterprise and munificence of the Parsi community. The Parsis are a resilient group and adjusted themselves to the new situation, when Pakistan came into being. They continued their avocations in the fields of business and industry and co-operated with the new Government in every way. The two of the leading hotels were owned by Parsis.

Their women were highly educated and active in the spheres of social service. Parsi families owned two of the best-known hotels in Karachi. Whenever we had a major function we used the services of Nusserwanji and Co. who dealt in soda water, ice and all the other requisites for entertainment. The founder, Jamshed Nusserwanji Rustomjee Mehta was celebrated as a philanthropist and a citizen who helped the City of Karachi develop into one of the cleanest cities with broad avenues and parks and a municipality that would clean the streets twice in a day! There was a sprinkling of Parsi officers in the Pakistan foreign office. Quite often the Parsi community leaned over backwards in their attempts to ingratiate themselves into the Pakistani hierarchy. I recall in particular a meeting the Parsi community had organized to honour M.A. Khurro, the Defence Minister of Pakistan. This was a few weeks before the Noon Ministry was toppled by President Mirza with the aid of the military officers. At this function, the Acting High Commissioner and other officers were present, the President of the Parsi Association made some remarks that were clearly uncalled for. In an obvious effort to please the Chief Guest he praised the efforts of the Defence Minister in his efforts of building a strong Pakistani Army to resist the sinister designs of Bharat to attack Pakistan. Many persons in the audience were taken aback at such

a gaffe. How could Katrak, who was a mild and inoffensive man make such a vituperative attack. He had obviously been tutored by someone. Fortunately Khurro, a consummate politician took no notice of this mischievous observation. After the meeting many Parsis present expressed regret over the incident. We left it at that.

We know of at least one Parsi family that left Pakistan soon after Ayub's advent.

The Byramji's had decided to migrate when it was still fairly easy. I had known the family very well. So I recommended a long term visa for them which the Government of India granted without much ado. They made the transition to Bombay and settled down quite happily. I was told that many others in the Parsi community had migrated to the UK and to other places.

(Note: The Byramji family was well-known to us as Mrs. Tehmi Byramji ran a kindergarden school known as the Bambina Kindergarden based on the lines of the Montessori system. Manjula the youngest of the family was sent to the Bambina Kindergarden at Karachi. Tehmi had been trained under Madame Montessori herself at the Theosophical Society at Madras when Madame Montessori and her Brother, both Theosophists, had taken spent the War Years in India outside of Italy. Tehmi Byramji's Aunty Mrs. Minwalla was a Theosophist and had insisted that the young Tehmi accompany her to Madras after her first marriage had broken up. She had two children by her first husband. Nawaz as her daughter was known, married the son of a well-to-do Bombay family while we were in Karachi. His name was Jamshed Desai. My sister, Manjula, the youngest of the Padmanabhan girls, started her schooling at the Bambina Kindergarden in Karachi. Ten years later, it so happened that the same Mrs. Byramjee, who had married a second time had started another Bambina Kindergarden in Bombay in the early 1960s after the family had emigrated from

Pakistan. My son Vikram started his first years at her school, as we happened to live close by, in the latter part of the 1960s. – Geeta Doctor)

I have remarked how as the military settled down to govern there was an easing of tension all over the country. We also noticed with great relief that Pakistan's new rulers wanted to be friendly with India too. This was to a large extent made possible by India's action in promptly recognizing the new regime and adopting a correct and proper attitude towards the events that had taken place in a neighbouring country. Yet another factor was the induction as the new Pakistani Foreign Minister of Mansur Qadir, a brilliant lawyer, a man of culture and great personal charm. With his advent, the whole atmosphere in the Foreign Office underwent a remarkable change. Gradually, we noticed that the newspapers that specialized in hurling invectives at India were cautious in their criticisms and for the first time our country was called India and not Bharat and we as Indians not Bhartis. This change-over happened without any official protest or suggestions from us. Such courtesies were definitely due to the presence of Mansur Qadir.

This happy trend was fortified by the arrival on the scene of the new Indian High Commissioner. Originally a member of the I.C.S. he was permanently seconded to the Indian Foreign Service. He was the Minister Counsellor in Moscow, (when D. Radhakrishnan was India's Ambassador), and was India's Permanent Representative at the United Nations for a number of years. He was coming to Karachi after a highly successful term of duty as Ambassador of Yugoslavia. He came to Pakistan with the determination to make a success of his job. He was fond of quoting an adage of Sir B.N. Rau (whom we both served)- "The biggest failure is the failure to try". So he launched forthwith to try and improve relations between our two countries with a total zeal and commitment. It is my sincere belief that he succeeded in this to a large extent.

The stars were also in his favour. In diplomacy as in other fields of human activity, personal relations matter to a great extent. The new High Commissioner had known Ayub Khan earlier in India, while he was the Deputy Commissioner in U.P. Ayub Khan was at the same station as an Army Captain. Here was a personal friendship that could prove beneficial to both the countries. Then again, Mansur Qadir was at Oxford at the same time as the wife of the new High Commissioner and they were still very good friends. Could events have been more propitious for the newcomers? They certainly strove to promote their earlier contacts to strengthen their standing with Pakistan's new rulers and in doing so made things a lot more pleasant for all concerned.

To digress slightly in Islamic hagiography the name Ayub belongs to a Prophet of that name. As the Prophet Ayub's life and trials are related in the Sufi tradition, it becomes clearer that the account of the miseries that are inflicted on the man's hitherto unblemished record of probity and good intentions, reveal that Ayub is no other than the Job of the First Testament. Certainly for his part the earlier record of the Ayub Khan attempts to bring order to the country that he had taken by force, albeit of a gentle kind showed that his intentions were for the betterment of the people.

Ayub Khan seemed to be in a hurry to bring various types of reform in the country. He chose to call the whole process a revolution. This was supposed to give respectability to the military dictatorship. He was guided and abetted by many of the Western countries, particularly the USA and UK both of whom bailed him out as the saviour of Pakistan. A few among the British Embassy that had organized a rear-guard action to stave off the grant of Independence to India crept back surreptitiously to give expert advice to the military regime. These included Professor Rushbrooke Williams who used to function as the Director of Public Information in New Delhi for many years and was responsible for producing the

Annual Report on India which the Secretary of State for India submitted to the British Parliament every year.

It was widely believed, at least during my term in Pakistan that Prof. Williams was the progenitor of the system of Basic Democracy which Ayub Khan introduced as a panacea for the country's ills. In an era which many of the nascent democracies of the world had collapsed and 'guided democracies' had become the latest fashion, Ayub was lucky to have a person of the calibre of Prof. Williams to provide him with a sufficient theoretical base and publicity material to launch his 'Revolutionary Plan'. The principle underlying the system of Basic Democracy was to abolish the direct vote, except at the initial stage. The total adult population were eligible to elect what were called the Ward Committees. Thereafter, the next three tiers were indirect. That is to say, the Ward committees would elect Union Councils and Town Committees. These in turn would elect Tehsil Councils and Municipal Committees, which would lead to District or Agency Councils and these would elect the Provincial Assembly. But what vitiated the whole system was the fact that at every stage, half the nominations to the Ward Councils, Union Councils, Tehsil Councils etc. were filled by the Government appointees. This eroded the elective principle considerably. In fact the grandiose schemes of Basic Democracy were a bit of a farce. It was a throwback to the system of partially elected local councils which existed in undivided India after the 1919 Reforms. Yet the Western commentators were ecstatic in their praise. Which only goes to show that very few persons in the West bother much about the lack of democratic process in other countries as long as their existence and way of life are not threatened.

Ayub Khan also brought about a radical reform in land-holdings, improved the educational system and toned up the services, by getting rid of corrupt and inefficient officials. He abolished political parties and passed an order disqualifying any potential opponents from holding elective office again. Public

confidence was restored and the economy boomed. Judging from the short term benefits, the military regime had fulfilled its promises.

The new High commissioner in the meanwhile introduced various changes in the working of the High Commission. It was no longer a one-man show; it became a co-ordinated body. We had weekly meetings of senior officers to review the situation and to chalk out policies. Another innovation he introduced was to give civilian garments to some of the security guards serving at the mission. Under an earlier arrangement worked out between India and Pakistan, the diplomatic missions in either country had the right to induct its own nationals to serve as armed security guards on the mission premises. In Karachi it was the practice for an armed security guard to sit in the front seat of the High Commissioner's car and accompany him wherever he went. The new High Commissioner found this rather embarrassing and saw to it that his body guard was less conspicuous in his dress and that he did not carry any weapons openly. Dayal's main purpose was to present a new image of the mission in Pakistan.

In this he was eminently successful. When news got around that the High Commissioner was a personal friend of the President of Pakistan, restrictions about persons visiting the Indian Mission evaporated and the High Commissioner always had a stream of visitors, many of whom were old acquaintances from U.P. and Delhi. Social contacts led to cultural gatherings, mushairas and sitar recitals amongst aficionados. Since there was a demand for Indian films we held regular film shows also for select audiences. Some films were loaned to Pakistani big-wigs for holding private film shows.

But by far the most spectacular feat achieved by the High Commissioner was to get Ayub Khan accept a dinner at the High Commission. A couple of months earlier such an eventuality would have been impossible, if not unthinkable. Ayub was a man cast in a different mould from that of his predecessors in office. So

when the invitation was extended, his initial reaction was "Why Not?" He however stipulated that it would be a 'family affair' and that no foreign ambassadors would be present. We planned the party with meticulous care. We sought the help of the Pakistanis to ensure proper security for the President and his party. We even took the precaution of disarming our own security staff, lest a trigger-happy guard should decide to take a pot-shot at somebody on the Pakistani side. The President and party which included Begum Ayub Khan and General Azam Khan came with full military escort which was under the command of Ayub Khan's own son.

After the introductions were over we all had drinks and the party then moved to the dining room for dinner. Ayub Khan was very relaxed and spoke of his days of service in India. Azam Khan, as could be expected was mainly a listener, but was affable and courteous. The evening passed off very pleasantly. The dinner was a great success.

Ayub Khan's pragmatism was also evident towards India-Pakistan relations. Once he had developed and strengthened a strong base in the country he did not depend as his predecessors in office had done, on the gimmick of raising the bogey of India whenever the domestic situation worsened. He felt he could talk on equal terms with the Indian leaders. His appointment of Mansur Qadir was a step in the right direction. His decision to send A.K. Brohi, a leading Karachi Lawyer to New Delhi as the new Pakistani High Commissioner was highly significant. Brohi, an authority on Constitutional Law, a great savant and a host to Jaya Prakash Narain when he visited Karachi, was expected to bring a fresh mind in helping solve the Indo-Pakistan tangle. Brohi, like his chief Mansur Qadir, accepted the assignment at great personal sacrifice, as he was said to be making more than Rs. 20,000/- (a large amount in those days), a month by his legal practice. In a witty speech that he made at a farewell dinner in his honour by our High Commissioner, Brohi said that he and his host were "pamzuif" brothers-in-

law who had married twin-sisters! There was no doubt that this was a sentiment shared by his Indian counterpart in Karachi. Consequently, a period of unprecedented felicity followed between the relations of the two countries. Not for nothing was it dubbed a 'honeymoon period'.

Ever since the emergence of two separate States, India-Pakistan relations have been bedevilled with a host of apparently intractable issues. Anything and everything might escalate into a dispute. Thus, amongst the major ones, apart from Kashmir, we had disputes over the sharing of the Canal Waters in the Punjab region, the size of the evacuee property on either side, the repatriation of assets, which each claimed for itself at the time of Partition, demarcation of the boundary in disputed areas both in the West and the East. Over Kashmir, the two countries had a clash and the matter was taken to the United Nations, where the main issue was who had committed aggression, was lost in the Big Power wrangle which had developed. India, losing all hope of getting a fair deal, was content with the status quo but was forced to maintain a huge force in Kashmir to guard against any further attack of infiltration from the Pakistan side.

Pakistan could in turn not forgive itself for having failed to grab the territory in 1949 and did not slacken its efforts to revive the issue on every possible occasion that presented itself. Kashmir became an obsession with Pakistani diplomats; it became a part of their campaign against India. Undeterred by such virulent propaganda, India took the line that before one could tackle such a complicated and emotional issue like Kashmir, the two countries should try and resolve some of the disputes that called for urgent resolution. India also proposed a No-War pact. Pakistan balked at the No-War idea, but tacitly agreed to try and solve some of the secondary points of dispute and irritation.

The prominent amongst these was the Indus Waters dispute. This was a legacy of Partition. The divided terrain of the two Punjabs cut right across the Indus Canal

system developed over hundreds of years. Pakistan found that the headworks of its two main canals were on the Indian side of the border. All the five tributaries of the Indus also originated in India and flowed through Indian territory in its upper reaches. Even before Partition, Sind and Punjab had wrangles over the sharing of the waters of these rivers. The situation worsened considerably after the holocaust of Partition. Muslims were convinced that Hindus were out to starve them by turning off the taps of the canal headwaters. There were hysterical cries in the Pakistani Press for taking up arms to defend their rights over the waters. Fortunately, an arbiter came in the garb of the World Bank, which eventually succeeded in thrashing our settlement that was acceptable to both parties. The main credit for this should be given to Eugene Black, the World Bank president. While the negotiations about the sharing of the canal waters was going on, officials from both the countries were grappling with the process of settling disputes over the demarcation of boundaries that had defied solution over these years. These disputes had arisen over the interpretation of the award that Cyril Radclyff, the British Judge who had been entrusted with the task of defining the boundary between the two countries after Partition. The two teams were sent out by India to tackle this thorny issue and I must say that their discussions which they held with their Pakistani counterparts were in the spirit of friendship and cordiality hitherto unheard of in Pakistan.

To a large extent this was due to the fact that the leaders of the respective teams were old friends and college mates in Lahore, in pre-Partition days. The leader of the Indian team was Sardar Swaran Singh; the Pakistani side was under the leadership of General Khalid Shaikh. Once these two men established their report, they let the details to the principal advisers; on the one hand, M. J. Desai, and on the other Sikander Ali Beg. Once it was established that the main purpose of the exercise was to achieve maximum agreement and neither side was attempting to steal a march over the other, it was easy to hammer out workable solutions. If it was found that either India or Pakistan had an overwhelming case in favour of its

stand on a particular dispute, one side graciously conceded the other's claim and in this manner the dispute was over. It was as simple as that! In this way, the two negotiating teams were able to settle a number of irritants in this field and pave the way towards a period of real detente between India and Pakistan.

The Rann of Kutch Dispute

However, despite the goodwill generated during the talks, agreement could not be reached on all the controversial issues. Some of these proved to be intractable. One of these was the dispute regarding the Rann of Kutch, a piece of what might be called barren land prone to intermittent flooding. As neither side gave way, it was decided to leave it for further negotiations, through the normal diplomatic channels. Subsequently, Pakistan was to take the law into its own hands and send a raiding force into the territory only to be halted by the Indian Army units. The dispute was put in for International arbitration, as a result of which India agreed to give up a part of the disputed area to Pakistan.

The war of 1965 is one of the biggest wars fought by the Indian army, where a large share of its resources got employed. The war began on September 1, 1965, when Pakistan Army entered Chambh sector in Jammu & Kashmir. Two major operations that Pakistan launched to test the Indian Army paved way for the full-fledged war between two countries.

Operation Gibraltar, launched by Pakistan establishment in August 1965 with nearly 30,000 infiltrators including Pakistan Army regulars. Note from article by Maninder Dabas. Oct 19th, 2016--- Geeta Doctor)

Meanwhile, Ayub Khan had taken another bold step. This was his decision to stop over at the Palam Airport in Delhi on his way to Dacca and meet the Indian Prime Minister. He was no doubt prompted by our High Commissioner and had

received prior approval from Delhi, but the Pakistan President deserved full credit for following it through with good grace and aplomb. The Palam meeting which lasted for nearly two hours went off very well. At the end of a brief statement issued in which the two leaders emphasized the need to conduct relations on a rational and planned basis. It was also agreed that outstanding issues should be settled in accordance with justice and fair play, in the spirit of friendliness, co-operation and good neighbourliness. Later when speaking to the Press, Ayub Khan stressed the need for reappraisal, for forgetting and forgiving, and for a more realistic, rational and sensible relationship with each other. The ice was broken and right-thinking people of both the two countries heaved a sigh of relief.

Soon it was clear that bigger things were in the offing. The protracted negotiations about the sharing of the Canal Waters were drawing to a close, thanks to the untiring efforts of the World Bank officials and the spirit of accommodation shown by the experts on both sides. The agreement on the Canal Waters was the biggest single achievement between the two countries and it was decided to have it signed with due pomp and show. This provided the Indian Prime Minister an appropriate opportunity to reciprocate Ayub Khan's stop-over at Palam and demonstrate his friendly feelings to the people of Pakistan. This historical visit of Pandit Nehru, which was to be his last visit to Pakistan was between the 19th and 23rd September 1960.

While the arrangements of the visit were under discussion, my High Commissioner had to leave Pakistan on an urgent assignment in the Congo, at the request of the then U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold. He was very reluctant to go, but he had no alternative. So the task of organizing Panditji's visit fell on my shoulders. Fortunately, I had very able colleagues to help me.

Prime Minister Nehru's visit commenced on a rather low key. The welcome at the Karachi airport was formal and correct but not overly enthusiastic. Decorations along the route that the motorcade passed from the airport to the Presidential Palace were minimal. Even though a sizeable crowd of people had gathered on the streets to get a look at Panditji, there was no cheering. It was evident that the military authorities had ordained it that way.

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The same evening the 19th September 1960 was the historic signing of the Indus Waters Treaty. This was done with due solemnity and decorum. Nehru signed on behalf of India, Ayub Khan on behalf of Pakistan, and W.A.B. Illif then Vice-President of the World Bank on behalf of the Bank. The Treaty was based on the principle that after a transitional period of ten years, extendable to thirteen years at the request of Pakistan, the three Eastern rivers, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej would be exclusively allocated to India, while the Western Rivers, Indus, Jhelum and Chenab would be allocated exclusively to Pakistan, except for certain limited uses by India in the up-stream areas. During the transitional period, Pakistan would undertake a system of works, parts of which would replace, from the Western rivers such irrigation uses in Pakistan as had hitherto been met from the Eastern rivers. While the system of works was being built, India would continue to supply water from the Eastern rivers according to an agreed programme. The Indus works programme was estimated to cost about 1,070 million dollars, of which 870 million were to be spent in Pakistan. It was a colossal programme.

Once the signing ceremony was over, everyone breathed a sigh of relief. What had been an insurmountable problem was out of the way. Could one proceed to the other items on the agenda? This was the nagging question that bothered the advisers on either side. In any case, we had been prepared for whatever discussions that might be raised on a whole gamut of issues. Panditji had bought with him a team of advisers that included M.J.Desai, the Commonwealth

Secretary, an able administrator and a tough negotiator. Ayub Khan had great respect for his ability.

The discussions which followed were proved to be desultory and unproductive. It was clear that neither side was prepared for any major concessions. We talked principally about creating a better atmosphere for the development of trade between the two countries and for co-operation in the economic sphere. A number of ideas were thrown out. Ayub Khan in a generous mood offered to divert the waters of the Indus for the parched areas of Rajasthan by erecting a barrier in the lower reaches of the river; also to supply Sui gas to the Bombay area.

*(*Sui Gas Field is a natural gas field near [Sui](#) in [Baluchistan Province, Pakistan](#) that is operated by [Pakistan Petroleum Limited](#). The Sui Gas Field is considered to be the largest natural gas field in Pakistan with 1.6 trillion cubic feet reserve estimates as of 2017. In 2007, the Sui Gas Field accounted for 6% of Pakistan's total gas production. Pakistan has proven reserves of 28.10 trillion cubic feet (TCF) as of 2006 (Source:Wikipedia) – Geeta Doctor)*

The Indian side in its turn agreed to consider sympathetically the proposal enabling Pakistan to run a through-train service across India connecting Lahore to Dacca. Even co-operation and co-ordination in the military field came under discussion.

India expressed concern about the Chinese activities in the northern border of Kashmir and emphasised that this would pose a threat to Pakistan also. Ayub Khan without batting an eye shook his head gravely and promised to study the question with his military advisers. Little did the Indian side suspect that Pakistan would be handing over a sizeable chunk of territory in the northern part of

Kashmir to the Chinese in return for China's support for the annexation of Kashmir.

In fact, all our bilateral discussions and grandiose schemes came to practically nothing because of Pakistan's insistence that India should make substantial concessions in regard in Kashmir.

Meanwhile, the Indian Prime Minister was charming the people of Pakistan by his sincerity, courtesy and eloquence. At a garden party in Karachi he assured the gathering of the fraternal friendship that India had towards Pakistan, for the need for both the countries to make renewed efforts to settle their differences. His chaste and mellifluous Urdu, which was quite in contrast to the staccato military Urdu of his host enthralled the select audience, many of them who had come just to have a glimpse of Panditji.

In between his public engagements PM had very kindly agreed to visit our Chancery which had recently been moved into a new and spacious building. On the advice of the Pakistani Security men we had taken elaborate precautions to see that no unauthorised persons had access to the building when the PM visited the place and had insisted that our own security staff carry their security passes. We had also blocked the access to the upper floors of the building so that no one could go up there and create any trouble. Everything went off well until PM went into our Information Wing. There his keen eye noticed that there was no copy of the Draft Third Year Plan. He was quite upset that we did not care to put a copy of the Draft Plan in our Library. He also wanted all the officers to study the Draft Plan so that it could be a talking point to the Pakistanis.

Immediately afterwards, his clouded face lit up when he saw the crowd of children awaiting the arrival of Chacha Nehru. In those days, we had a very large number of married couples in our Mission, many of whom had two or three

children. I was told that many persons came to Karachi to worship at the tomb of a Muslim Saint and to bless them with progeny. Many a time their prayers proved to bear fruit. In fact one of our officer's wife gave birth to a healthy baby boy after fourteen years of married life, following their posting to Karachi. So, it was that we had a very colourful gathering of the families of our officers and staff that forenoon at the Chancery to greet our beloved Panditji. And how he revelled among the kids. He made faces with the little ones and jostled with the tough looking teenagers. He spoke briefly to all of us and gave us encouragement in the task ahead.

The next day we left for Lahore. There, PM was the guest of the Punjab Governor.... At Lahore there was a reception for Panditji by the Governor, who spared no efforts to see that Panditji was received in right royal style. The highlight of the program at Lahore was a delightful evening party at the famous Shalimar Gardens. The whole of Lahore was there that evening. Security arrangements went haywire. Everyone wanted to be near the Prime Minister. Some just wanted to touch him. He went around talking to various groups of people, sometimes to old friends. Then he climbed onto the rostrum. He spoke in a low husky voice saying that it was not his first visit to Lahore.

“My earliest visit was when I was about eight years; I came here with my Mother on our way to Kashmir. I had come to this beautiful city many times during our freedom struggle...who can forget that it was on the banks of the Ravi that we passed the historical resolution on the 29th January, 1929?”

By this time many in the audience were weeping unashamedly. The gentle voice of Jawaharlal Nehru tugged at their heartstrings. For a brief moment his words seemed to heal the broken fragments of the sub-continent. To many, these words may have brought doubts as to whether the decision to partition what was in reality one country and to separate what was essentially one, on the sole ground

of religion was the right one. But alas, it was too late to reverse the course of events.

When in Lahore, Panditji called on an old friend of his Mian Iftikharuddin who was ailing. It was a private visit and I did not accompany him. I was told that Mian Iftikharuddin was very moved by the courtesy shown to him by Panditji. The two men spent as much time as was available, reminiscing about their time together.

Our next stop was Rawalpindi. There was a ceremonial welcome and the PM was introduced to the high ranking civil and military officials in the region. Soon, we were in Murree. En route we stopped briefly at the site of the new capital, Islamabad where we were shown the plans for developing the City. Ayub Khan acknowledged the planners had benefited considerably by studying the basic principles underlying the construction of Chandigarh. The officer who explained the details about the layout of the capital was General Yahya Khan, who was even then marked out as Ayub Khan's eventual successor.

Murree was bathed in bright sunshine when we reached there. We had to make a slight alteration to the PM's program at Murree. We were given to understand that two suspicious individuals had crossed from the Punjab and were making their way to the North. Pakistani Police did not want to take any risks and advised the cancellation of a visit to our camp office, as had been planned.

So, the two leaders had all the time at their disposal to discuss a subject that had been deferred until this moment- Kashmir. The setting for the talks was idyllic. It was in a leafy arbour at the back garden of the Government house. Informality appeared to be the keynote, as we settled down into our garden chairs which were arranged around a low table. There were no stenographers to take note, no assistants hovering at our back, not even any papers, or writing materials. There

were three on either side. Ayub Khan, Mansur Qadir and Brohi on the one side, Panditji, M.J. Desai and myself on the other.

We had expected that Pakistan would come up with some concrete proposals to solve the Kashmir stalemate. For many months we had received broad hints that Pakistan was prepared to consider some via media, or a compromise formula to get round the impasse. Many schemes were mooted informally- apparently to gauge our willingness for a settlement; as well as the possible repercussions in Pakistan itself. None of these conceded India's right to hold on to Kashmir by right. If at all India was to remain in the area it was to be on the basis of an equitable division of the State. Then again, India's right to retain Jammu was conceded, no one was prepared to renounce Pakistan's claim to the valley. So if there was to be any settlement on the basis that the cease-fire line should be the de-facto boundary line, India should be prepared to make some 'territorial adjustments' in favour of Pakistan. And once such a settlement of this type was made, Pakistan should have a right to visit the Valley freely as tourists. This in substance was the proposal for compromise that was thrown into our court by various feelers and suggestions parlayed by intermediaries. We on our part, while being wary, gave an impression that we would not be averse to discussing any reasonable formula which would help in solving this almost intractable problem.

At Murree, however, Ayub Khan gave no evidence of any fresh thinking on the part of Pakistan. He reiterated the orthodox Pakistani case that Kashmir was a part of Pakistan and that India should stand by her commitments to hold a referendum to ascertain the wishes of the Kashmiri people as to whether they would like to be a part of India or of Pakistan.

PM explained very patiently that much water had flown down the rivers since the case was debated originally in the UN and that no one in India would agree to

reverse the course of the events that had taken place during the last decade. He also reminded the Pakistani President that two elections had been held in Kashmir during the period which would prove that the people were wholeheartedly in favour of their present status in the Indian Federation.

Ayub Khan then referred to his difficulty in explaining to his people about the delay in getting their claims to the territory accepted and that he for one could not agree that the cease-fire line should be frozen into an international boundary. Though Manzur Qadir and M.J.Desai chipped in occasionally, the debate was mainly between the two leaders. In the end, when it was clear that there was no meeting point between these two conflicting points of view, it was decided that we had had enough and the meeting was adjourned.

Ayub Khan's face was serious and grim. Apparently, he had hoped to cajole PM into making some concessions and could not hide his disappointment. PM on the other hand was his bubbling, effervescent self. He must have congratulated himself that he had not been cajoled into accepting the blandishments of his host. After this historic encounter the whole party drove across to another beautiful mountain resort in the region, Nathiagali which used to be the winter resort of the Governor of the N.W.F.P. in the halcyon days of the British rule. The hill-station which was located at the Abbottabad District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, was at a height of 8000 ft in the centre of the Galyat range of mountains. Though the building that we occupied was not large, the site was superb. One could sit for hours on the porch looking out into the mist-covered valley surrounded by the majestic hills around them and forests of oak, cedar and pine with rolling meadows in their midst. It was said that on a clear day, one could even see the majestic Nanga Parbat peak from here. It was easy to understand why the British had chosen the spot for their relaxation.

Fortunately, for us, some vestiges of the Raj had survived in the form of the Staff, particularly the servants and the gardeners in charge of maintaining the estate. Everything was maintained in perfect condition as though in wait for their old masters to descend upon them. When we walked through the perfectly maintained flower beds brimming with colours like any garden in Devonshire, England, Panditji stopped and asked one of the gardeners the name of one particularly striking bed of flowers.

"Yeh, Pillox hai, Sahib," the gardener explained while the rest of the small entourage looked embarrassed at not being able to identify the blooms.

"Ah, Phlox!" replied Panditji, with a warm smile. "Very common in all our gardens, but I have never seen such a variety and size that you have here." That was Panditji the nature enthusiast talking. It was one of the lighter moments of what was going to be a long day.

We were given a light lunch. Our host then suggested that the PM might like to retire for what he prescribed as "forty winks". The rest of the party had to make do with taking a break on the easy chairs in the long Veranda outside and drink in the nectar of the surrounding countryside.

Presently, PM joined us with a book in his hand. He nodded to the company on the veranda and took a seat in the far corner intent on getting through his book. Sometime later, his host appeared on the scene, obviously having partaken of a snooze. He asked his guest, "Panditji did you sleep well?"

PM replied, "Yes, thank you," and turned his attention to the book.

"Shabbash!" said the General looking very pleased.

"What book are you reading?" he asked.

"A report by the UN Secretary General," PM replied laconically.

Thus ended the exchanges. Nehru, the scholar was too immersed in his book.

After tea, we got back to Murree and then off to Rawalpindi and Lahore. The Governor was as genial as ever and took the PM for a ride in his pony cart. . It was a most charming sight that showed the PM at his most relaxed since he loved horses.

The last public function was at the Governor's House. It was a small affair, as far as Press Conferences go. PM started with a preliminary statement in which he emphasized how despite their differences, the two countries should never forget their common heritage of a shared history and culture. He pointed out that there were more things in common between Northern India and Pakistan than between North and South India as for instance when it came to food, dress, customs and languages. Similarly, our Bengal and East Pakistan were closely allied on similar grounds. So there was no reason for the type of suspicious and ill-conceived misunderstandings that had arisen in the past.

He then answered questions posed to him from Correspondents on a variety of issues, the Canal Waters Treaty, the facilities being planned for travel between the two countries and how Kashmir had figured prominently in these discussions, but PM did not divulge what had transpired between him and President Ayub Khan at Murree.

For all the euphoria following the signing of the Indus Water Treaty the brief moment described as "a honeymoon period" was to vanish. Karachi itself as the capital of Pakistan vanished. President Ayub first moved the capital to

Rawalpindi as a more strategic centre for the Army to control and thereafter to Islamabad.

The two men so powerful at that time of signing the Treaty were both doomed to die disappointed men; Pandit Nehru died four years later in 1964; Ayub Khan in 1974. Their countries remain at the crossroads looking backwards, intent on destroying one another.

We go on a journey - Travels in the Sindh

With the advent of military rule, travelling had become easier. So we made plans to drive up to Quetta and back. I took my Mercedes Benz as I assumed that it would not fail us en route. It certainly lived up to our expectations as we traversed along strange and often deserted terrains. Padma accompanied me, as also Krishna, a First Secretary. We also had a driver, so we were a party of four in all.

Our first stop was at Hyderabad, 120 miles north of Karachi. In pre-Independence days it used to be called Hyderabad Sind, to distinguish it from its better known name-sake in India. We had often been to this City. While Karachi was cosmopolitan and in many ways a sister-City to Bombay, Hyderabad was very much a Sindhi dominated town. Most of the Hindu families who had built the town had fled to India but some Hindus were still reluctant to leave their birthplace and continued to live in the city. They went about their avocations in an unobtrusive manner. What we liked best about Hyderabad were its fine spaciouly built rest houses. It reminded us of the manner in which during the British Raj had aside from its deep verandas and formal sitting and dining rooms, large airy bedrooms with adjoining dressing rooms with what would now be called en-suite bathrooms. Since most of the staff were from the pre-Independence period we were treated with utmost courtesy and consideration. This was to be our experience wherever we travelled.

The next day we reached Sukkur, another large town on the Indus. We had learnt the name of this down during our school days as being the locale of the biggest Dam in India- the Sukkur Barrage as it was called. So, it gave me a great thrill to drive across the mighty span of the Sukkur Barrage as it crossed the Indus River. Being winter there was not much water in the river but one could imagine what it would be like when the river was in spate.

We stayed two days at Sukkur, mostly to visit the famous shrine of Sadh Bela. The shrine that used to attract thousands of Hindu and Sikh pilgrims was situated in the middle of an island in the Indus River. We got permission from the local authorities to visit the shrine but when we got there we found that it was in a very neglected state. The river had eroded some of the embankments and the rain-water had seeped into some of the rooms. The main prayer hall was in a fairly good condition. It's walls were adorned with numerous portraits of gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon and the various gurus of the Sikh religion. Some of the Hindus of the locality who had accompanied us on this trip explained to us that Sadh Bela was held sacred by Hindus and Sikhs alike. For many, many years both Sikh and Hindu pilgrims came from all over India during festivals. Attempts were made in the past to revive it but all to no avail. We discussed the possibility of getting the place cleaned up and maybe placed under the care of a committee of the local Hindus. We were told that the matter could only be considered by the Government at Karachi. It was tentatively agreed that a committee could be formed by the local officials and a few Hindus so that a further deterioration of the shrine could be averted. This was what was eventually done.

From Sukkur, we travelled North towards Quetta. The road across the Sindh dessert was harsh and uninhabited. Our aim was to travel from Jacobabad towards Sibi, via Shikarpur. This was once a thriving center of Sindhi enterprise. Some of the most prosperous of them lived at Shikarpur, following their usual trade as merchants and moneylenders. With Partition, most of the Hindus had been killed

or forced to leave everything behind and find their way to India. There's was a melancholy refrain that we heard as we passed through the town, 'No Hindu families live here at Shikarpur anymore'. The bazaars were filled with locally made brass and metal goods, handmade carpets and kilims with rough textured cotton cloths that had the distinctive embroidery of the Baloch tribes.

Leaving Shikarpur, we found ourselves in an increasingly dry scrubland that was as barren and sparsely populated as we had anticipated on knowing that this was the Sindh dessert. We had been told to take adequate precautions by tanking up on water and food. The distance to be covered was about a hundred miles. The road in front of us stretching like a black rubber band that seemed to be on the verge of melting in the heat provided us with the only sign of human endeavor, except for the occasional truck or lorry. The drivers never looked at us, even though we must have presented a rare sight their eyes glazed with the task of ferrying their goods from one end of the track to the other.

We stopped for lunch at Sibi and then pushed on to Quetta. What we had not factored was the trek through the fabled Bolan Pass that lay ahead of us. This took much more time than we had expected. The road dipped and rose through miles of rugged terrain. It was like being on a roller coaster ride through a rock- strewn countryside with the sudden appearance of streams that flowed between the ancient valleys. We were pleasantly surprised that the Bolan Pass was not a high mountain pass, as we had been led to expect, but a range of mountains with valleys through which the road skirted clinging to the sides. At an elevation of 1,793 meters or 5,884 feet above sea level it's an ancient route that cuts through the Toba Karar range.

Nevertheless, the Bolan Pass was of strategic importance. the gateway into India from Afghanistan and Central Asia. In 1883, Sir Robert Graves Sandeman had

negotiated with the Khan of Kalat and finally managed to get control over the Pass for the exchange of an annual fee.

(Note: The Khanate of Kalat was an independent princely state that owed allegiance to the Moghul Court at Delhi in the days of Emperor Akbar. During the Freedom Struggle, the Khan of Kalat attempted to negotiate with the British for an independent status, failing which he hoped to reach an agreement to be merged with neighbouring Iran or Afghanistan. It was briefly independent from August 1947-1948 when the Khan reluctantly acceded to the new Dominion of Pakistan. It passed to Pakistan in 1955.)

Again, there was no vehicular traffic worth the name, but we met many groups of tribal people wending their way, along with their families that included a basket loads of live chickens, squawking noisily at the discomfort of being carted on the top of camels. These were the Powindas members of the Ghilzais tribe, a nomadic race that moved southwards before the onset of winter. Formerly known to be a warrior tribe, they had turned to grazing. They were friendly when we stopped for a short break and were as curious to know about the tribes to which we belonged. Due to a lack of a common language of communication our interaction with the Powindas was confined to a few exchanges of stilted hand signs and nods of smiling heads that left us both happy but confused. They tried to convey that we had still a long way to go to Quetta.

“Once the sun goes down, there will be darkness,” they warned. “We always find a place next to a watering hole before dark.”

Just as they had predicted, once the spectacle of the sun going down upon the Bolan Pass was over, we found ourselves enveloped in sudden darkness with the jagged peaks of the Toba Karar range rearing up in a menacing fashion. It seemed as though we could hear the cries of armies as they thundered down the narrow

gorges and the wailing moans of the wounded as they lay abandoned in the shelter of the rocks that now took on a stark and sinister formation.

Suddenly as the sun sank slowly into the horizon, we found ourselves in one dark valley after another. As we hastened in the gathering gloom, Quetta seemed to be very far away. At around 7 pm as we rounded yet another hair-bend we found ourselves in the headlights of a police jeep.

“Stop!” the men in uniform shouted in Pashtu as they leapt out of their jeep. For one moment we did not know what was happening.

“Are you from the Indian Embassy?” the men asked. “We have been waiting for you since 4 pm, *ji*. We are your official escort, *ji*. Please follow us, *ji*.” So, it was that we rode into Quetta with a police escort. They took us to the local MLA’s hostel in Quetta.

We woke up next morning to find Quetta like mountain resort in Europe. It was fresh, bright and beautifully laid out. We strolled along the main road and visited the shops. As always, we were received with great affection when they realized we were from India.

“My business partner was a Hindu, my brother, my *bhai* from childhood,” confessed the shop-owner of one of the largest stores in the locality. “To this day, I send him a share of the profits. He is my *bhai*, no? Even if he has gone to the other side. He will come back one day. I am still waiting.”

Baluchistan has always been a haven of communal harmony. A large portion of the Hindu families had elected to remain. Many of the incidents of looting or intimidation had been due to the machinations of the outside elements interfering in Baluchistan; we were assured, almost repeatedly.

“We Baluch actually prefer to employ Hindu accountants in our business,” claimed one gentleman. “Because, you see, Islam and *issap* (*hisab* - calculation) do not go together.”

We wanted to go on a little further from Quetta and visit the hill-station that was only a few miles to the North. But the authorities were adamant.

“We do not have the permission to let you proceed,” was the answer.

I thought of going and meeting the Commissioner of the Quetta Division, but he was “Busy”.

So, we gave up the attempt and spent the time wandering around the periphery of Quetta. On one of these trips, a road sign that had two arrows pointing to the north fascinated us: one indicating “Zahedan” (Iran) “1100 miles” and the second “London 5100 miles”. I had no idea that eight years from then, I would be looking in the opposite direction from Zahedan in Iran, with a road sign reading “Quetta 1100 miles!”

Though the Commissioner Sahib had given us the cold shoulder, his wife was more gracious. She invited Padma to a ladies’ party at her residence where she displayed some of the local handicrafts made by the women. Later, I did meet the Commissioner at the residence of a gentleman who called us for dinner. It transpired that the official was once in the I.C.S. and had served under K.P.S. Menon in China. He was obviously not going to spoil his career by showing any undue familiarity to an Indian Deputy High Commissioner. Unfortunately for this gentleman the axe was to fall on him regardless, when a purge as they called it, under Ayub Khan, got rid of about 80 senior officers for alleged maladministration and corruption.

Despite such official aloofness, our visit to Quetta was an unforgettable one. The staff at the MLA's Hostel treated us as their special guests and even some of the residents received us with touching hospitality. The contrast from what we used to experience at Karachi in our earlier days was most striking. There was no rancor. In fact, the local people wanted to make up for past behavior. The followers of the Khan of Kalat, Abdul Samad Khan could not be otherwise.

We left Quetta amidst reports that the unseasonal rains in the mountains had disrupted communications beyond Sibi. This didn't dampen our spirits as we bowled along the Bolan Pass, waving at the Powinda groups as we overtook them down the winding track.

At Sibi we had bad news. There was no road or rail communication beyond Sibi. The flash floods that had followed the rain had disrupted all communication in the last few days. We were virtually marooned at Sibi.

Sibi being a small town did not boast a large guesthouse as in Hyderabad or Sukkur. So, the local authorities arranged a part of the old Residency for our temporary accommodation. A cook was commandeered to look after our needs. We were told that it would take at least two days before the rail communications would be restored. We could have taken a ride to Jacobabad in an open goods wagon with our car. Not a very comfortable way of travelling, but with the main road washed away, there was no other alternative.

So, for two days we went around the bazaars of Sibi and mingled with the local people. They were simple folk. The pressures of the bigger cities such as Karachi did not trouble them. They were happy to know that we were from India and made enquiries about whether we had enough wheat grain, *jowar*, mustard, or *sarson* and wintergreens growing in our fields. They also commiserated at our plight at having to spend so much time at Sibi waiting for the train to start.

Since we were in the Regency compound, I took the opportunity of doing a bit of exploratory work, of course with the permission of the Caretaker. The whole place was in a state of disrepair or neglect. Rainwater had seeped and washed away the mud-plaster that covered the walls. There was little or no furniture; the more ornate ones had obviously been removed to other offices. Only one relic of the glorious past remained. This was a heavy Teak chair adorned with the insignia of the British Crown and the date 1911 etched at the back. It was obviously a part of the furniture that had been made to commemorate the Delhi Durbar of 1911, the heyday of the Raj, as it was often described when George the V was crowned the King Emperor of India. I had seen scores of such chairs at the Parliament House in New Delhi. How one of these had found its way to the Residency at Sibi was intriguing. Possibly an enterprising officer of the GOI may have managed to bring one of the historical relics to this remote outpost with the rest of his baggage. And there it had remained amidst the ruins of the Residency prompting us to ponder over the vagaries of its fortunes since the distant days of its glory when it had adorned the Durbar of a King Emperor.

At last, our vigil at Sibi ended. We were told that we could load our car in the train at about 5 pm and that it would take almost the whole night to reach Jacobabad. We had the option of leaving the car in the open wagon and occupying a passenger compartment of the train. We preferred to rough it out in the car itself. This proved to be a wise decision. As we discovered the train was jogging along at the rate of 8 miles an hour because of the soft terrain. It was slower than a bullock cart. Anyone could have clambered on and pilfered the luggage from the car. That we may also have been looted did cross our minds but that eventuality did not come to pass.

Fortunately, we found that we had company. Travelling in the wagon next to us were a young German couple in a Volkswagen mini-bus that had been fitted up

for long distance overland route to India. While the introductions were being completed the young woman went inside the mini-bus and emerged with a flask of steaming hot tea and cups that she shared with us. It made for a very convivial way of spending the time while bouncing along the railway track. The young man told us that he once had acquired the Volkswagen mini-bus he had been inspired by the idea of making the overland route. It was still a risky venture in those days and he felt that taking a companion along would be a good idea. So, he had advertised for a female companion and when one presented herself, he had signed her on board. They both agreed that until that point, they had found each other congenial as travel companions. Each of them kept a diary and hoped to get it published when they returned to Germany. They asked us questions about India and Pakistan and the chances of completing their journey to New Delhi. In that desolate landscape the stars looked down and seemed to hang low as our train sped through the darkness. Every now and then the engine driver would let out a piercing hoot from the rumbling train as it made its way along the invisible tracks as though to remind the djinns haunting the countryside to keep out of its way. It soon became freezing cold. The damp mist of the Sindh dessert enveloped us. Combined with this, the sheer exhaustion of waiting for the journey to end forced us to retreat into our respective vehicles and try to get some sleep. It was almost morning when an announcement was made by the guard of the train. “Jacobabad, next stop.” It was the most welcome news we could have had.

(Note: Jacobabad's claim to fame was it registered the highest temperature during summers in South Asia. It got its name from Brig General John Jacob (1812-1858) of the Sindhi Horse regiment. He recognized the strategic importance of this meeting point by creating the modern city named after him on the remains of an old one, Kharghar. He was rewarded after his death at Jacobabad with the construction of the Victoria Tower. It's not only an important rail junction but also a market place for the local tribes and communities. It

served as an important military base for the US army during the period of the recent war in Afghanistan.)

After a quick wash and breakfast at Jacobabad we took the road to Khairpur. On the way we picnicked at a beautiful spot on the bank of a canal, the memory of which still lingers in my mind. It was one of those magical places where if I had a chance, I would love to return.

At Khairpur we discovered a splendid rest house. It was the palace of the former Nawab of Khairpur. We received royal welcome from the well-trained staff. We found that most of them were from India and had relatives in Delhi or U.P. All of them were anxious to know how to get visas to travel to India. This was at that time the first questions that all immigrants from India wanted to know from us. We had no difficulty in assuring them of our sympathetic consideration as and when they decided to apply for a visa.

From Khairpur it was one long hop to Karachi. We were feted as long-lost travelers who had made a difficult journey into a forbidden sector of the Sindh dessert and returned to tell the tales. Many of my colleagues expressed their desire to emulate us, but I do not remember anyone having achieved it, at least not during my tenure at Karachi.

We had to make one more memorable trip to Sindh. This time to see the famous historical site of Mohenjo-Daro. We took the three girls along with us, my eldest daughter, Geeta was old enough to know the significance of Mohenjo-Daro and the importance of the Indus valley civilization. According to the majority of scholars the name stands for "the Mound of Dead Men". It goes back to 2500 BCE. A mystery surrounds the reasons for which this once highly evolved and prosperous City was abandoned. It was part of a network of such habitats to be

found across the region and contemporaneous with other such cities along the Tigris and Euphrates in what we call the Middle East.

When it was re-discovered in the early decade of the 20th century by an Indian archaeologist looking for Buddhist remnants no one could imagine the high quality of the way of life that the citizens must have enjoyed. A citadel on a higher ground, a market place of what must have been the center of the City, the famous baths and draining systems are reckoned to be evidence of a highly organized urban conglomerate. As for the discovery of the Indus Valley Seals, the numerous shards of pottery, beads, metal objects, toys and the iconic statuettes of the "Little Dancing girl"; the Priest King and the Mother Goddess, along with similar finds at Harappa, these too became items that were hotly debated as to who should be allowed to keep them after Partition. Finally, the Indus Valley treasures were divided to be displayed at the National Gallery Museums of both India and Pakistan. While the Dancing Girl came to New Delhi, the Priest King lives at the National Gallery in Karachi.

It was easy going till we reached Larkana, the principal town in the district and later to become well known as the home of the Bhutto family. However, at that time no one seemed to have heard of Mohenjo-Daro. There were no road signs. We meandered along from one deserted road or gully to another making enquiries. It was really like finding our way to the City of the Dead. Finally, one villager pointed in the direction of the place that he recognized. We just made it in time, as it was getting dark as we reached the site. The Curator of the place was waiting there as he had been informed of our visit. There was a guesthouse with rooms that had been prepared and this is where we camped for the night.

We went around the site the next morning when our guide showed us the principal monuments and the well-planned layout that had made Mohenjo-Daro famous. After he had taken us on a trek of the City and answered our numerous questions, we were still faced with the silence of the centuries that had shrouded the once

prosperous township. Who were these people who had founded this City nearly 5000 years ago? Were they tribes that had come from Mesopotamia as some scholars suggested? Were they of Dravidian stock, or Aryans as others claimed? How did they disappear, or leave their fabled city in ruins? Was it through conquest, or through floods?

The Curator believed that only through further archaeological explorations might some of these questions be addressed. For now, he told us he agreed with what the experts had reported. The present structures were built on the walls of an earlier city that had existed before the ruins of the ones that we were looking at. There may have been an even earlier city below that one. But further investigations were hampered by the ominous threat of the water table in the region rising all the time. There were signs that even the famous remains of Mohenjo-Daro were being damaged by the accumulation of ground water and salt deposits. They were hoping for expert teams and international aid to save the site. There was a danger he said that Mohenjo-Daro would disappear again, not perhaps in by the flooding of a mighty river but by the insidious rise of sub-soil water.

We returned once again from Sindh filled with nostalgia for a shared past. There were visions of caravans of people coming in from different parts of Central Asia bringing their merchandise. Some of them settling down in the fertile lands watered by the Indus, others leaving their tracks in marvelous cities of brick and limestone that could disappear in time leaving behind a mountain pile of questions and a handful of salt.

Living in the newly created country that called itself Pakistan, separated from an equally recent country that we were proud to represent as Indians, Mohenjo-

Daro was a reminder to us of how fragile human aspirations and desires for dominance could be. Set against the timelessness of the land we counted as nothing.

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(About Sadh Belo- Island in the Indus River- near the Sukkur Barrage.

Sadh Belo is a sacred temple on an island in the River Indus, near Sukkur, Sindh in Pakistan. The temple the largest in Pakistan is associated with the syncretic movement referred to as Udasi.

According to one account, Sadh Belo, or Sadhu Bela took its name from a Hindu sage or monk named Baba Bankhandi Mahararaj who founded the hermitage named after him.

Other versions claim that it was named after an Arab commander named Saeed who took over the Island and made it his headquarters.

Baba Bankhandi came here at the age of 15 to the town of Sukkur that was famous as a prosperous trading post along what was another route of the Silk Road, travelling all the way from a small town near Delhi.

He found the forested Island that people referred to as Menak Parbat an abode of peace.

The legend goes on to say that after he had lit his sacred fire, the Goddess Annapurna, the goddess of grain appeared to him in a vision. She gave him a sacred vessel, or Kamandal and told him that as long as he carried it with him, he would always find enough grain to feed the people in the kitchen temple. In this manner, the Baba was able to create a number of temples in and around the area.

What's interesting is that both Sikhs and Hindus worship at these temples that revere both the Granth Sahib and the Bhagwad Gita. Many of the sacred texts have been written in Sindhi. His death anniversary attracts a large number of pilgrims of both sects, from across the border with India. The tutelary guardians

migrated to India after 1947 but are said to return for the three day festival where free lodging, food and prayers are open to every pilgrim. (wikipedia) Geeta Doctor)



Sadh Belo is a sacred temple

By Boat and Rail through East Pakistan

When things were a bit quieter in Karachi, I obtained the High Commissioner's permission to visit East Pakistan.

I thought it was essential for the Deputy High Commissioner in Karachi to see the Eastern Wing of Pakistan which was more populous than the Western Wing and figured so much in our dealings with the Pakistan Government. It was customary for the DHC at Dacca to visit Karachi periodically, but the DHC at Karachi did not get a chance to make a journey in the opposite direction. So, in a way, I was starting a new precedent.

On my way, I had a brief stop-over at Delhi and also at Calcutta. From Calcutta we were bundled into a DC 3 plane of the Indian Airlines. It was rickety and quite filthy. Mercifully, it was a short hop to Dacca, where the DHC had very kindly come to the Airport to meet me. He had arranged for my stay at his residence which was very cool and serene.

Dacca was dusty and crowded. It still had the air of makeshift capital city. It was clear the Pakistan government had bestowed very little attention to the development of the Eastern Wing though this Wing carried sizeable foreign exchange in its exports, particularly with regard to jute. There was however the tragedy inherent in the jute industry, that while the golden fibre was grown in what was now East Pakistan, the factories and their owners were in what became West Bengal in India.

There was smouldering discontent over this step-motherly treatment, but nothing very much came to the surface. I drove around some of the main avenues and called on some of the friendly heads of diplomatic missions. The DHC organized a party in my honour, where I met almost all of the diplomatic corps. After that I was ready for a tour round the country and what a fascinating tour it was!

My first destination was Rajshahi, where we met a small mission under an Assistant High Commissioner. It is very much to the west of Dacca, almost adjacent to the West Bengal border. The only means of travel to Rajshahi from Dacca is by train. A First Secretary from the Dacca Office was deputed to accompany me. He hailed from East Pakistan and was a mine of information about the people of the region, its beauty and its richly evocative poetry. On the way a young gentleman came into our compartment and started enquiring who we were, where we were bound to and so forth. He was quite excited when he discovered our identity and immediately ordered for some refreshments. He apparently felt an overwhelming desire to entertain us. This was very

embarrassing, since he insisted on paying for all our meals on the journey. It was East Pakistani hospitality in excelsis.

We gradually gathered a little about this person's background. He was a minor official in the Railways. His father had been a fairly well-to-do person before Partition, but the family had fallen into hard times in recent years. He spoke without any rancour about the current plight. He had plans to visit Calcutta and other parts of India and enquired about visas and whether they were readily available to persons like him. We reassured him on this point. When he got off the train there were tears in his eyes. Certainly, he lived up to the image that we had of the warm hearted sentimental Bengali.

Thereafter, we were engrossed with the prospect of crossing the mighty River Padma. It carried the combined waters of the Ganga and the Brahmaputra and was a veritable ocean. There was a large ferry boat to take us across and it was quite a long journey. It took us almost the whole night. It was an un-forgettable night. There was the Full Moon above and the vast silent river flowing by. Then the boatman began to sing, a plaintive strain that rose about the sound of the ferry-boat, the words of which I could not understand.

But my young companion explained that it was a song of bygone days when India was a land of peace and plenty, when life was equable and without strife. I wanted to ask Roy for more details, but by the time he was gently snoring by my side. Soon, I too fell asleep. When we woke up, the ferry-boat had reached its destination. We got into the train and carried on our journey to Rajshahi.

This was a rather small place distinguished only by its University. It had obviously shrunk after Partition, because of travel restrictions to India. Most of the Hindu families in the town had migrated to India, though some of them had stuck on. The Assistant High Commissioner and his small staff were extremely

happy over my visit. They could not believe that anyone would have taken so much trouble to visit such a distant place. No one from Karachi had gone to the place for 15 years. The AHC had a reasonably comfortable place and seemed to like his assignment. But I found that some members of the Staff had appallingly poor quarters and were unhappy. I commiserated with their plight and promised to get their rent allotment enhanced when I got to Delhi. I soon realised how important it was for someone to visit such faraway places so that they could look into the grievances and make notes of small but important human issues that might arise under such circumstances.

I was happy to observe that isolated though they were, there was a lot of unity and camaraderie among the Staff of the mission. They organized parties and picnics to offset the boredom that pervaded their existence; and took turns to go to Dacca on some minor official assignment whenever the opportunity presented itself. Almost all of them were looking forward to the completion of their tour of duty.

When I visited their office, I was surprised to see how crowded it was. I was told that it was usual to have many local people around the place in the evenings, when they assembled to read the various Indian newspapers and magazines displayed there. The Library of our mission was well stocked with Bengali books, that were also immensely popular. In fact, many of the visitors took away the popular magazines and books from the Library from time to time, but the Mission took a lenient view of this habit.

I spent ten days in Rajshahi, in the course of which I visited the University and called on the Vice-Chancellor. He was a highly cultured gentleman who talked all the time of his connections with Indian institutions and savants. He felt isolated and forgotten.

From Rajshahi, I went right across to Chittagong, another marathon journey. I was struck by the slowness with which everything moved in this part of the world. This was mainly due to the presence of water everywhere. I was told that in the rainy season it was one large expanse of water, when the principal means of communication was by boat. In the countryside, there was a singular absence of roads which pre-cluded the use of wheeled transport. So, almost everywhere, people just went by foot. There was however a railway network, created during the time of the British. From my train I saw many wedding parties wending their way through the fields. My companions pointed out to me that it was often difficult to say when a particular wedding group consisted of Hindus or Muslims; their dress and customs were so similar. This was a feature of the composite culture that the region enjoyed.

Chittagong has an unique topography. It is a city built around a number of picturesque hillocks. And through the centre flows the most beautiful river, the Karnaphul River that originates in the Chittagong hills and flows into the Bay of Bengal. The Circuit House where we stayed was quaintly built and appeared to have been constructed on stilts. It was spacious and served us the most delicious food, befitting the region that provides the best cooks in the region, alleged to be the most talented on the sub-continent, barring perhaps the Goanese.

I had a busy time in Chittagong, thanks to the program which was chalked out by the Indian Community. I was very impressed by the unity and the sense of purpose by its leaders. They kept out of politics and had excellent relations with the local authorities. In my discussions with them, I commended them for their services to their community and advised them to identify themselves more and more with the aspirations of the country of their adoption. They indicated that after the assumption of power by Ayub Khan, the Hindus felt much more secure and there was less talk of migration to India.

It was at Chittagong that I learnt that our Foreign Secretary Subimal Dutt hailed from this region and had a brother who had become a Sanyasi and was living just outside of the City. Subimal Dutt was said to be the most brilliant of the large family to which he belonged and was an almost legendary figure to the local gentry. I therefor made it a point to call on the Brother at the Ashram but the Swamiji was not there. This was a great disappointment. So I had to content myself with a note of appreciation in the Visitors Book.

On the last day of my visit to Chittagong, I had the pleasure of dining with a legendary figure of the Indian liberation Struggle, Mrs. Nellie Sengupta. She was living in a house surrounded with the massive furniture of bygone days, photographs and her memories. She was eager to get news of India, about Panditji and many of her old friends. She had no complaints about the way things were going on in Pakistan and seemed determined to stay on in Chittagong. She was full of praise for the way the Indian Community was conducting its affairs in the region and was obviously in touch with what was taking place among the Hindus in the area.

My next stop was at Rangamati, in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The trip nearly fell through, as it started raining heavily. But a providential break in the downpour enabled me and Roy to sneak through to our destination in a jeep. It was a tiresome journey, but it was worth it.

We were going up the valley of the Kaptai River which was then being harnessed for power development just at the place where Rangamati stood. As a matter of fact, the town was already partially evacuated and many of the officials were accommodated in bamboo hutments, lower down the valley. We were housed in one such hutment, which had all the conveniences. It was cold during the night and we required blankets.

We had reached the place around noon. So after lunch we decided to walk round to a tribal centre that was close by. It was a neat little settlement perched on a hillside. There were no men around, but sturdy hill women who were busy with their traditional chores. Many of them were weaving bright coloured lengths of cloth, probably for the handloom emporia in the country. I asked our guide how the hill people were reacting to the advent of the Dam that was being built. They were naturally worried about the prospect of losing a large bit of the land that would be submerged by the lake which would be formed in the upper reaches of the river, but they were also excited at the idea of getting electricity which would make life easier for them. The availability of power at their doorstep would certainly make a lot of difference to the pattern of their lives, lead to a tremendous leap from their existing primitive conditions to the age of electricity, bringing with it all the advantages and its concomitant changes in the age-old customs and traditions that they had known.

This was the topic of our conversations when we gathered around the table at the guest house. There were two other guests that night, one an engineer connected with the Kaptai project and the other a businessman interested in transporting timber from the area. The latter turned out to be from Kerala, a Moplah who had migrated to Pakistan some years ago. Apart from timber he was interested in tiger shooting and he regaled us with some of his exploits. Someone in our company asked him whether there was any chance of tigers being around where we were, no doubt apprehensive about the flimsy walls of our rest house. The brave shikari however assured us that there was no such danger and that even if there was any growling in our neighbourhood that night, he would be ready with his rifle. With that assurance, we retired for the night. The next morning we left for Chittagong.

The exhilaration of that trip still remains. I tarried in New Delhi only long enough to fulfil my promise to the unfortunate Staff members of the Rajshahi mission. I

could not get an official confirmation that any of my recommendations were followed and whether their living conditions did improve as a result.

A few years later, the mission was closed down.

(End of notes on the trip to East Pakistan. KVP.)

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At Home in Shivaji Park - Notes by Geeta Doctor.

Celebrating Festivals Together

Mohammad Ayub Khan, who became President of Pakistan in 1958, was a charismatic individual, tall and apple cheeked, albeit with a moustache, if you can imagine an apple with a moustache. My sister and I rather liked him since we had been given a holiday by the time he declared his second Coup.

In 1960, President Ayub Khan introduced something called “Basic Democracy” which was meant to give elected local leaders a say in governance. All of a sudden my Mother’s bridge and coffee morning friends who used to wear expensive French chiffons and satins took to wearing Pakistan made cotton textiles. One of my Mother’s dearest friends was a member of a famous textile magnate’s family, the Adamjees. She reported that their mills were spinning miles of fine cotton yardage to be made into sarees and blouses by the Pakistani elite. Everyone was wearing them.

“But look” exclaimed one of the Pakistani bridge-playing partners of my mother,

“underneath we still wear our satin petticoats.”

In a sense this summed up the effects of Pakistan’s attempt at Basic Democracy. Underneath the so-called changes, the satin cords of the privileged Punjab elite remained. They tightened the noose on the rest of the immigrants seeking a new life.

As privileged outsiders, the three of us, my sisters, Surya, the middle one and Manjula the baby of the family and myself, had the best of both worlds.

In 2018, the well-known Pakistani journalist Sanam Maher wrote a story of six derelict properties in Karachi, each bearing the sign “This property is owned by the Government of India” in Caravan magazine. She ended it with the remark that the enclaves housed the Indian consular staff, until they were evicted in 1994, by a fiat of the Pakistan government. Only a few people in Karachi knew the history of these properties’ story, she wrote, and that few were willing to reveal it.

My Sisters and I read the account with fascinated interest.

“That’s our house. Our home in Karachi,” exclaimed my sisters as we read an article about that ghostly largely abandoned property in the port city of Karachi that had once been the proud capital of the newly independent Pakistan.

My family knows the story of those properties very well – it was a place that gave us some of our happiest memories of the time.

From 1958 to 1960, when my father was the Deputy High Commissioner for India in Pakistan, we lived in a house in the “Shivaji Park” enclave on Karachi’s McNeil Road.

Shivaji Park, in the 1950s, was a thriving dominion of the Indian government. Our large white-walled house had an enormous portico overlooking a garden and tennis courts. In the cool early mornings of Karachi’s winter, my mother would set out a table near the portico and organise her staff to serve us breakfast.

There was a complement of two male bearers Apu who was from Kerala but who could also make a whole mountain of hot jelabis when the occasion demanded it of him; and Daniel from Tamil Nadu who acted as the butler, automatically

bringing a silver tray of iced drinks when the guests arrived. This was often enough. Apu had a fuzzy head of curly hair and a beaming smile in a shining chocolate brown face that endeared him to all the children at Shivaji Park. Daniel had the sober look of a black Bishop on a chessboard. He had to be since he was in charge of the Drinks cabinet. He never betrayed my Mother's trust in him to do the right thing.

Upstairs in the colonial style house, the ayah from Mangalore would shake out the pillows and sheets to make the beds and see to the comfort of our house-guests. We always managed to have a guest or two, so this small platoon of helpers from India was necessary to run the house.

She was a tiny woman who was actually meant to supervise my youngest sister Manjula. She was always dressed very neatly in pale cotton sarees of fine cotton and kept her hair combed immaculately. She was more of a housekeeper than an Ayah. In any case, she could never keep a track of Manjula and her equally uncontrollable collection of five year old friends. On one occasion, Manjula was found to have very neatly cut out the outlines of flowers from a printed table cloth that had been gifted to our Mother from an interior designer friend from the UK.

"Why did you do that?" my Mother asked Manjula.

"Don't know, I thought it would be a good idea," replied Manjula. The Ayah was in tears, sure that she would be reprimanded for leaving her charge alone for so long.

On another occasion while my Mother was at the Bridge table with the other ladies from the foreign embassies, Manjula and the young son of the Swiss Ambassador's wife had opened a collection of miniature liqueur bottles and decided to sample each one of them. To escape being caught, Manjula helped him to climb out of the open window of the guest room, that was on the ground floor. Unfortunately for him, or luckily for him, one of the straps holding up his pants

got stuck in the long arm of the hook meant to keep the windows open. "Help me! Help me!" he was found crying, as he hung like a spider from the window ledge. Manjula watched the show with all the gleeful interest of a five year old as he was rescued by Apu. No one else was impressed.

One afternoon the Mangalorean Ayah took it into her head to bathe and scrub one of my sister Manjula's young friends with mustard oil and channa ke atta, while attempting to give Manjula a proper scrub bath. The little girl a very delicate Austrian child with fine strands of pale silvery blonde hair came out looking like a mouse that had fallen into a vat of oil. My mother had to bathe her once again with shampoo before she could be sent home! As far as I can remember, the Ayah did not last very long either and requested to be sent home.

Running a house for senior members of the foreign service was not different from running a hotel. Not only were there house guests to be accommodated, but VIPs from the home country who had to be entertained at formal events. Coffee mornings, bridge parties and informal get-togethers of the wives of the officers at the Embassy who might not have been able to get out of their homes were another part of my Mother's responsibilities at Shivaji Court. These meals had also to be planned to meet the dietary requisites of whatever combination of guests that had to be entertained in a nominally hostile country.

All our daily food requisites were brought into the compound. More exotic tinned items like cheese, butter, asparagus tips, mushrooms, chocolate cookies, jams and jellies, tea and coffee, custard powder, sheets of gelatine for the puddings, tiny bottles of hot pink cochineal, green minty flavours, drops of orange and vanilla essence, and even cans of condensed milk, came through the Embassy's Commissariat and had to be planned for well in advance of their requirements.

There was also a wonderful Goan cook called Fernandez whose pastry making skills were as fabulous as they were legendary. He could make Rum Babas, or

small upstanding cones of steamed cake crumbs soaked in liqueur, or piles of Brandy snaps, crunchy nut and ginger flavoured cigars filled with cream, or chocolate souffles of pure air and cream, eclairs with chocolate cream, by just looking at the photographs that our Mother would show him from her large encyclopaedia of recipes from the famous Cordon Bleu school in Paris.

He had a secret for making the lightest of puff pastries. Fernandez demanded that he be allowed to requisition pig fat from the bazaar and melt it down to make lard. This was not an easy task in a pork hating country, but like everything else on what was all still a part of the Indian sub-continent, even this could be arranged through unofficial channels. His only defect was that he was often temperamental and liked his drink. This too arrived through the unofficial route.

If he was in one of his drunken states after a long evening at the stove and my Mother happened to complain about the hygiene levels in the kitchen the next morning, he would run after her with his kitchen knife. Daniel and Apu would then guard the doors to the kitchen and make sure that she could exit in safety. The next afternoon, or maybe the very same day, we would all be treated to a fabulous tray of jam and lemon tarts at teatime.

We would all heave a sigh and say, "Oh thank God, whichever God is in charge of jam tarts, Fernandez is back to his normal state."

An adjoining building in the same compound had three or maybe four storeys, with two apartments on each floor. Every evening, all of us children from the two buildings would gather to play ball, or tennis, or act out complex dramas.

My mother, my younger sister Manjula and Abid Husein Safrani, a dear family friend whom we called Uncle at the porch of Shivaji Park. He had joined the IFS in the same year as my Father and travelled with the family on their first assignment abroad in 1949 on a ship to take up his post as First Secretary in

Cairo, Egypt, while my Father sailed on to Paris, where he had been posted as the First Secretary at the Indian Embassy.

During festivals such as Holi, Diwali or Christmas all the families would come out in their best clothes to party together. When it was their turn to celebrate, our Muslim friends would send over the best paya, saffron-scented rice dishes and creamy-layered phirni, set in individual terracotta bowls.

Among the dishes that arrived at our door was Mrs. Zairuddin's biryani. It was famous in our family also because not so long back Mrs. Zairuddin had been sending it to my South Indian grandmother in the district of Cuddapah in Andhra, as it was known then.

They were both wives of men who worked in the old British administrative network. Mrs. Zairuddin's daughter Zakia married Akhtar Husain, an official in the railways. "We could never believe when the whole family opted to go to Pakistan," my grandma would say. "They had never even spoken of Pakistan."

In Karachi, the family was happily settled. Their daughter Suraiya was my age and we not only studied in the same class but also became best friends.

Just like Mrs. Zairuddin's family, there were many old friends who had worked with my father during the British Raj and had opted to move to Pakistan. These links, though not always openly acknowledged, formed another reason why we felt so much at home in Karachi in the late 1950s.

Turtle Rides on Hawke's Bay

There were two places, Shivaji Park and Hindustan Court, in Karachi where the senior staff of the Indian High Commission and their families were billeted behind high walls, guarded by security guards. The High Commissioner lived in his own mansion a little distance from these two places.

We lived in complete seclusion in a world of our own. We knew that anyone entering the compound would be marked by the snoops casually standing outside our gates, pretending to sell cold drinks, or repairing leather sandals or running a tea-shop. So, it was rare for us to invite any of our Pakistani friends from school, or anyone we had happened to meet outside.

So, we were careful not to embarrass our friends by calling them to our place, we would always try and meet them at neutral locations – another Embassy, or at the house of a common friend, or for a picnic at night on the beach at Hawke's Bay.

In fact, those picnics spent waiting for the turtles to crawl onto the sandy beach on dark nights to lay their eggs were often the highlight of those summers in Karachi. We would pack a large wicker basket with food and find a spot of higher ground on the beach waiting for the sport we called "Turtle Rides".

The mother turtles would dig their soft nest deep into the sand and lay their eggs. As they returned crawling ever so painfully back into the dark waters, we would climb onto their back and conduct our turtle races.

Of course, it sounds very cruel but it was one sport that all of us, Indians, Pakistanis and the other guests, endorsed.

By the time we finished the ride, our flushed and sweating faces would be covered with glittering specs of silver mica dust from the sands of Hawke's Bay.

Another time, a friend of our parents, Bikoo Patel took us to a strange oasis in the Sind desert. It was called Mungo Pir. It combined a shrine to the holy man of that name, hot sulphur springs and a pit with crocodiles. The legend we were told was that a famous Sindhi saint named Lal Shahbaz Qalandar had caused the oasis to spring complete with date palms and water when he visited the Sufi Pir Mungo. We did not believe the second part of the story. As a bonus the saint gave his head lice to the Pir who threw them into the water where they became crocodiles. The area also sheltered a tribe of Siddhis, known as Makranis, descendants of the African slaves who had come and made their home there as in coastal Gujarat.

My own journeys took me into the markets and Museums of Karachi with a group of aspiring artists inspired by the wife of the Belgian Ambassador. She was a trained artist of the European School. She not only took us on numerous expeditions across the City, but also undertook commissions at painting portraits in oil for those who were lucky enough to appeal to her sense of aesthetics. Though I preferred the silence of the National Museum where we could study and reproduce in oils on canvas the serene expressions and flowing lines of the famous Gandharva Buddhas that were on display there, she preferred marching us through the crowded lanes of bazaars filled with goats on their way to slaughter or the shanties where people actually lived in all their colourful exuberant vitality. That we could just walk into someone's courtyard and set up our easels for a morning of painting makes me feel embarrassed today. That however, was how the European gaze feasted on the exotic East.

Promise to a Dead Pir

One day, an odd thing happened in our Karachi house. The towels in my father's bathroom were of the thin woven variety used in Kerala, known as Thorths. Only he used them to dry his thick black curly hair. Suddenly, they were streaked with red stains.

“Blood!” reported the servants. The house was built on a ground that belonged to a Pir, who had died a long time ago. It was his spirit that was manifesting itself on the blood-stained Thorths.

My mother conducted pujas. The wife of the Indian High Commissioner came and conducted a session of devotional songs using her training as a classical singer.

The towels became a topic of conversation among the residents of Shivaji Park.

My father, however, remained silent. It seemed as if he had promised the dead Pir never to reveal the secret of the blood-stained towels – not even to his wife.

Many years later, he suddenly spoke up.

“Do you know the reason for the blood stained Thorths?” he asked. “It was on account of a hair dye that I had started using for the first time in Karachi.”

Tickets to Popularity

In Karachi, my sister Surya and I went to the St Joseph’s Convent, where the principal was a nun called Sister Longina Maria. My other sister Manjula, meanwhile, attended a Montessori kindergarten named Casa Bambina. It was run by a wonderful Parsi lady who wore low cut cholis with a cleavage that displayed a luxuriant growth of body hair.

My sister Surya and I were possibly the most popular girls at our school, since we had access to tickets to the Hindi films that were the rage. Not just those, the tender Benarasi paan was also accessible to us, even if it had to be flown in by what used to be known as the Paan International Airlines from Dacca.

Our best friends, two English girls, were thankfully not particularly interested in Indian films. Jacqueline and Vivienne Eliot, whose parents were old Indian hands, could come home anytime. Jacqueline was tall and red-haired with green eyes.

Her sister had a more sober colouring but was an equal source of excitement to our local guards. Their father was a geologist who was helping the Pakistani government access the newfound “Sui Gas” reserves under the ground.

We were told, privately of course, that it was God’s way of making sure that Pakistanis were full of natural gas. Of course, the Pakistanis never failed to remind us that it was we, Indians, who were the ‘pulse-eating gas-filled Babus’ who had left these windy pockets behind when they fled back into Hindustan. Somehow back then, neither side felt insulted by these barbs.

Despite being secluded in our Indian enclave at Shivaji Court we could not help but be infected by the loud, bustling vitality of Karachi in the early 1960s.

“You can sing ‘Sare Jahan se Accha!’ along with us,” our friends advised us during national day parades, “After all it is your song too! Iqbal belongs to the entire sub-continent.”

Just as they could not utter the words, “Indian Sub-continent”, we could not belt out the line- Pakistan Hamara.

The most stunning looking girls at the St. Joseph’s Convent at the time were the daughters of the Isphahani and Shirazi families. They had creamy complexions, well defined profiles and flashing eyes. With hair that could sometimes be flaming auburn, raven hair black, or corn-silk gold, they looked like the models of the Pre-Raphaelite painters. My best Pakistani friend however was a tall and strikingly attractive Pathan girl Shahida Niazi with a father in the Army. I often wonder what has become of her.

The Indian High Commissioner and his glamorous wife had just come from New York and filled the walls of the High Commission with the latest “modern art”. There were paintings by Jackson Pollock and Rothko. HC’s wife explained how

Pollock had created the scribbles of intense colour in the abstract works that puzzled most of her visitors.

“One day I had soaked all my jewellery in a basin of water and left them on my dining table. When Pollock saw them, he was immediately inspired by them.” She also used a long cigarette holder as Audrey Hepburn had done in her role as Holly Golightly to insert a cigarette when she entertained. Soon, the cigarette holder became a fashion statement.

“We must showcase our textiles and jewellery whenever we can,” she told the ladies of the High Commission. Suddenly everyone was dressing up in as much traditional splendour that they could manage.

Along with saree diplomacy, mango diplomacy and Hindi film diplomacy the High Commission embarked on a plan of cultural diplomacy. The Karachi culturati were enthralled when Indrani Rahman performed for them. She was an exponent of the Odissi style and with her dual American-North Indian heritage had the physique that allowed her to assume the tri-bhanga Shiva Tandava pose to great effect. When the young Yamini Krishnamurthy came to visit on her first ever tour outside of India the crowd was riveted by the dancer’s statuesque figure. For a while it seemed that Karachi would soon replace Lahore as the cultural capital of the new country.

It may seem odd in this era of revisionist history that amongst them the person who captured the imagination of the common man in Pakistan was Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

In September 1960 he came to sign the Indus Waters Treaty. It was a landmark settlement between the two countries. In his speech during the signing of the treaty Pandit Nehru re-iterated the word “memorable”. It was memorable he

said not just because of the practical benefits, but memorable because of the civilizational bonds that were being affirmed by the Treaty.

It's not a wonder that Shivaji Court and all it represented in that leafy suburb of Karachi now lie in ruins.

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Official Visitors – Diary Recollection by K V Padmanabhan

A lot of the hours in a diplomat's life is spent on visitors- mainly from his own country. In the early part of our existence in Karachi we did not have many visitors from India, since many were hesitant about the kind of welcome they could expect in Pakistan. Some of them stayed put on their ships' cabin, or at the International Airport terminal and sent word to our mission for various types of assistance.

I might add that the first time we sailed out of India in 1949, this is more or less what we had also experienced when our ship touched port at Karachi. The only ship that my colleague Abid Husain Safrani and I could get in the newly formed Indian Foreign Service, soon after the War, was an Egyptian cargo ship named "Port Said" that was sailing from Bombay to London via Genoa. While Safrani was posted as First Secretary at Cairo in Egypt, I was to sail to Genoa with my young family and then go via rail across Europe to join my post in Paris.

We were very hesitant to get off the ship when it docked at Karachi. But Safrani, who had travelled the world as a close member of the INA fraternity and close confidant of Subhas Chandra Bose, and who had even accompanied him on his secret escape by submarine from wartime Europe to Japan, insisted that we should get off at Karachi.

In any case, being a cargo ship, the Port Said always managed to dock for a couple of days at each port along the way. This was our first and early introduction to Karachi. It was a very clean and well planned City in those days and we were impressed by not only its broad avenues, but by the welcome we got from the people we met.

It was with this memory in mind that if the visitor happened to be a VIP who was in transit, I would make it a point to meet him or her and persuade the person to visit the town. Those who agreed do so, resumed their journeys, greatly impressed by what they saw and could appreciate about the conditions that they had seen during their brief introduction to the Pakistani capital, as Karachi used to be in those days.

One of those who did not accede to my request of a visit to the City was the celebrated Indian Scientist and Nobel laureate, Sir C.V. Raman. He was returning to India from a trip abroad and refused to budge from his cabin. He was keenly interested in the internal situation in Pakistan and seemed to harbour various suspicions about the security of Indian citizens in Pakistan.

On another occasion, Sardar H.S. Malik, my former Chief in Paris and his family were marooned at the Karachi Port because of a strike by the crew of the ship on which they were travelling. I offered to take all of them home and look after them till the owners of the sailing company sorted out the problem with their employees. But the Ambassador preferred to stay on board despite the inconvenience caused by the strike.

Such instances, however were rare. Many others came to Pakistan to meet their friends or to try their hand at bridging the gulf between the two neighbours.

In the latter category was Jayaprakash Narayan and General Cariappa. Jayaprakash and his wife came without much fanfare and used to stay with the

Brohis. Once, when I heard they were in town, I arranged a party for them at our house.

General Cariappa came after Ayub Khan's accession to power. One morning, someone reported to me at the Chancery that an elderly gentleman was going round the rooms questioning the Security guards- it was General Cariappa trying to discover what their previous army antecedents might be. He told us that Ayub Khan was an old friend of his and had asked him over to Karachi to perhaps find solutions to sorting out the problems between their two countries. Whether he was able to play any useful role as mediator between India and Pakistan, I have no way of affirming, but the General made it certain that his visit did not pass unnoticed in the Press.

Then we had a very gracious and charming visitor in Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, or Madam Pandit as she was known internationally. She came on a private visit to stay with her daughter and son-in-law Chandralekha and Ashok Mehta who were at the High Commission. Padma and I had met her before when we were in Paris, where also, the Mehtas were a part of the Embassy family. As a matter of fact, the Mehtas and ourselves were at the same time in New Delhi too. We were together at three posts, which must have been quite a record. We had drawn up quite an interesting program for Madam Pandit so that she could meet her old friends and exchange ideas. She also met the Staff and their families at a function held at the Chancery.

One particular party stands out. It was a small dinner party in Ashok Mehta's house, to which only a few very close friends had been invited. These included an American lady, whom Madam Pandit had known in the USA. She must have been a prominent person as she was sitting at one of the tables, alone with Madam Pandit. Suddenly, in a voice audible right across the room she asked: "Tell me why was Pakistan created?"

There was real perplexity in her voice and every eye was turned towards Madam Pandit to see how that very contentious question was answered. Madam Pandit, being the seasoned diplomat that she was turned on one of her most charming poses and merely replied: "My dear, it will take a long time to answer that question." I am sure that many another person in that room and for many a time across the sub-continent would echo those very same sentiments in their mind- Why Pakistan?

The next visit that comes to my mind is that of a person cast in a very different mould- Morarji Desai- the strong, silent man of India. He had come on an official visit to try and settle some outstanding financial issues between India and Pakistan. His visit coincided with Pakistan's National Day, which enabled him to meet a number of Pakistani leaders. He shunned the limelight and quickly observed things for himself. His official talks became stalled almost as soon as they began, since we found that Pakistan was at its usual game in initiating their claims for compensation from India, as against agreeing to discuss their various dues to India. It was clear that Pakistan had no intention of paying anything on this account.

So, Morarji Desai spent his time meeting friends and in sight-seeing. The Gujarati community had organized a party in his honour where some of us from the High Commission were also present. Morarji Bhai was in in a relaxed mood and was chatting and joking to the assembled gathering, many of whom he had known in India. Then some of the youngsters in his party wanted his autograph. He readily obliged all of them. My daughter Surya who about 12 years old at the time was with me. She also also approached Morarji Bhai eagerly with her autograph book.

He shook his head and said, "I cannot give you my autograph."

"Why?" my daughter asked him, genuinely puzzled.

"Because you are not wearing Khadi," replied Morarji Desai, now looking grim.

"But all these girls to whom you have given your autograph are also not wearing Khadi dresses," Surya persisted.

"True, but they are Pakistanis, not Indians." There was an absolute finality in his words and my daughter did not press her case.

We had a glimpse of Morarji Desai, as unbending a disciplinarian as he was reputed to have been all his life.

Yet another memorable visit was that of Cardinal Valerian Gracias. He was the first Indian to be raised to this high position in the Catholic world. He was unusually tall for an Indian and evoked respect and admiration wherever he went. He was happy at the way that events were shaping between India and Pakistan.

He very kindly graced our house with his presence at a luncheon party.

As regards foreign visitors to Pakistan during our time there two very different personalities who dominated the headlines of their individual countries were the Shah of Iran and President Nasser of Egypt.

When the Reza Shah Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran arrived with his new wife, Queen Farah Diba, Karachi high society were intensely curious to have a glimpse of the new Empress.

The Shah as was well known had given up his beautiful green eyed second wife, Soraya, a member of the powerful Bakhtiari tribe in Iran because she could not

bear him an heir. As it happens there had been hopes that one of the candidates being considered was Begum Iskander Mirza's daughter by her first husband. Instead, the Shah took as his third wife a young architectural student who had been studying in Paris. On their first State visit the rumour that the tall and somewhat gauche student consort was pregnant added an extra dimension to their presence. The Shah had been the first head of a country in 1947, to give an international recognition to Pakistan's sovereign state.

At a reception given in their honours, after the first flush of excitement was over and the guests had settled down to their drinks, the Chief of Protocol, Air-Commodore Rabb made an announcement. The Empress was pregnant. He almost made it seem that Pakistan should take the credit for this happy event. He raised a special toast to their Majesties and to their son and heir. It was assumed that it would be a Son! Champagne flowed during that evening though later on, the Chief of Protocol remarked, "Wherever we went, we had to carry a flask of iced orange juice."

The poor Iskander Mirzas could not have known at the time that this was to be their last public appearance and that soon they would be swept away like everything else in this transient world and gathered into the dust heap of history. President Gamal Abdul Nasser, the strongman of Egypt came during Ayub Khan's ascendancy. Nasser was at the time at the peak of his power and fame. He brought about the union of Egypt and Syria and was the President of what was called the United Arab Republic. He was the uncrowned king of the Arab world. Ayub Khan was assiduously trying to mend fences after his assumption of power and to improve his importance in the Arab States after the disastrous stand that Pakistan had taken during the Suez Crisis in 1951. So he had planned to give Nasser a grand reception in keeping with his status in the Muslim world.

Nasser on the other hand did not want to play the Pakistani game; and give undue importance to the visit. He knew the wily Pakistanis would try and extract some kind of statement from him and they would subsequently use it for their propaganda against India. Thanks to the help given to me by my good friend Adib Daoud of the UAR Embassy, I had the honour of meeting President Nasser and have a brief talk with him. He was a somewhat plump looking individual, not very tall, but very stylishly dressed as all Egyptians are. He was happy that India-Pakistan relations were looking up and praised Panditji's efforts to bring about a detente in the region. He had a genuine regard and admiration for Pandit Nehru, whom he regarded as an older brother and mentor.

The Nehru-Ayub meeting of September 1960 was the high-water mark of India Pakistan relations. Never before, or since had there been such a fruitful summit taken place between the two countries. The credit for this achievement must belong to the two men at the top who behaved as decent human beings who believed in settling things right on the basis of justice and fair play. Tribute must also be paid to Mansur Qadir and Rajeshwar Dayal who by the dint of their perseverance laid the foundations for the summit meeting. It was a tragedy that he was called away to Congo just when the plans for the high-level encounter matured. His continued absence, even after the Nehru-Ayub meeting only exacerbated the disaster into what became a permanent rift.

For within a week of the summit meeting I got my marching orders. I was to proceed at once to Delhi to replace H.N. Haksar in the E.A. Ministry as Joint Secretary in charge of Administration. I bowed to the inevitable but asked at least for a short extension to enable my children to appear for their annual examinations. This was refused on the grounds that Haksar had to leave for Nigeria in a short time and that the post of JS(AD) could not be kept vacant.

A person who was most surprised was Mansur Qadir. During his term at the Foreign Office he had despite machinations of the die-hard elements in his office, established a good rapport with our Mission. During Nehru's last visit, we had a lot to do with each other and he was most vigilant in addressing some of the issues that had occurred during the tour. When I told him why I was being recalled to Delhi, he merely smiled. He was too much of a gentleman and a diplomat to question another Government's bonafides. But he conveyed his deep sadness at my imminent departure.

I also felt that I was saying farewell to a person who though a Muslim represented the best in the culture of the sub-continent and who had sincerely tried to work for the good of the two countries.

So we started packing again. The Naval Attaché at the High Commission, Commander K.P. Nair and Lakshmi, his newly married wife, very kindly agreed to extend their hospitality and look after our eldest daughter Geeta at their home until she completed her final Senior Cambridge exams. This came as an immense relief to both Padma and myself. We decided to take our two other daughters with us to Delhi and to try and get them admitted to schools there.

There was a flurry of hurried farewells. Somehow we survived all those and had enough energy to hold our own farewell party on the lawns of our Shivaji Court residence. The whole of Karachi was there. After the party it became a problem to get rid of the police and security personnel who insisted on toasting me again and again. Finally, some of them had to be carried out.

We had decided to go to Delhi, by train via Lahore. Because of the improvement in our relations with Pakistan this had become the natural route for travel with all our staff, instead of the old routes by sea and air.

And what a send-off we had! The whole platform was crowded, mostly with local people. They were sad to see us go. We were sad to leave too.

Particularly, to leave our darling, Geeta, behind.

We felt that we had left behind bit of our heart, in Pakistan.

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- *Transcribed and Recollected on 23rd July 2021-- Geeta Doctor.*