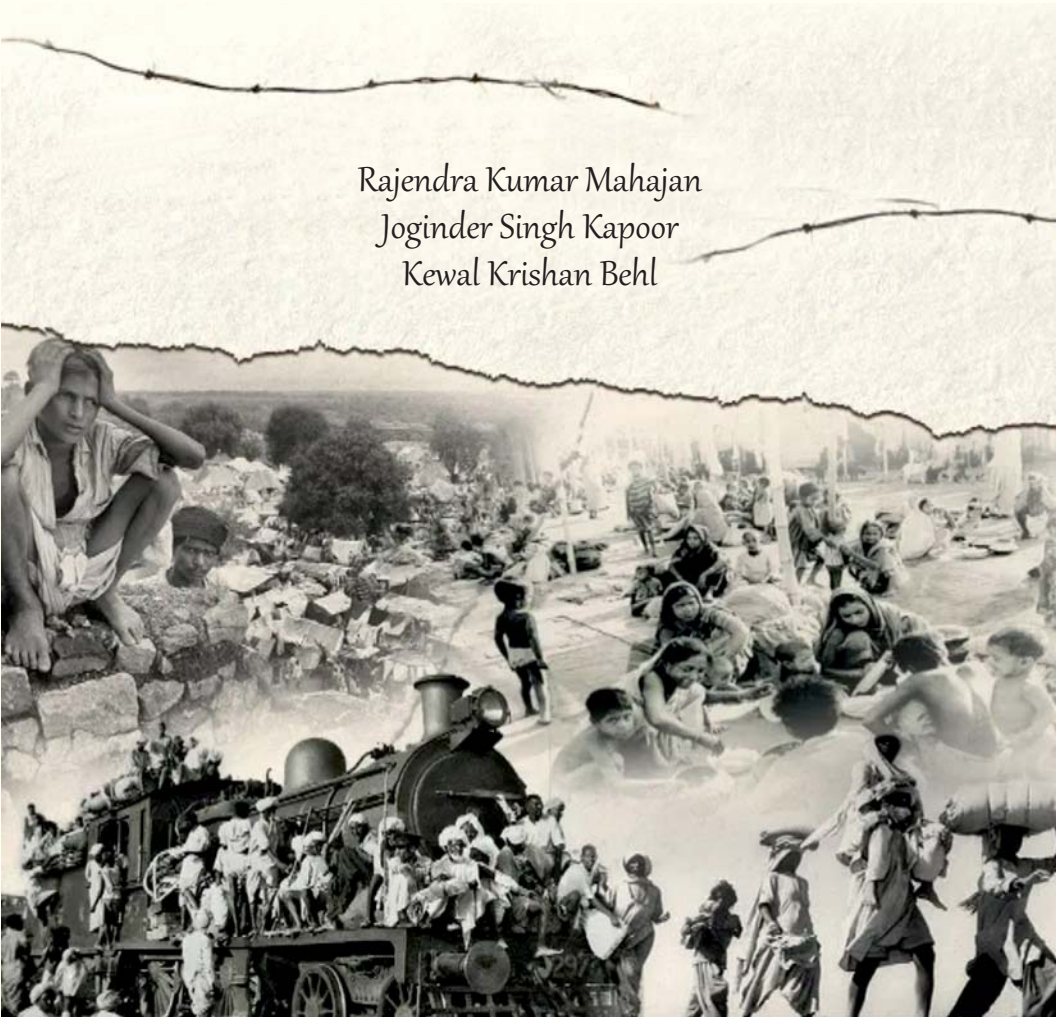


STORIES OF PARTITION

Rajendra Kumar Mahajan
Joginder Singh Kapoor
Kewal Krishan Behl



Stories of Rajendra Kumar Mahajan,
Joginder Singh Kapoor & Kewal
Krishan Behl (Facing Horrors of
Partition, migrating to India Struggle
for livelihood, achieved heights in
profession and status in society).

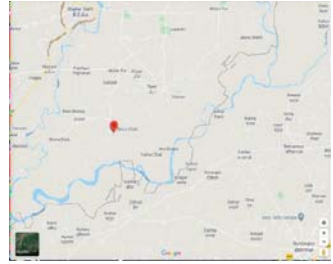


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DEDICATION

With the dawn of sunlight on August 27th, 1947, a group of about 500 to 600 people of Hindu and Sikh faith started a one-way journey from their homes in remote villages where they had lived for generations to march into Independent India. I was a 10-year-old Hindu among those people.



The only visible hurdle or danger that appeared to the group in their journey was to cross over the national boundary, ferociously flowing river Ravi. Little did they know, the real danger was not the river Ravi, but elsewhere.

During that journey, the group was escorted with the protection promises made by Muslims from the same village, whom Hindus and Sikhs considered as their brothers and close friends because of generations of living together. The group was completely unaware that Muslims had hostile feelings towards Hindus and Sikhs, and that the protection promise was a trap.

It is exactly 73 years today that most of those Hindus just could not cross the river Ravi due to the treachery and total breach of trust and backstabbing by Muslims. Hindus were either killed or compelled to jump into the river waters, where most of them got swept away. Hardly 50 Hindus (I am one of them) could survive the mayhem that day and were able to eventually set their feet on the soil of free India.

I have tried to record the happenings of that fateful day as good as my memories could recall. I dedicate this memoir to those unknown and unsung heroes who became victims of fatalism as a substitute to nationalism, and who made the supreme sacrifices as their humble contribution in the war of independence. Ignore, with disdain, those who preach that our country got azadi (Independence) without shedding a drop of blood.

- Rajendra Kumar, August 27th, 2020

PROLOGUE

The 1947 Partition Archive is a global effort to document life stories shaped by the India-Pakistan Partition of our country in 1947, for posterity as claimed by the Organisers.

In this effort, I was interviewed (video-photographed) by a student, Ms. Mansi Ranka of the Ashoka University, Haryana, India on June 23rd, 2018.

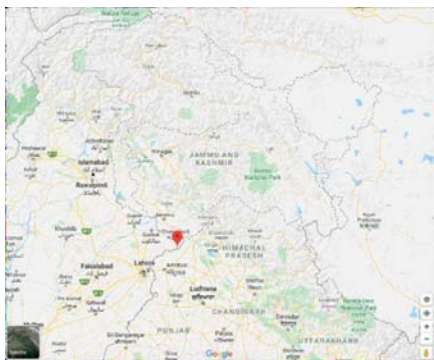


On July 7th, 2020, Chhotu (nick name), my youngest son, asked me "Story Kahan Hai?" (Where is the story?) and I replied, "UK Mein Hogi" (Must be somewhere in the UK). After the interview, there was no contact with Mansi, nor did I contact the Archives. As such, did not know what the status of the Partition story was. But this conversation with my younger son prompted me to pen down the series of happenings of those days as they come to me in flashback.

I was 10 years old at the time of our country's Partition, and more than seven decades have passed since. It is normally not possible for a child of ten years of age to recollect the sequence of events which happened almost seventy-three years ago. So, this is just an attempt to recollect the memories of those days.

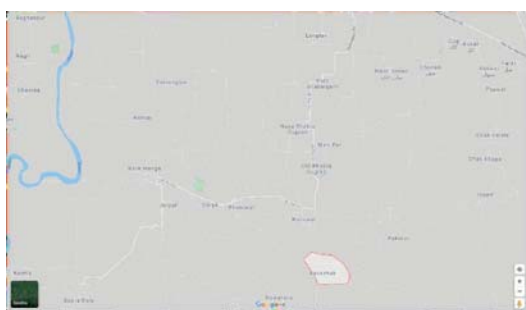
CHAPTER 1: ANCESTRAL VILLAGE, PAKISTAN

My ancestors had settled in a remote village called Bhikochak. Our joint family consisted of about 40-50 members living together in one big house. There was only one entrance to that house.



Most members in the family did not go to any school except the one in the village. The only other school teaching up to matriculation standard was at a place called Baramangha, about 2-3 miles away from our village. My father and a few uncles studied in that school, passed the matriculation examination and became eligible for white collar jobs. No surprise, my father got a government job in 'Survey of India', while other uncles went to Lahore to work for different banks, financial organisations. Others in the family remained stuck to family business and trade.

Other important villages around Bhikochak were Shakargarh (which later became famous for one of the fiercest tank battles fought and won by the Indian forces during Indo-Pakistan war of 1971), Narowal, Fathochak, Nainakot, and Baramangha. I used to visit the village only during school holidays.

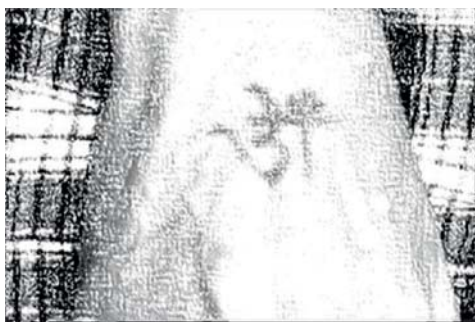


CHAPER 2: KARACHI, PAKISTAN

My Babuji (father) was a government employee and worked for Survey of India. He was posted in Karachi, which is now in Pakistan. He must have been in Karachi for about four to five years. I had my primary education in Karachi in a school managed by DAV Institute. I remember vividly that after passing the fourth class, I was admitted in the DAV School, but could not continue there as Babuji was transferred to Dehradun/ Mussoori in the year 1947. This was the time when our country was being planned to be divided into two parts based on the two-nation theory, on religious and communal considerations.



I loved Karachi, a neat and clean city with wide roads and plenty of beautiful spots to spend your leisure time. We used to live in a building which had about 8-10 residential units. I, along with other boys in our building, used to walk to our school. I used to get Re 1 and then Rs 2, as pocket money during my school days. This was a reasonable amount to spend as a child during those days.



On my way back from school when I was in the 3rd standard, one day I saw some people sitting on the roadside printing tattoos on human bodies. I observed for some time and felt tempted to have Om printed on me. I checked up the charges and found that I

had the money to pay them I got Om printed on the back of my right hand. This action of mine was reprimanded when I reached home, but I was excused since it is God's name.

Travel by trams, which was an easy mode of transport, was very reliable and comfortable. We could go to the seaport (called Bandergah) by Tram in just 2.5 Annas, equivalent to 15 paise, converted into present day Indian currency. There were Tongas, called Victoria, pulled by horses, running on roads for easy transportation. I remember having travelled a long journey by train from Karachi to Chaman, famous for grapes, along with my cousin brothers. I was studying in second class at that time. We lived in Shailabagh (near Chaman) for several days during our school holidays.

Every Sunday morning, I was expected to get ready and accompany my Babuji to Arya Samaj, on foot of course. Any hesitation or excuse used to invite scolding and slaps. So better habit developed in me to accompany Babuji on every such occasion.

There was a place outside the city of Karachi called Drigroad. It was probably some military area. They had kept a large number of trained pigeons. These birds used to fly out, move around in the sky and return to their designated



cages with the sound of music at certain timings. We used to enjoy that scene.

Basant Panchmi (beginning of spring season) used to be a day of great rejoicing for us. It used to be celebrated on a grand scale on the beaches of Karachi. Large

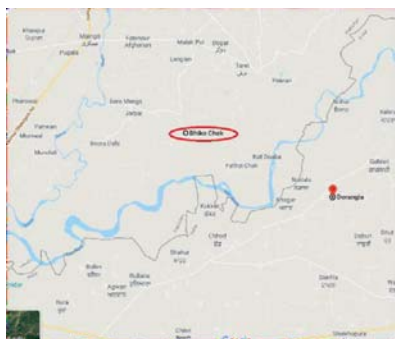
number of Hindus used to gather there in groups, right from the morning. Everyone used to be attired in Basanti colour. Scarfs with Basanti colour used to be flaunted with pride. Even food served on that day had Basanti colour particularly in Sooji ka halwa and sweet rice. It used to be a day of fun and frolic, games and sports. We were free to move around on the sands of the beaches. There were discourses on religion, Indian culture by learned saintly persons. Basant Panchmi was a good annual gathering for families and friends to meet enjoy and have social interactions.

I had no inkling about the implications of partition of the country, and our future after moving out of Karachi. I simply remember the wonderful life we lived in that beautiful city, with all the comforts, facilities and the lovely time we used to enjoy there.

CHAPTER 3: BACK TO THE VILLAGE, PAKISTAN

We packed up for good and left the city of Karachi by train for our native village, Bhikochak, Tehsil Shakargarh, District Gurdaspur. When, any date? No, I do not remember. It used to be a long overnight train journey from Karachi to our village.

I also remember that a sweet called Soan Halwa was prohibited to be taken out from that region. We used to hide the same in beds and clothes so that it could not be detected when checked. The train had to pass through many important cities like Hyderabad, Sindh, Sargodha, Okara, and Lahore (all in Pakistan now). To reach our village, we were required to change the train at Lahore, for Narowal.



From the railway station, the only transport to reach our village was on horseback. As customary, some relative would come to receive us at the railway station with the requisite number of horses. There were youngsters and even elders in the family in our village home who had never seen a locomotive train. As such, there used to be a tussle as to who would go to the railway station to receive the relatives and have an opportunity to see the train. I used to be amused by this.



Ours was a small village, situated in a remote area, with no roads, no power supply, no communication, no medical facilities or other modern-day facilities. There was neither a post office nor a police post. Horseback was the normal mode of transportation for movement from one place to another.

Just on the outskirts of our village, there was a pond. It stored enough water to meet the needs of the villagers, their cattle for the full year. Cattle would be taken there for drinking water, cleaning and bathing in it. Ladies used to wash clothes while children would enjoy swimming there. Villagers maintained it not merely as essential but as sacrosanct for lifeline.



In the village my cousins used to enjoy at my cost sometimes asking me to do what I had not experienced or known before. One day a cousin of mine took me with him for a horse ride. There was no saddle on the horseback. He made me ride the horse and after a while made the horse trot. I lost my balance and fell on the ground. It was great fun for him.

In the village youngsters in particular used to be fascinated by the type of personal items I had like shoes with laces, socks, knickers, belt, sunglasses, flashlight and even some toys. Many of these items were retained by them when we would go back to Karachi after school holidays. Details of city life, facilities available there used to astonish and baffle them.



Hindus were in minority in the village and surrounding areas, but they controlled the whole economy. Trading and agriculture were the main source of livelihood, while people of 'lower castes' used to work for them. There was harmony and good relations between all the communities although each one maintained their own identity.

I do not remember the day, or date, when we reached the village from Karachi. It could possibly be sometime in July 1947. Babuji was to leave for Dehradun the very next morning as he had to report for duty within the time allowed on transfer. As required, one horse was arranged for his journey. He was to go across the river Ravi, reach Dorangla village, my maternal uncle's place en-route, and then move on to Gurdaspur to catch a train to his destination.

CHAPTER 4: LAST FAMILY TO SAFELY LEAVE

After reaching the village the very next morning, my mother pleaded with the family elders and insisted that she would like to go to her Maika (mother's house) in Dorangla along with my Babuji. Despite all persuasions and pressures, she did not agree to change her mind for a change. She insisted that she had some very disturbing ominous feelings all through the night and that she needed a change, may be for a fortnight.



She had never insisted on any point so forcefully ever before as an atmosphere of communal tension had already developed in the village. Possibly due to looming partition of the land, the elders of the family did not want to give the impression that their relatives were leaving the village. Though tensions from division of the land were worrisome, the generations old relations between the Hindu and Muslim communities were keeping them together in the village. As the day dawned, elders gave consent to my Mom's request, and another horse was arranged to transport her and the four children.

Since she and the children were supposed to come back after a short stay of about two weeks, our luggage and belongings brought from Karachi were not unpacked. Only a few clothes needed in the summer for daily casual use were packed. When I learnt about the change in our programme, that I along with my younger brother and two sisters was also to accompany mother, I protested and created a scene not to go from the village. I used to be pampered by my paternal relatives, and as such wanted to remain with them. In the morning all my family members started their journey to Dorangla but I dragged my feet for almost a mile. Ultimately, it was decided that while others

would proceed as per programme, I would stay back in the village. So, my clothes were taken out from the luggage, and I stayed back with the joint family. My own parents and siblings left for Dorangla across the river Ravi.

Little did anybody visualise at that time that departure of my family on that day would be the last group to leave the village. Henceforth, no one could go out or enter the village for any reason except at the risk of their life. I was stuck to stay with our joint family while my Mom and siblings were stuck at my maternal uncle's house in Dorangla. There was no communication between us. Incidentally, from that day I developed some fever which turned into Typhoid over time. In a remote village of those days there was no doctor or any medical facilities available. Also, no communication facilities worth their name were available. We were confined, as if in an insulated island. Further movements, if any, were limited within the village only.

CHAPTER 5: ANXIETY AND TENSION

I still recollect the feelings of anxiety and tension of the unknown amongst our elders, though the daily life routines were carried on seemingly as normal. I did not comprehend the gravity of the situation at that time. But the incidents of arson, killings around the village every day increasingly caused fear in everybody's mind.

During my stay in the village for about two months of July and August 1947, I do not remember any chronology or sequence of events or happenings over there. Yet I do recollect a few incidents which I narrate here. We finally left the village on the fateful day of August 27th.

I continued to have fever which subsequently was diagnosed as Typhoid. No medical help was available in and around the village. They had to manage my condition with local treatment, however rudimentary it was. My elders used to be quite worried about my condition, particularly as I was under their guardianship, my father and mother being not accessible.

Fear of the unknown and anxiety about safety of family members used to be the greatest concern. Absence of information aggravated the situation. Survival on day to day basis was on Hope alone, expecting something good or some miracle to happen for their rescue. They were not lucky! Nothing of that sort happened.

Young ladies, girls and children were sent outside the village to stay with our trusted relatives who lived in better, secure locations. I was told that my cousin Raj Didi, Mahesh and Saheb were quietly sent to Nainakot to be with our Bhua's family. Similarly, cousin sisters Bimla, Champa and others were sent for safe refuge to other relatives. After all, honour of the family was at stake. Some cash and jewellery were probably also moved out for safe custody. Those who were sent

out could never come back to the village, to be with the family. They reached India through different routes and on different dates.

Two of those relatives, who are still alive, shared with me that they remember having been moved to India in a boat crossing the river Ravi. After sailing in the river for some time they were taken out of the boat and then placed on the other shore of the river, now called free India. They were moved to Gurdaspur, lodged in a refugee camp at Geeta Mandir, where they got food, clothing and other help from young men wearing black knickers and white shirts. Our family members who survived, were scattered at different locations, waiting for information about the safety and arrival of others. It was a very painful time for the young, alone without family, and above all with no means for subsistence and communication.

On many days we used to get the frightening warnings that our village would be attacked by Muslim miscreants. Extra preparations used to be made for protection from such rioters. It is not difficult to imagine the agony that used to prevail amongst all concerned.

I remember that on quite a few occasions, we used to be huddled in the house of some Muslim residents of the village, who enjoyed the confidence of our family/Hindus, so that they would protect us in case of any violent attack by radical elements. Lots of rushing around used to take place during those times.

With the passage of each day, relations between the two communities were souring and the conditions were getting worse. Our cattle-cows, buffalos, horses were removed and taken away from the stable under threat. The words of pleadings by my relatives still resound in my ears "Please leave a cow or two for providing milk to children".

Many Muslims started siding with the hardliners who declared that all the belongings of the Hindu Kafirs (infidels) would soon be their property. Such public declarations created great sense of insecurity and helplessness amongst the Hindus.

On many nights, from our rooftops, we used to observe big fires flaring up in the sky in the nearby villages. Cries, as a result of violence and destruction of property, could be observed quite clearly. All used to pray that such instances of vandalism should not happen in our village.



We Hindus were living every moment in hope against hope. Any word of peace and conciliation between the two communities used to be like a straw to a drowning person. Regular meetings and discussions used to be held between Hindu and Muslim elders. The latter would give assurances of safety and protection every time, though the daily happenings were just the opposite.

CHAPTER 6: ROGUE

Hindus of our village Bhikochak and the surrounding areas had imposed full faith in the Muslim friends of the village, particularly in one "sincere, loyal and caring" Muslim brother. Oh God, never give such a "good friend" even to my enemies! As the time passed, he proved the opposite of all human values. Far from being a protector of friends and their families, he ended up as a butcher for Hindus at the critical time. He proved in fact, to be the person who conspired and nurtured hatred against Hindus and planned to grab their wealth, property and women also. I do not know his name but since he had a major dubious role in the killing of Hindus, I would address him as "Rogue".

Cases of violence and killings were on the increase all around. They had chilling effect of lowering morale of members of my community. Everyone felt helpless. Muslims were becoming openly abusive and inimical to Hindus and started terrorising them. There were clear threats



to Kafirs to leave the village if they wanted to remain alive. Nobody, man or woman, was allowed to leave or enter the village without the permission of the Muslim activists, "goondas". Any help and/or assistance from the administration was neither available nor expected. Hindu families had to manage their safety arrangements on their own, but such measures were vehemently opposed by the Muslims.

In the absence of any authentic information, the impression spread around was that the country would be divided in two parts though the status of our village and areas around remained under suspense. Our

elders could never imagine a situation where they would have to leave their ancestral land and would be required to take refuge at some other place. They thought that under worst circumstances they might have to leave their village, land, shops, property etc. for a short period of time under the custody of their friends, and then they would return home as the communal tension and violence subsided and brought under control. This view was buttressed by Rogue and his group. They certainly wanted the Hindus to remain under the wrong impression and false hopes. This group was hatching conspiracies to finish up the Kafirs and take possession of their property. The real wicked Rogue and his mental thinking came in the open on August 27th, 1947, the fateful day when a group of about 500 to 600 Hindus were escorted to leave for India.

CHAPTER 7: PARTITION

Helplessness amongst Hindu families in the village was increasing day after day. Pressure from Muslims to leave the village was on the increase. Acts of planned violence, arson, killings in the area were increasing manifold, creating intense fear for the non-Muslims. Communications of all sorts were totally cut off. The political scenario was also very confusing and hazy. No alternatives were available. Hindus were cornered from all sides and were left with no option but to consider leaving their villages. This was a very difficult decision indeed.

Unfortunately, the Hindus were not accepting the writings on the wall despite the fact that communal venom was being spread ferociously by the Muslims.

During this difficult period, the inevitable happened. Announcement of partition of the country was officially announced and this news spread like wildfire. Although, no authentic details were known, the message went around that our Tehsil Shakargarh of Gurdaspur District had gone to Pakistan while the other Tehsils of the district across the river Ravi had gone to India. Members of our family were still hoping for some unknown help and depended upon the support of their close friend, Mr. Rogue and his associates. As such they were delaying their decision to leave the village.



CHAPTER 8: BETRAYAL

Deterioration of law and order combined with overt directions of Rogue and his friends compelled the Hindus to succumb to their pressure to leave their homes for their own safety. Hindu families around our village were also forced to fall in line with this decision. After lots of deliberations, it was agreed that a group of about 500 to 600 Hindus would leave together on a fixed day to ward off any situation of ambush or attack. Safety and security of all were cited as the prime considerations.



As such it was decided that the group should move together and be escorted adequately. All arrangements for exodus of such a large group to reach the riverbank safely, and then to be transported in boats across the river Ravi were confirmed to have been made by Rogue. I repeat that the Hindus had put their total faith in the genuine loyalty, friendship and action plan of Rogue. Nobody doubted in the least about any mal intentions or betrayal by Rogue.

Morning of 27th August 1947 was decided as the day when the group of about 500 to 600 Hindus would leave their homes and hearths, their ancestral land and depart for India. Dividing boundary between India and Pakistan was the river Ravi. To reach the riverbank the group had to travel a distance of 5 to 6 kilometres on foot. Thereafter every Hindu had to cross Ravi to reach the other shore, to land in free India. Incidentally, Ravi was ferociously in spate during those days as it always used to be during rainy season.

For such a large group of about 500 to 600 persons - to travel the distance through unsafe route, and to ensure their safe transportation in boats required detailed arrangements. Mr. Rogue assured everybody that all necessary arrangements had been systematically planned and finalised. They were just to follow his directions to reach India safely. This was repeatedly asserted by Rogue. He made it clear that the Group would be escorted personally by him and his associates so that they could protect and take care of any untoward incident. It was assured in particular that arrangements of adequate number of boats at the riverbank (called Pattan) had been made to ferry everyone across the river.

To demonstrate their confidence in Rogue and to impart general impression that the group was moving peacefully and without fear, Hindus, young and old, were required not to carry any arm sword, spear, even lathi on the day of departure. So, all had to move totally unarmed.

Yes, the group (the "Kafila") moved as planned on the morning of 27th August, 1947, peacefully, without any arms, hoping for a safe journey, though with a very heavy heart. They bid goodbye to their land. Most of the group members were on foot, a few on horse backs. They marched towards the river with fear of the unknown but trust in the friends and their loyalty sustained their confidence. The Kafila moved on its journey to reach Ravi. There was no major untoward incident en-route.

Oh God, what happened thereafter was unbelievable. Total treason, betrayal, breach of trust, faith and confidence by Rogue and his associates. They withdrew themselves from the responsibility to escort and reach the group safely, some distance before the riverbank, and left everyone to fend and defend himself. They bid goodbye and left.

CHAPTER 9: TRAPPED

The Hindu group had hardly reached the riverbank when they observed that they were being surrounded in a semicircle by Muslims, on foot, on horsebacks, fully armed with swords, daggers, axes, spears, lathis, hansia etc. They were shouting anti Hindu communal slogans, demonstrating their hatred against the very Hindu friends whom they had escorted a while ago. They were approaching in a strategic formation which encircled the Hindus and blocked them from all sides. Nobody could run away from the front, breaking their circle or from the rear as there was the Ravi river on that side. All Hindus were trapped. Intentions to kill were menacingly very clear. The "friendly Muslims" had schemed to kill the Hindus after they reached the riverbank.

Hindu elders huddled together to assess the emergent situation, but had no solution to stop the fanatic, sloganeering brutal attackers. Fighting back without any arms was a losing proposition. What happened to their life, and how to save the life and honour of ladies were urgent concerns, but they had no solution. Militants menacingly rushed towards Hindus. There was really no way to save any life. Utter confusion prevailed. Fear of death and getting killed was so real, with no way to escape. There was nobody to lead, guide or suggest the course of action.

Crucial decision had to be made within the fleeting moments. In response to this emergent disastrous situation, the young persons in the group took the initiative and asked the children, ladies and elderly to huddle together. They formed a circle around them to protect and got



ready to face the attackers. It was no doubt a desperate measure for protection and survival. The confrontation was between un-equals, unarmed against armed, those stunned by total surprise versus those prepared with a plan to kill. There were no options. Anyway, the Hindus were the victims destined to die that day!

As the Muslim attackers inched closer to the entrapped Hindus, they were surprised to find that Hindu youth were standing ready to confront them. It was at an eyeball distance.

Both sides realised that it could be a war of nerves. During those horrible moments, Muslims flashed their arms, shouted inflammatory communal slogans and charged attack on Hindus with all vehemence. Some young Hindus fought back barehanded. Some snatched arms from the killers and attacked them. They injured and even killed some Muslims. They were however outnumbered and overpowered soon. During that mayhem, the feeling of insecurity among Hindus reached a flashpoint.

CHAPTER 10: NO CHOICE LEFT

Some men women and children, who were close to the riverbank, jumped into the flooded river to escape death at the hands of the Muslims. Such action weakened the Hindu defence and morale and encouraged Muslims to attack Hindus without any resistance. At that stage, Hindus were left absolutely with no choice but to get killed or jump into the river and take a chance if they could reach the other shore, India. More and more ladies, even with infants, girls, boys, men young and old, all rushed towards the river. Most of them jumped into the waters and were swept away by the river stream before Muslims could reach them. Those, who got trapped by the Muslims just could not escape death. Only a few survived this ghastly massacre.



It is essential to note that in total breach of trust, Rogue and his associates had ensured that no boat to transport the Hindus across the river, as promised, was available at the Pattan (the area from where boats start and stop). Hindus were compelled as fate accomplice to jump into the river and risk their lives in the river Ravi. It was said that boats had been moved miles away from the Pattan.

Being unwell, I could not run around and follow my elders. I was left behind on the riverbank. I did not apprehend as to what was happening around me and remained there helpless throughout the day until about sunset.

Personally, I was hit several times, severely wounded, and left as dead. The Almighty seems to have destined those deadly wounds and injuries for me, but not death. I am 83 years old today as an eyewitness to many violent acts on that day. The ghastly scenes of human killing, blood gushing out of the human body leading to death

CHAPTER 11: HAUNTING MEMORIES

I would like to share a few incidents that I witnessed on that day (August 27th, 1947) on the riverbank.

The first nasty happening that I witnessed that morning was that Billu, a boy of about my age from our village, and I were standing near a tree holding the arms of his father, our village Pandit, looking in bewilderment. Little did we realise that a bloody Muslim had spotted us and was rushing towards us on his horse back. By the time we became



aware of this, the killer had cursed and beheaded Billu's father. Both of us instinctively ran away in different directions. I did not see the dead man again.

The first hit I got was on my back soon thereafter. It was by some long-edged weapon (like hansia) by an unrecognisable person from behind. It hit my backbone taking away a piece of flesh and causing a deep wound. I started bleeding profusely and fell down unconscious. Even when I was in that stage of unconsciousness, I was hit several times by spears by Muslim attackers, whoever passed by that spot. Their intentions were clear to ensure that every Kafir was killed, leaving no chance of survival. Anyone who saw me with deep wounds, lying and bleeding in that condition simply exclaimed and added me in the list of dead.

I have no idea when I regained consciousness. It must be in the afternoon. At that time, I recognised Billu hiding in a bush near me. He had covered himself with some cotton sheet which he got on the riverbank. We could hardly exchange a few words when Billu

cautioned me about the coming danger, two Muslims with swords flashing and coming towards us.

Billu quickly hid himself in the bush. I remained lying where I was. I found that a few others had gathered near me. The Muslim killers reached near us and asked each one to hand over cash, jewellery, and other valuable to them otherwise they would kill all of us. I did not have a penny with me. Others handed over to them whatever they were carrying with them. One elderly Sikh gentleman took out a wallet from his pocket and handed it to those attackers, pleading that he had only that much and no more.

Meanwhile, a young Sikh boy about my age got very panicky. He stood up and started crying. He implored with those Muslim attackers that he had nothing on his person. He took out his shirt to demonstrate that he had nothing to offer, begged and pleaded mercy for himself. Oh, no! One Muslim butcher hit him so hard on his neck



with his sword that he fell and died. They collected the money and went away from there, abusing us as Kafirs.

Time passed and about a dozen Hindus gathered again near the spot where I was lying. Everyone in the group was mentally reconciled to the fact that except for a miracle there was no hope to survive. I do not know what their physical condition was at that time. After some interval, another wicked Muslim duo came near us. One of them was carrying a sword and the other one an axe. They threatened us again to hand over all cash, jewellery and valuables to them otherwise they would kill everyone in the group. The elders in the group explained that they had handed over everything they had to their allies a while ago and they had been left with nothing. All their explanations, requests and beseeches had no effect on the Muslim duo. They hurled abuses in a very demeaning manner, cursed us as Kafirs and shouted that all Kafirs deserved to be killed. They had come prepared to kill.

In total disregard of the pleadings, they started the pre-planned killing. Irrespective of age, gender both started slaughtering each one of us, by rotation, first by sword and the next by axe. I have a clear picture in my mind how the lady lying by my side was hit by the axe on her neck. She started



bleeding and sighing. Oh..oh..oh, my turn was next. I was hit on my neck with the sword. God knows how I acted so smartly, threw my neck on one side in a manner that it looked as if all was over and I was dead. After me, they moved on to the next and carried out their nefarious mission of killing others in our group.

When I realised that the Muslim killers had left the place, I asked the lady by my side repeatedly (I called her Tayiji) as to what had happened. She was from our village, a Brahmin, whom the whole village respected and took care of her daily needs, food etc. She would just not utter a word except sighing. Oh..oh..oh, I could not understand what had happened to her. Fate of others in the group is not known, probably all would have died.

God granted an escape route to me some time later towards sunset. Billu was in hiding all through the day and remained unhurt. Since the river Ravi was ferociously in spate during that time, I was told that probably the others in the group might have been swept away by flooding water during that night, leaving no chance of survival for anyone.

A body of an infant drifted towards the riverbank and was seen floating around in circles. No doubt it must have separated from its mother who would have jumped into the river and could not hold the child for long due to strong water waves. One Muslim guy saw the floating dead body of the infant and exclaimed to the other about the death of another Kafir. The other Muslim looked at the dead body and asked his companion how he was so sure that the child of a Kafir (son of a snake, "supolia") was really dead. He aimed his spear at the body

of the floating dead infant and pierced the same into him. He was shouting that no Kafir should remain alive. Such was the extremism of feelings and intensity of hatred against Hindus.

Later on, I learnt that the infant was nobody other than my own cousin brother, son of my Tayaji. Incidentally, this Tayaji was my angel guardian who took complete care of me in the village, and also after I landed on the Indian side on the evening of August 27th, 1947, totally given up as dead.

Billu was the only person with whom I exchanged some conversation that evening. Surely, he remained most of the time away from me for safety reasons. There were a number of household items scattered on the ground near us. I spotted one geometry box lying there, and asked Billu if he could get me the same. Billu brought the box to me. It was an



ordinary used geometry box which contained one scale, one pencil, an eraser, a pencil sharpener and one compass. I carried this box with me to India and kept it with me even under very difficult and painful times, as a precious, sentimental souvenir, until it was lost during one of our family movements from one city to another.

CHAPTER 12: OM, MY SAVIOR

Towards the evening there were no movements seen. It was the eerie, chilling atmosphere all around. It seemed as if all was over. The sun was about to set and after a while it would all be dark, and frightening night would start. I was lying down on the ground, eyes closed with excruciating pain, mind blank, totally unaware of what was in store for me the next moment. There was



no hope nor any possibility to escape from there. Everything depended upon destiny and destiny alone. I prayed silently within myself, Om, Om, Om, tried to settle down and calm myself. I prayed to God to do whatever was best for me.

Suddenly, after a while, I saw some men rushing in one direction. They were not seen on the riverbank, so must have been hiding somewhere nearby. I watched a few of them and then enquired in my feeble voice where they were rushing to. Nobody paid any heed to what I was asking. I repeatedly made the same enquiry but it was ignored every time. I got no response. I could sense some urgency in all of them to run in the same direction. I learnt later that they wanted to reach a boat from where loud calls had been made for Hindus to reach fast, to escape from that place. Billu had already run in that direction. God knows from where I got the energy and I got up and started walking in the direction in which others had gone.

I walked about 500 steps along the riverbank with great difficulty. There I saw a boat parked in the stream, rather away from the riverbank. I noticed some hands waving to me to reach the boat

hurriedly. I waded into the river water but could not keep my balance after reaching a certain water level. Every time I tried to move forward, I would lose balance and fall. It became extremely difficult for me to move even a step forward. The situation was further aggravated when others who went past me totally ignored my inability to move forward, rather rushed fast towards the boat. The slim chance to escape from that mayhem seemed to be lost.

I continued struggling all the time to reach the boat though unsuccessfully. I would fall, get up, and fall again. Suddenly two strong arms got hold of me and stopped me from falling. The gentleman lifted me physically, carried me up to the boat in very assuring manner. He made me sit in the boat in a caring and affectionate manner.

As soon as I was seated inside the boat it started sailing back towards the Indian shore. There were about a dozen of us, a few seriously injured. I learnt subsequently that one person from our Kafila had been amongst the early ones who jumped into the river. He reached the other shore, approached and explained to the villagers about the violence perpetrated, and the indiscriminate killings of the Hindus by their own confidante Muslim friends. He requested them if some arrangement could be made to rescue any Hindu who might be alive by then. Nobody was initially ready to risk their life. The incidents of horrible, cruel killings on the other side ultimately made the villagers agree to send one boat with a gunman. It is said that the volunteers in the boat, when they reached near the shore on the Pakistan side, shouted that any Hindu needing help to move away from the river side should reach the boat fast. As a result of such calls some Hindus rushed towards the boat. I was the last person to get into it. Some Muslims might have been resting nearby. As soon as they heard the call from the boat for Hindus for safe escape, they rushed towards the boat with coarse expletives and inflammatory abuses, determined not to let any Hindu Kafir escape alive. That was the reason our boat did not wait much longer and hurriedly sailed back towards Indian shore.

I do not know how much time was taken by our boat to reach the Indian side. But as soon as the boat reached near the Pattan, the passengers sitting inside jumped out without waiting even for a moment. They moved away, perhaps due to fear and trauma. But I could not get up. Eventually, I was taken out of the boat by the gentleman who had brought me inside the boat on other side of the river. I learnt later that he was our next-door neighbour in the village although I did not recognise him when I was seated on the riverbank.

CHAPTER 13:

MY GUARDIAN ANGEL, TAYAJI

The sun had set in the West and it was becoming quite dark in the night. I lied there on the riverbank unattended, waiting for someone I knew to come. The Hindus who had reached the Indian shore waited anxiously for their family members, relatives and friends to come. They gathered near the Pattan as it could be the most convenient location to meet. Individuals trickled in one by one, weeping and crying. Their blank eyes looked around in all directions for their own, but hardly anybody was seen. All were aware that their family members had jumped into the river about the same time. Therefore, casualties at the hands of the Muslims were not expected although fear of their getting swept away in the river increased.

As the time passed, the realisation that the family members had not been able to cross the river and might have been swept away by the waves became stronger. But the hopes were still very high about the safe arrival of those who were young and good swimmers. Somebody said he had seen some of our family members swimming together with the support of wooden logs. Some others were seen having reached very close to the riverbank on our side. None of them reached. Time weighed very heavy since it was getting very dark and cloudy. Strange enough, one of my uncles who was somewhat mentally ill, reached the Indian shore. When asked, he said there was no water on his way and he comfortably walked on the sandy riverbed and crossed the river.

There were more disappointments with the passage of time. All were fully conscious that the river Ravi was in full spate and it would not but sweep away everything inside the water or on the banks during the night. Therefore, the time for moving away from the riverbank and survival was very limited. This thought by itself was very worrying and horrifying. It was a strange irony that only a handful of young children, in teens or less, and a few elderly persons reached near the place where we were that night. No lady nor any young man including good swimmers reached.

During that dark evening, full of utter desperation, while I was lying listlessly on the riverbank my angel Tayaji spotted me. It was not possible to gauge his grief as his wife and two sons had not reached by that time, and they have not been seen till today. Even Tayaji is not alive now. He was shocked to see me bleeding so profusely. Immediately he took me under his care. As the lingering hope of some others to reach the Indian side waned and the weather started getting wet, the dozen people gathered there decided to move away from the Pattan.



Someone confirmed that he had been able to find a small Gurudwara nearby where they could take shelter. All surviving persons in the group moved to that Gurudwara and sought shelter there. The name of the place probably was Kalanor, but I am not sure.

A small cot was arranged for me, and I was made to lay down on that. I was bleeding continuously throughout the night. My Tayaji told me later that he found two earthen pots which he used to collect the blood so that it would not soil the floor. He used to keep one pot near my body to collect the oozing blood and would empty it in the open where it would flow away with the raining water. Meanwhile the other pot would be kept under my body to collect the blood. This process continued practically the whole night. No medicine or medical help was available there.

In the morning, an indigenous "Desi" method to stop the flowing blood was thought of. A piece of cloth was burnt, and its ash was to be applied on the wounds. But they found that the clothes I was wearing were fully drenched in blood and had got stuck to the body. It was

very difficult and painful to remove the clothes. So, my clothes were cut, torn, and removed and then the ash was applied. At that time, I was dressed exactly in the manner when I was born ten years ago. A cotton bedsheet covered my body later.

The area around the Gurudwara was heavily flooded for miles across. Movement from one place to another was very difficult, if not impossible. We had no option but to continue staying at that place till the flood situation improved somewhat. During that period of grief, time passed wishing, hoping and expecting some others to come alive.

With every passing day some news would reach that a particular person had been seen and that he had also been trying to contact others. Some villagers or the odd person who moved around were the only medium of information. A few others joined us at the Gurudwara, place of our shelter. After 4 to 5 days, as the rains stopped and the floods receded to a safe level, and also having realised the futility of waiting longer for others arrival, Tayaji along with others decided to move out of the Gurudwara and reach Dorangla village where we already had some relatives and my Nanka (house of my maternal uncle).

CHAPTER 14:

REUNITED

It was a tough journey from the Gurudwara to Dorangla, about 4 to 6 kilometers, wading through the muddy waters. Four persons carried me on their shoulders, with me lying on the cot. Others who came to know about our movement joined us en-route to Dorangla. The news about killings, barbaric inhuman treatment given to us by the Muslims had spread around, and our people in Dorangla were very furious after knowing such a great human loss of their relatives. As our small group reached near the village boundary, I remember many people watched us pass by from their roof tops. Later on, the residents of Dorangla village used to identify me as Agya wanti's (name of my mother) son, who had come on the cot.

The degree of anger, hate, and the urge to wreck vengeance against Muslims was very high in the hearts of all Hindus. I learnt later that as a measure of retaliation and vengeance, the Hindus of the village gathered all Muslims, young and old, man and woman in the village and gave them the same treatment that Hindus had received at the hands of their Muslim friends, and killed them.

Although this action was to give vent to their anger and grief, it just could not compensate for the losses we suffered due to treason and betrayal by Muslims on other side of the river Ravi. We counted eleven members of our family as dead, those who could not cross the river Ravi to witness the freedom of India.

In Dorangla, I joined my mother and siblings, who had already come there earlier at our maternal uncle's house. While recovering from the trauma and injuries, the haunting memories of that period have faded, perhaps due to my medical condition. I used to miss my father too much and cried for him quite often. The circumstances in those days did not allow my father to visit us at Dorangla. After some time, however he managed to visit us barely for 2-3 days, and then left for his office. But his departure was not mentioned to me that day.

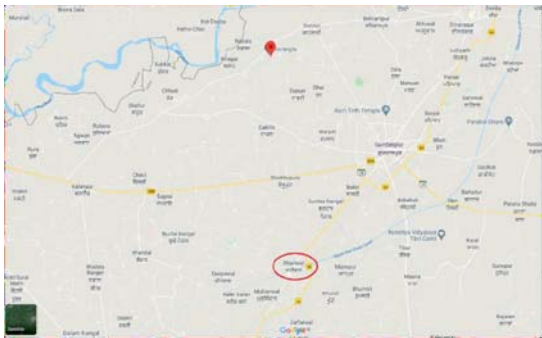
One indelible picture, I have in my memory is how I used to be carried by four persons on a cot, to a doctor for dressing of wounds and other treatment. This doctor was not residing earlier in the



village. It's not known to me where the doctor came from, maybe the elders would have known. Visits to the doctor and dressing of the wounds used to be a very painful process, but I had to endure that.

CHAPTER 15: BLESSINGS OF THE ALMIGHTY

My Tayaji and other members of the family did not want to remain dependent on their relatives in Dorangla beyond a reasonable time. So, after some days as the weather improved and having made some arrangements for basic daily needs, they moved to Dhariwal in district Gurdaspur. Why Dhariwal was chosen as the place to settle, I am not privy to that, may be proximity to relatives in that region. I stayed back with my mother, because the doctor attending on me advised against body jerks, and also against long rough drive in Tonga on dilapidated roads. My mother with four of us (her children) joined the joint family at Dhariwal after my medical condition became stable.



This is a brief description of events based on old memories in my life, the way I experienced them just around partition of our country and particularly on August 27th, 1947; and also the heavy price our folk from remote villages paid in the fight to achieve independence of India. What an irony, we were labelled as refugees having gone through all the tortures, losses and sacrifices when we reached our own country. We lost cash, jewellery, land, wealth, valuables even human heads.

Wouldn't you shudder at the very thought of having witnessed beheading of human heads, and would your blood not boil when big political leaders of the country extol that "Bina Khadag Bina Dhal", meaning without any sword and shield, and without shedding a drop of blood they got freedom for the countrymen? Don't be naïve. Be honest!

As I said, my objective is to record happenings as I personally experienced them around the time of the partition of our country in 1947 in this memoir. It records the migration of about 500 to 600 Hindus out of whom barely 50 could reach the shores of free India as per the best possible information from all affected persons/families. I am one of those 50 lucky ones in this lot.

There were undoubtedly many such events during that period, even more ghastly and barbaric in other parts of the country, which others can share. I stop now, having narrated the happenings of more than 70 years before, as honestly as I could remember them.

EPILOGUE

For me personally, it has been a long journey of life from age 10 to over 83 years now. My family went through tremendous amounts of ups and downs in all aspects of life. Like nomads, we had to move as victims of circumstances from one city to another, Dorangla to Dhariwal to Dehradun to Narela to Sonapat and finally now at Faridabad. Most of this time, my father had to be away from us as his postings used to be in very far flung places.



It has been a tough uphill climb for me from a stage where I had been given up as dead on the bank of river Ravi to moving about with physical disability, and then moving on the path of physical, educational and professional recovery and growth. It has all been possible only due to extreme kindness of the Almighty.

I am living a full life with three very affectionate, loving, caring children, Sangeeta, Sanjeev and Rajeev, well settled in life and the grandchildren faring well for themselves. My life partner of over 53 years, Sudershan, departed for her heavenly abode six months ago on Feb 10th, 2020.



After living life in such a varied manner, I cannot but express my gratitude in all humility to the blessings of my parents, elders, friends, and above all to the Almighty.

May all be happy. May all be free from illness.

May all see what is good. May no one suffer.

Om...Om...Om.



PARTITION STORY

Joginder Singh Kapoor



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CHAPTER 1

It was wintry day of December 1935 at Hafizabad (West Pakistan) the cold wave was in the full swing, most of the human beings as well as animals had tugged their heads within their legs and were braving the weather with the help of charcoal or wood burning.

In the house of Chaudhry Narain Das Kapoor in Mohalla Kapooran (Samadhi Mohalla) a number of family members had gathered and there was lot of hustle& bustle – the gents were sitting in the living room munching Groundnut & Gur and enjoying the warmth of the burning of the charcoal whereas the ladies clustered around the big fire in the huge veranda of the house talking very slowly unlike the habit of the women and their faces depicting great anxiety. The clock struck 11 night and there was noise in a room and lot of Stir and the two women coming out and going into the room frequently fetching one or the other item. Around 11.35 am one women came out of the room and said (Wadhain, Kaka Hua Aye) congratulations, male child is born. Immediately there was demonstration of joy in both the clusters i.e. women as well as men, the young girls and boys showed lot of pleasure by banging the kitchen plates with spoons. Almost after an hour Dr. Veeran normally called Veeran Bhuawa came out and said “bhai sahib wadian sab theek hae Bacha takra ae ate bara pyara ae te hunliawmethian” – by that time all the men had also joined the women folk. Chaudhry sahib pulled some currency from his pocket gave to Dr. Veeran and the Sweets distribution and celebrations started.

This son was Ch. Narain Das & Kesran Dai Kapoor's 15th child and after four consecutive girls hence was very precious and sought for male child in the family.

The child was very dear for the family hence the mother being over conscious started eating hot items on the advice of old ladies, resulting into acute digestion problem to the child and to the mother, none of the medicine was helping in cure. In those days one Hakim (Sadhu) was camping in the Shiv Mandir and was famous for

treatment of chronic diseases hence the family approached him who said, “Do not worry only give the child goat milk for a couple of months and give grinded Souaf with sugar to mother and a little of Souaf boiled water to the child.” Accordingly, the goat milk was arranged and the child was fed on goat milk for about two months and slowly shifted totally on to mothers' milk and Buffalos milk. The child grew very healthy and used to take much more milk than the in take of normal children. It is said that Chaudhrani Kesran Dai would not tell the quantity of milk taken by his child to any one, fearing evil spirit.

CHAPTER 2

Hafizabad is an ancient city, and is home of one of the most amazing canal networks in the world. It is situated at a height of 800 feet (240 m) above sea-level and is located between 32°-20' north latitudes and 73°-12' and 73°-46' east longitude. It is 90 km away from Provincial Capital Lahore. The Chenab River forms its Northern and North-Western Boundary on the North-West it touches Mandi Bahauddin, on the South lays Sheikhpura, on the West Sargodha and Jhang districts and on the East Gujranwala District.

There are a number of stories about establishment of the town but the most believed story is that Emperor Akbar was on hunting and got separated in the jungle from his team and felt extremely thirsty. Emperor after lot of search spotted one light at a distance and on reaching the spot found a hermit sitting in the hut to whom he told about his thirst. The hermit called the deer, grazing nearby and offered their milk to the king. The king was very happy and asked the hermit to demand something from him on which the hermit desired that nearby a town be build for the convenience of his disciple and the king readily agreed and the town by the name Hafizabad was established.

Ch. Narain Das was a big landlord, a great hunter, a popular social figure and adorned with number of titles from the Government and was living in Mohala Kapooran.

Later in the year-the family shifted to a big house in Mohalla Buban Bukhari where huge stable was adjoining the dwelling, having one big door and an opening through one standard door from the house. The stable used to have minimum two Buffaloes, two horses-one far riding and other far bringing fodder etc. for animals. The Buffaloes had to be milked by family member only, instruction was that one must have (tharan) direct milk in the mouth and a pat to the animal at the end-Chaudhry Sahib used to say that the process is to inculcate love with the animal. The young ones of the family used to stand in turn for filling their glass with milk-the size of the glass would change with age/capacity of the child.

CHAPTER 3

I was simply one-year-old when my father and the elder brothers started putting me on the back of the horse as well on the buffalo and slowly taking for ride and later for the driving of Tonga/ cart. At five years of age I was fully trained to administer Chhach (butter milk) with mustered oil to young calves.

It is told that I was brought up by the elder sisters and mainly the unmarried elder sister Dayamanti. Basically, mother had not much responsibility for my development.

I grew a handsome, lovely and much pampered child by the large family, so much so all the brothers, sisters used to give temptation of gifts etc. to sleep with them.

Playing with the immediate elder sisters Kamla and Bimla, and nephews I attained my four plus years of age and the time was to get admitted in the school, at that time there was no choice of school since there were only Government Primary Schools. The primary school was situated nearby but Chaudhry sahib and Brother Jagdish Singh took me to a well adjoining the main bazaar where Pandha (Pandit) performed some puja and then I was got admitted in the school on the circular road. I studied here unto fourth class under different teachers and the head master Mr. Jagannath. In the School I am unable to recollect any remember able event but for that before the start and the close of the school we used to play. The games generally played were Kabaddi, by making boundary through school bags and shoes and regular fighting by Takhti (a piece of wood for writing).

During this period there were three Kapoor children in the school, Devinder Singh, Joginder Singh (Me) and Hardev and all had nick name kaka. The Lassi (chaach) with plenty of butter used to be brought from these houses for the



masters. Study in the school was very little unlike today's system and typically before the close of the school there used to be reciting of parhas (Tables) in each class by dividing the class in two groups. There used to be regular, best handwriting competition



on every Saturday, the writing used to be on the wooden pieces (Takhti) and pen (Kalam) of kana (), the teacher used to make/ sharpen with his knife, purchased/ replaced with collection of money from the students. All the teachers used to keep a stick in hand which could be taken as the identity and frequently used on the children for not doing homework and mischief. The stick would also get broken and the teacher would get the same replaced through collection.



In the evening the games played in our big courtyard within family children used to be play tarkla salai, khotian (Donkey) pithu, Shatapu and seasonally/occasionally inhaling of naswar () in competition and resultantly loud sneezing (considered good for clearing nose and throat). Eating of fresh/hot roasted gram (hoolan) sitting in circle on low height stools (moorha) was cherished seasonal fun.

At night in the street the games were pakaranpakrai, uchnich, chupanchhupai which was played by boys and girls together in the street.



Big boys used to play kabbadi, wrestling, volleyball, Khutian improvised hockey, gulidanda etc. in the ground nearby, in the evenings. In winter early morning game used to be (maranmarai) catch the ball and hit the one you can with ball.

In addition to the above games some boys used to compete for race of the cow calves- once I got seriously hurt outside the ground of my elder brother's in laws at Katal Garh . Horse riding and cart/tonga driving and regular competition of the same were other special hobby of some people.



As I am Concerned I grew up to be a very good rider and would compete and challenge any one even elder on the road and would attract enormous complaints of my fast driving of the horse. Different people used to picturesque before my mother and sisters that I drive so fast that become invisible on the back of the horse emanating fear & big shock to viewers, hence do not allow me the horse independently.

My mother afraid of my being hurt and extreme love would scold me every evening on my coming back (tariantunganbhandaiagi agar tu kal godalaekegaya) by saying I would break your legs if you go on the horse again.

My father being a bold man would say that the boys grow only getting hurt (Munde dhigdhigke hi vade hunde nae) and the show went on in spite of the swear opposition of my mother.

The next training was administering curd milk mixed with mustard oil to the calves of buffaloes in their mouth through Bamboo tube and accompany the elder brothers to assist them to train the horses for tonga/cart and learning driving of Tonga.

The final learning in this context and my interest was to give masalla (improvised medicine) to the horse in his mouth--- an extremely difficult/expert and brave act by a child).

In the year 1944 I passed 4th standard and got admitted in 5th standard in Arya High School which was around two kilometres from our

house. Almost all the students used to go on foot and wearing a head gear was compulsory and very strictly administered by the Head master Dina Nath and PT master Shadi lal.

In the year 2011, I visited Pakistan and paid a visit to the school which is now a Government Girls High School. Here I was given warm welcome, taken around the school which had some extension and very well maintained. Here I could recognise my class which was in the same room, I addressed the students who were extremely happy. I vividly remembered some incidences like my missing the classes for jumping over the rivulet at the back of the school with my friends specially Prithvi Raj Chopra and once I fell in the Nala, spoiled my clothes and as a result got beating from school and scolding from home.



The school was out of the city and on the way a number of Ashrams were situated where basic facilities like-- could be had if needed. At the end of the school curriculum, there used to be on routine mutual fights – it looked as if these were only mock exercises and none of the elders will interfere, even the teachers will pass by saying (nalarumundeo, mud jao) stop, do not fight—This was the harmony & culture of my city.

CHAPTER 4

Hafizabad was very popular for its Ramlila and there were two separate Ram Lila groups which were in severe competition with each other, almost all residents used to go to witness the Ramlila with family, which was staged at night normally between 8 pm to 12 night, this was one of the best entertainment in those days for about 10 days. We used to play Ramlila in gali peepal wali and the roles of Ram, Laxman and Hanuman used to be played by me, Prithvi Raj, Ram Parkash. Khairaiti Lal strongly claimed to perform the role of Hanuman and on our saying he would not be able to carry both Ram and Laxman, Khairaiti Lal opted for trial to carry both of us, consequently his carrying both of us on his shoulders and running in the street, had a fall hurting Prithvi at the knee resulting in some bleeding and apparently a few scratches to me on the elbow resulting into lot of pain.

I felt much uneasy and left for home where after meals I sat down for the study which could not be possible since I was in acute pain. Around 10 pm when the pain was unbearable, my arm was excessively swollen and not moving I had no choice but to tell my mother. I told my mother about the injury who immediately opined that I had broken my arm and gave me some pain killer to reduce pain and compelled me to take a glass of hot milk mixed with haldi (Turmeric) and whole family got to know the incidence and were worried. The next day early morning I was taken to Peelo village where a famous bone setter set my arm. How ever after a few weeks when I went for checking, it was perceived that the arm was wrongly set and could only be rectified after breaking joint and resetting the same but my father refused to get it done —the arm is still not straight and there is one-inch difference in the length of both the arms.

My father and mother decided to go to Nanakana Sahib with S. Sewa Singh and his wife on the Gurupurab in the year 1946 and on my crying for going with them they did not drop their programme but reposing utmost faith in Baba ji decided to take me along. At

Nanakana Sahib there was lot of rush and in the Darshani Deuwadi the mischief mongers used to create commotion and cut pockets and my father was also a victim. The Purse of my father was picked from the internal pocket by cutting his coat and even the picketers took our shoes from the deposit since the shoe slip was in the purse.

It is pertinent to mention that there was extreme rush and nowhere one could move without a push from left & right but my arm was perfectly protected, it looked as if Babaji had declared the area untouchable—Great.

My father reported the incidence of pick pocket to the Gurudwara management who had well managed and elaborate arrangement, had caught a number of thieves/pickpocketiers and recovered from them lot of purses and other items but our purse could not be traced.

Our family was large and three sisters and one brother was married and the custom was that the daughters with their children would come to live with their parents for almost whole vacations hence we used to have large number of children together, playing together in our huge court yard and the boys also playing outside. The big cluster of my nephews and nieces some of them elder to me was a threat and encroachment on my rights, they would even snatch my own toys - but a great fun. Later my deceased sister Kaushalya's son Madan Lal stayed permanently with us and another sister also settled at Hafizabad and this fun and encroachments continued. All my nephew and nieces used to tease me by calling “Mama” but never any one outsider could dare to say so- this was our fear/prestige and family unity.

CHAPTER 5

My elder brother Jagdish Singh's marriage was in April 1947 and I along with my brother Iqbal Singh went to Kaulu Tarar for bringing the white mare. It was around noon that we reached at the village and saw Attaullah Tarar Sahib inspecting the grooming of the mare and getting shoes fixed to his bulls. Attaullah Sahib gave us warm welcome, served us Chach (cured milk) with plenty of butter and after making us comfortable said “Ghori Tyar Hai. The mare is ready. The mare was of pure white colour, very robust and not being used for a number of days and being given special diet to make her



better runner. I requested my brother to let me ride on the mare which my brother readily agreed. However, Attaullah Sahib told that mare was difficult to manage/ ride, hence it is not safe for the child to ride on. My brother looked at my face and assured Attaullah Sahib that I was a very good rider and nothing will happen to me. Ultimately the mare was given to me and in reality she was damn strong and naughty. The mare first had lot of erratic dance then stretched her legs, made her stationery and refused to move and after the beating by Malik Sahib all of a sudden she ran into the Dera (Shed) which was of low height, probably with the intention to harm the rider—my head could be chopped of. All the gathering at the Dera got afraid, started praying God for my safety. However it was to their surprise and amusement, I clinked to the neck of the mare catching the bridal just near her mouth, hence no harm could be done to me and the mare had to come out from the other side of Dera unsuccessful, to obey my command.

Everybody there appreciated my courage and skill and blessed me. Attaullah Sahib was very happy and proud and could not resist his emotions said ” Ae Mere Bhera Chaudhry Da Putar Ae, Ae koi kararthurahai” (He is son of my brother Chaudhry and not a bania), He came running and kissed my forehead – what a great love.

CHAPTER 6

Hafizabad people were strong & hard working, lively, hilarious, full of vigour, liberal, and people of parties & celebrations and embodiment of harmonious & lively culture, Hindu & Muslim were basically from the same race, had almost no religious strife and used to celebrate their functions & festivals together throughout the year with great enthusiasm like Deepawali, Dussehra, Id, Muhuram, Lohri, Baisakhi etc. in addition to some fairs, nautanki, toorantalki etc. The Animal fair of Hafizabad generally was held in the month of March. It used to be the biggest fair in the Lahore division with elaborate arrangements of entertainment; the main attraction here used to be drama, nautanki, circus etc. Various sports viz wrestling, kabbadi, catching of wrist etc. were also played. The aristocratic/ chivalrous game of polo/ peg lifting was exhibited with great enthusiasm in which generally the winner used to be Malik Feroz Khan Awan, Ch. Narain Das Kapur, S. Bhadur Singh kaliaiwale.

Another very popular event was Dusehra celebration, burning of Ravana and his family after completion of Ram Lila in the huge Idgah ground (land donated by Dewan Harikishan Kapur). Here all men, children and some women from all religious faith from the town and surroundings through all mode of transport used to come to see the event. The craze was to take home some piece of bamboo stick used in the body of the Ravana, since the same was considered very auspicious and lucky.

In the year 1946 after riots in Calcutta, UP, the religious harmony to some extent got jeopardised in Hafizabad also and the Hindu and Muslim organisations like RSS, Muslim league, Akali Dal got active and started grouping and strengthening, holding secret meetings etc. The people also started gathering weapons for their safety and erecting iron gates. However most of the people were not much scared and were of the opinion that they would not leave their houses even though Pakistan.

The Mohalla Babben Bukhari was totally Muslim area and only three Hindu families used to live in the area, where as two other families i.e. Amar Nath Chopra (Rtd. Inspector police) and Hans Raj Bhandari shifted somewhere else. Our family was lone family living at the time undaunted by the circumstances and braving dangerous rumours, but internally very conscious and had made elaborate arrangements like keeping of weapons whole night vigil etc. The house was amidst the Muslims and some people used to come for listening radio news and would even discuss their planning etc. before us, as if we were in their group.

In the schools telling proudly concocted stories about possessing of different weapons and there use to friends proudly had become very common pass time activity.

CHAPTER 7

The trouble in Hafizabad started on 13th August 1947 when some shops were set on fire, and our school mercilessly burnt and looted.

In the early hours of 15th August 1947 two brothers, Moolraj and Vasdev got slaughtered near our house which partially I witnessed and other two Sardari lal and Satpal were saved by putting them against the wall and standing before them as a joint. Chaudhry Sahib scolded the miscreants who because of respect and shame ran away hiding their faces.

At about 9am an ocean of people from all around Hafizabad gathered along the railway line opposite Gurudwara Chavi Padshahi with the attention to hoist Pakistan flag on the Gurudwara which was resisted by Sikhs and there was exchange of fire between Sikhs/Nihang and Muslims accompanied by police. After some time of exchange of fire, police and Muslim leaders visualised the ammunition, strength and courage of the Sikhs hence decided to retreat and the crowd went towards Mohalla Kapooran but this Mohalla again had good defence under the control of Dewan Ram Nath Kapoor recently retired Superintendent of Police.

The Muslim elders due to past harmony/mutual respect or any other reason advised the crowd to retreat from there also and finally the crowd had procession in the main bazaar—this was clearly visible from the roof of our house.

The aftermath of the incidence of 15th August where my father saved two brethren Satpaul and Sardari lal by putting them against the wall and standing before them with his huge body like a giant however Mool Raj and Vasdev could not be saved. some other incidences and advice of family friends like Malik Alibhadur (president Muslim league and Pegh Vend Brother moreover the muslim refugees had come to Hafizabad and tension prevailed. the family decided to shift to our house in Mohalla Kapooran and ultimately go to India and accordingly we shifted in last week of August.

We boarded the truck on 23rd of –September 1947 with 600 to 700 Hindu & Sikhs to go to India. The Trucks were parked on the circular road and a number of good Muslims were gathered there with tears in the eyes to bid good bye to their Hindu brethren. Taking along food grains was strictly prohibited but Shabir Husain, and Chacha Karim brought a bag of about 40 kg wheat flour and sneaked the same under our luggage saying it may be of extreme need.

The convoy commander was one major Khanna belonging to Hafizabad and was very alert and careful, the convoy continued till a few miles before Shahdara without any hurdle, where it stopped abruptly. The commander called, the Representative from each truck and the drivers, and briefed them about the sensitivity of Shadara area, told them that they were going through very sensitive area and ordered everyone to drive bumper to bumper and not to stop on the way under any circumstances. He also instructed who so ever knows driving should sit with the driver at the front seat and in case of any disobedience /mischief push the driver out and take on to the driving. He put one army jeep in front and one at the back and put some soldiers on some trucks in the middle in alert position.

The situation beyond Shahdara ie border area was again assessed by the commander most vulnerable hence decided not to cross the Wagah border on the day and diverted the convoy towards Lahore DAV college camp and wait for the right moment; here we remained in the camp for six days. The ration in the camp was very meagre only roasted grams and boiled wheat were distributed in limited quantity resultantly the wheat flour given to us by our well-wishers was of great help and to wipe the tears of some other children.

Finally, on 30th Sept. we again boarded the Army trucks to proceed to Amritsar under utmost fear as per the previous reports of massacre and every one was sitting in the trucks like a duck. The convoy crossed the Wagah border in the evening and seeing the Indian flag every one sitting like a duck, engrossed with fears, suddenly stood up

and started raising slogans “Hindustan Zindabad” etc. and for the moment every atrocity, hardship, difficulty was forgotten.

The convoy stopped 3-4 miles before Amritsar and we were asked to unload; here a number of persons who had reached India earlier were searching for their relations. In our case my uncle Dewan Paras Ram Kapur and my eldest brother Ch. Inder Singh Kapur, who had come earlier through Jammu spotted us and took us to Sharifpura where they had occupied a house. We reached the house around 10 pm and had nothing to eat, however a little quantity of rice was available with us which could be boiled by burning Chhaj (used for separating wheat from hay) and distributed to all the family members.

Early morning lots of mourning sounds were heard and on enquiry it was found that cholera epidemic was in full swing in the area. My mother who was a strong lady got extremely worried and gave ultimatum to the elders of the family to shift to any other safe place even open ground and till then no cooking or eating would be done.

The elders went in search of some accommodation and could find some local contact who immediately offered two big Halls as temporary shelter for the family, in Katra Ahluwalia near Golden Temple. The family reached the place, after 11 p m. extremely hungry. The full efforts were put in to find some food to eat but were of no use, since all the shops were closed. Lastly our elders went to Golden temple and found some chapattis and dal from the Baba Tul and the same were distributed. we lived in Amritsar for 10-15 days, bathing in the Sarover and daily Ardas at Harmandir Sahib.

CHAPTER 8

After reaching India the challenge before every one was to find a shelter and livelihood, accordingly everyone wanted to settle at the place where one had relations/ contacts/ earning opportunity or the metropolitan cities. My father, Brother –in- law, two brothers went to Delhi to look for some shelter etc. since we had very close relations settled there but were disappointed with their cold response and decided not to live in Delhi. During these days, there were no regular passenger trains or buses operating hence they took up one goods train which stopped at Panipat, where they happen to meet an old acquaintance/ relation who welcomed them with warmth and got my brother Ch. Jagdish Singh employed in blanket finishing factory as clerk on rupees 60 per month which was of great help and the family decided to settle at Panipat.

Accordingly Ch. Inder Singh & Ch. Jagdish Singh remained at Panipat and others proceeded for Amritsar to bring the family.

Panipat is an historical & ancient city, 90 km north from Delhi and 169km south of Chandigarh on NH-1, where three battles were fought in 1526, 1556, and 1761 which were turning points in Indian history. The first battle was fought between Mughal Chief Baber and Delhi Sultan Ibrahim Lodhi. The second battle was between Mughal Baryam Khan, the guardian of young Mughal emperor Akbar and Hemo.

The third battle was fought between the Maharatha army under Bhao Sahib and Ahmed Shah Durani.

The city is now famous for textile – bed covers, bed sheet, blankets, carpets; it is biggest centre of “Shoddy yarn”. ”Achar Pachranga of Panipat is well known Indian pickle, Panipat also has heavy



industries with a refinery of Indian Oil Corporation, National thermal power corporation plant. The main places of attraction in Panipat are Museum, Tomb of Ibrahim Lodhi, Kabuli Bagh, Devi Mandir, Kala Amb, Salar Gate and Tomb of saint Bu Ali Shah Qalander and Rama Sharnam.

The whole family as per schedule reached Panipat, but the city was under curfew as the result of riots hence we had to stay at the railway station for 6-7 days under one Shesham tree, cooking whatsoever available and eating the same in the open – horrible.

At the railway plat form the anxiety and pass time activity for us all was to look for relatives/ known people in the train and this way, a good number of families of Hafizabad and its superb got message that Chaudhry sahib family has decided to settle at Panipat and they also followed suit. Dewan Vashno Dass Kapur (Tya Ji) who was posted as Deputy Collector some time back at Panipat also opted to settle at the place after meeting us. He got a big house allotted in Mohalla Rajputan where we lived all together including a number of other relatives – this was the relations support and culture. Presently Hafizabad people are settled at far of places doing very well in their profession.

“Yaron ne ja kay duur basa lee hain bastian
Bikhri huye hain pattian jaise gulab ki.”

CHAPTER 9

As mentioned earlier Hafizabad was very popular for Ram lila and there were two clubs functioning i.e Ramlila Gosain and Ramlila Sunarian. The former was under the leadership of Pandit Hargopal and they opted for building Dharamsala at Haridwar known as Ram Bhawan/Hafizabadi for which further funds were also collected. The later started staging Ram lila at Panipat in a magnificent way under the patronage of Dewan Hari Kishan Kapur and Chaudhry Narain Das Kapur. Dewan Chaman Lal Kapur and Chaudhry Jagdish Singh Kapur were its managers. The Ram lila in those days was best way of entertainment and rich people/elite used to go to witness, with their full family even all the ten days of celebration. However, with the change of technology, culture and attitude of the public the stage Ram lilas are the thing of the past.

Biggest challenge before our family now was livelihood (Roti Rozi) and unluckily none in the family had much experience of business. It was a sheer chance we could get one Dhobhi Ghat and started a laundry business in partnership with someone who again had no experience of the business resultantly incurring of loss and the partnership broke and some viability was obtained by my brothers Ch. Jagdish Singh & Ch. Iqbal Singh with hard work and expert advice. My sister Kamla & I also used to support the business by pressing the clothes at home to save the wages of the press man.

Later the soda water factory was also started, by getting some loan from sister Dayamanti. I and both my elder sisters used to live very amicably I would even save the colliage/pocket allowance and bring Salad item with which we all used to have the food. We had also kept a few hens which were substantial support to serve the eggs to the guests and by selling the same we could bring some other petty items for hospitality for a stream of guests, but the biggest challenge before us was to behave and look aristocrat before the relations and others in spite our meagre income—what a difficult challenge.

Eldest brother Ch, Inder Singh started fruit and vegetable commission business and was living separately with his family, quite often I used to go to his shop and get fruit etc. for the home.

We & Taya ji (Dewan Vaishnoo Das) were also allotted some temporarily agricultural land where it is present Model Town and later we were allotted land at Bich piri. The assignment to bring vegetables from the farm almost daily was of Basheshwar Nath (my cousin) and me and we used to spend lot of time in catching some grazing Donkey behind the S D High School to take to the well to carry vegetables for us, but hardly we would be successful since the donkey would normally get himself free and in the process many times we got injuries also but the fun continued. The permanent allotment of land in lieu of the huge land left in Pakistan is till date a Mistry for me and the younger lot.

I got admission in 7th class in S D High School which was hardly half a kilometre from our house and passed my Matriculation Examination in the year 1952 and before the announcement of the result got employment as a work charge labour on the electricity line being erected between Panipat to Safidon- I was assigned a light job at the beginning i.e. to fill the log sheet of the vehicles, sitting in the camp office but later was put on the miscellaneous labour job and fabrication of transformers on the sight - Here in my employment of about three months I got three significant injuries— Broke my head by a big bolt which fell on my head from the top of the tower while I was cleaning the items at the base of tower on sight, the bleeding was profound and no first aid available hence a piece of cloth was burnt and put on the wound to stop bleeding the small hump is still visible.

The second injury was when I burnt my arm while lifting recently switched of electric motor which was quite heavy.

The third injury was when I cut my index finger of left hand while lifting some parts of the transformer with one co-worker which were heavy, however this cut proved a blessings and life time reminder to

me later when in power I always looked at the finger while giving punishment or discharging any employee, and resultantly got popular for counselling and verbal firing to the errant employees.

The matriculation result was out and my father was very happy that I have passed entrance and took me to different big bosses whom he knew well for the job but felt humiliated as I had done only Matriculation and they wanted minimum graduation. I was also taken for the Delhi police for the job of constable, where my father had quite good acquaintance with the top bosses but again I got rejected since I was under age and my weight and chest was also less than the required. The income of the house was very meagre, no college at Panipat, hence it was not possible for me to have college Education. To do some job to supplement house earning was my utmost necessity.

Ultimately I got employed as a clerk and later worked as typist in Rashk-Ke-Munir Scent manufacturing Company, Phawara Chowk Delhi at rupees 55/ per month with good offices of my uncle Sh. Kidar Nath Barry, and I started living with my dear Bhuwaji & Phupherji (Aunti& Uncle) near Sadar Bazar and used to go & come on foot from Phuwara Chowk, but for some time when I would use tram for some distance by paying one anna (six paise) only with an effort to save money.

I had merely worked for 3-4 months when my uncle Dharambir came to Delhi liked me and took me to Bombay/ Mumbai with a promise to make me manager of his business for which I was damn happy. On reaching Bombay around 10 am I was left at home and asked to rest and on the very next day was put to work i.e. going with uncle around 10 am on local train, working as orderly on the shop. The lunch used to come from home for every one through dabhawala and I used to get tea in the evening with bhujia then wait till uncle finishes his drink and we chase the last local train to Santa Cruz. The routine was to take taxi and chase the train at all stations and finally catch where so ever possible or otherwise reach home around 11 pm on taxi.

After a few days the routine got changed, I was ordered to stay back at the shed and help Satya Paul in mixing colour till after noon and then catch train and reach shop at Masjid Mor—my goodness all my body, clothes used to emanate colour even the cough was full of different colours .The duty was very hard, had no friend, no sympathiser and over and above another bolt from my chachi ji (Aunty) that I should bring milk from the booth early morning instead Satya Paul (her sister's son), which was beyond my capacity but was helpless- poor lone fellow. However, I choose to inform my uncle in a way that Aunty does not get annoyed i.e. one day I on the pretext of finding empty bottles started making rattling sound and on enquiring, uncle got to know that I was deployed to bring the milk also, he was very angry with chachi ji for this excessive work load on me, and instructed her to relieve me from the duty immediately.

I could get hardly time for the writing a letter, however I spared some time and replied the letter of my sister saying I am ok but the work hours are too long and work is very hard, various colours are on my body and clothes and I look like a parrot. I cough various colours but do not bother for me and do not reveal this to any one, maybe my role is changed. The letter was like wild fire in the family who loved me so much as my sister immediately read letter to all the family members who went into weeping mode and decided to call me back or someone to go and bring me back. My father immediately wrote to my uncle and gave telegram to send me back immediately; my uncle sent me back and gave me some amount calculated @ 100/ rupees per month as my salary.

I reached home and on perception family found me more effected than even communicated to the sister, the rectification process was started clothes were bleached and some thrown, Doctor was consulted who found slight fever and acute weakness hence was administered medicine and recommended rest and as a result was fit to fight again in about a month.

My brother Ch. Jagdish Singh had started poultry farm along with his service in Panipat municipality, in partnership with one Karamchand.

The farm was mismanaged due to lack of supervision and finance and I was assigned the vital role, which I effectively performed for some time and further losses could be saved.

Ch. Jagdish Singh later got contract of transporting Ice from the local Ice factory to its various Depots at Panipat city and delivery was strictly time bound. To execute the contract my brother bought four horses with carts and employed four drivers but generally there would be absenteeism and he would be short of a driver, hence the poor me had to come to the rescue. My modes operandi was to create a buffer stock at the depot by conducting 3-4 rounds before dawn so that none knows that this menial work is done by son of the respected Chaudhry family.

CHAPTER 10

In the year 1954 Arya College was started at Panipat and I was working at the English wine shop at rupees 60 per month. My brothers now were financially better specially Iqbal Singh who was working with his father-in-law on salary cum share basis, Ch. Inder Singh also joined the wine business, Jagdish Singh was working with the Municipality.

I requested my brothers to get me admitted in the college which was agreed with the consent of L. Jagan Nath, on the condition that my job shall be performed by my father helped by me, and I will get rupees thirty per month i.e. Iqbal Singh rupees 15 and other two brothers 7.50 each. The college fee was rupees 13.50 per month and my regular receipt was rupees 15 per month and erratic payment of rupees 7.50 per month, the third brother could hardly afford to pay since he was helping the family otherwise and living in the same house. The family had big status in the city hence I had to pose belonging to a royal family —what a paradox and extremely difficult role.

It was sheer chance or compromise of convenience that I develop friendship with Gulshan Bajaj, Surinder Sehgal, Des raj Khera, Kuldeep Sharma, Girdhar Gopal accountant etc. We used to catch hold of co-students and get their fee deposited with fine waived using our influence and the concerned would spend for our extra expenses and some would spend voluntarily on us for reason known to them only. I and Surinder Paul were serious for studies, would read the subject in advance and be only in the class to clarify the doubts etc, and used to bombard questions, resultantly the teachers would get irritated —It would be pertinent to write here that in spite our nefarious activities we both friends were toppers. Our reputation & strength was a matter of jealousy for the other group consisting of Karan Singh and Kadar Singh and some of our relations and friends used to take liberty like my distant cousin Qemti Lal and nephew Surinder Kumar whose ragging of a boy of the other group led to a serious group fight from where they themselves fled away and we were in the soup- I had serious head injury and injuries on the arm.

The criminal case was got registered by the college authorities under various sections which was later got amicably settled by the good offices of Sh. Amrit Lal Batra , Dharam Singh Rathi, Kundun Lal Lamba, Dewan Chand Takker etc.

At this point of time none of our male member was stationed at Pani Pat hence my nephew Rajinder Chopra gave telegram to my brother Ch. Inder Singh “Mama fought with college students, admitted in hospital”.

The telegram was delivered at noon when my brother, who was at Rewari was going to start eating his lunch, which he could not and abruptly, preceded for Panipat—great Love.

On reaching Panipat my brother saw me in the bazar with bandages coming from hospital felt sigh of relief, blessed me and said “Kaka Hun Te Bhut Bukh Lagi Hae Aa Kuch Kha lye, baki galan phir karage” Ch. Inder Singh met the different people who were helping us including Nathu Shah with whom we had strained relations but he pleasingly helped us due to Gulshan Bajaj without discrimination, treating us as children—saying “Bache Sare Apne Nae, Aur Joginder Te mere Sher Inder Singh Da Bhara Hae.” My brother told me about his anxiety and fear for me but did not said any derogatory or reprimanded me for the episode and only said “ Izat De Lae Ladaye Karna Te Sadi Family De Khun Wich Hae” prestige fights are our family trait. He took me to a meat shop paid the butcher price of 15 chickens and instructed me to take one chicken daily for my consumption.

The reconciliatory meetings between the two groups used to be held at the houses/offices of the above mentioned elders and Dharam Singh Rathi was honorary advocate for both the groups. All mentioned people used to treat us like their own family members and feed us sumptuously with love. Mr. Rathi brilliantly and dedicatedly pleaded our case and when asked for professional fee, he scolded us and virtually gave a mild slap to me saying how I could dare to say –what a great character love & culture - I vividly remember and feel the pinch/pleasure of that slap.

After this great fight my mother and my aunty (mother of Surinder) got afraid, which was obvious since all the elder male members of both of us were working out of Pani pat and decided that we both should be taken out of Panipat so that we shun the bad company. However, I could convince my family to let me continue my studies at Panipat with my promise to be cool/submissive for rest of the period and leave/ reduce the company of Gulshan Bajaj etc.

However, Surinder's mother went to her cousin Sh. B N Puri then General Manager of Punjab National Bank, related her problem, who promised her to get Surinder appointed in the bank and advised to send his son in his office. The very next day we both went to the office of Sh. B N Puri who telephoned Sh. Bagga, then Secretary State Bank of India and instructed us to see Sh. Bagga in his house next Sunday with bio- data which we did. Sh. Bagga (who again was family relation) warmly received us in his house and took the papers. He asked me for my papers but on saying I would continue my studies, was very happy. The letter was received by Surinder from State Bank of India Rohtak branch for an interview in the very next week. The interview was on Saturday and Surinder requested me to accompany him to Rohtak where after formal interview and test, he was asked to join the duty. I kept on sitting in a nearby restaurant enjoying coffee where as by working two hours only Surinder got salary for two days—great pleasure.

Surinder left the college and I was deprived of my Sweat Company, study friend and well wisher. However, I found respite in another nice gentle fellow Gurbaksh Singh Sehgal who fully fulfilled major gap; Gurbaksh was very gentle, punctual, methodical and serious for the study/ carrier and used to live quite near to our house. Very sad he died very young while he was working as head master in a school at Patna(Bihar).

The election of the college was scheduled in the year 1957 and our group decided & compelled me to contest for the secretary position since I was considered as balanced and cool person in the group. On learning the news my father told my mother that I was called tiger in

the college and was contesting the election which he would lose badly since the same is by secret ballot. My friends assessed that we would win with thumbing majority hence arranged for the procession but the result was totally different. The winning party out of fear/respect put the first garland around my neck, on which my friends termed the action as very offensive and wanted to take revenge, but I was averse to the same and could only cool/convince my friends by saying that the action on the day would bring defame to us and the revenge can be taken later and this way the fight was averted for ever.

The winter in the year 1956 was very severe and some of us (stalwarts) had no proper woollen clothes hence we decided that this winter none of us would wear woollen and moreover two buttons of the shirt will also remain open- this all had to be kept secret from the family. The brothers got me a beautiful coat from the rags, sold at Jama masjid but the same could be identified as used /bought from rags as it had half lining unlike the custom in India. I used to wear the coat with great pride but refrain from putting it off in public.

I have lived my life in all the situations and never regretted or cribbed because of extreme love, recognition extended to me by my whole family.

Though I was youngest in the family and still adolescent, even then was considered unchallenged evidence, consulted on major decisions and even used to be mediator, problem solver/ fight reconciliatory within the family.

I learnt/gained a lot from my family and had basically my five mentors i.e. my father, my mother and brothers:

My father taught me to have utmost faith in God, to be fair and bold, help the poor, lead a graceful life and be content and thankful to God, and used to utter always “Karam Tera, Rahim Tera, Fazil Tera.”

My mother taught me strict discipline, contentment, sacrifice for the family and be religious.

My elder brother taught me bravery, not to accept one without scrutiny, must react/ fighting spirit and virtual fighting tactics.

Ch. Jagdish Singh taught me to have patience, emotional love for the family, sacrifice for near& dear ones and vigorously pursuit of Hobby.

Ch. Iqbal Singh taught me concern for the family, business traits, help the needy relatives, keep up family prestige and honour the promises. I always used to spend my summer vacation with Iqbal Singh who have been sharing business and teaching me its intricacies—was of much help in life.

The family was large, the families of married sisters living in the town, meagre income, great prestige and honour- what a difficult paradox but I perused it with the cooperation and love of whole family.

There are numerous related instances/ stories but I have enumerated a few of them only.

Kuch Baat Hae Hum Mae Ki Mitti Nehi Hasti Humari –

Aziz Ullahpur was around five miles of distance from Panipat where our very close friend Kuldeep Sharma's father who retired as SP police had made his banglow within his own land away from the village with modern amenities and facilities. Kuldeep Sharma has been persistently insisting to spend one night in that beautiful and different atmosphere.

It was the month of May 1957 when Gulshan Bajaj, Des Raj Khera, Surinder Sehgal and me went to the place with Kuldeep Sharma on bicycles and reached the village when dark. The short journey with friends on kacha road into the vast land without any inhabitation was a new experience and adventuress.

The magnificently situated single banglow with its beautiful lighting was looking marvellous. Pt. Lakhpat Rai Sharma (father) and

brothers Shashi Rai, Ranjeet Rai welcomed us with great love and we had great fun and sumptuous dinner in that natural beautiful surroundings. The fun, activities, remember able hospitality was so great that we did not realise it was pass ten pm and Surinder Paul insisted to go back since he had not told his mother that he would stay here for the night.

Surinder was much afraid of his mother (my masiji) for staying at Azizullah par for the night without her knowledge and took me for support to his house.

Masi ji was awake whole night knitting sweater in anxiety. She would not speak to us in spite our apologies. However with great difficulty we could convey our inability/and advise of the group not to travel through fields at night. She got satisfied and advised us not to repeat future.

I passed my graduation in the year 1958 with top position in Economics and later the degree was received from the hands of Honourable, Sh. Lal Bhadur Shastri (very simple and honest prime minister of India) in the convocation, for which I am very proud.

My brothers who were now financially better, especially Ch. Iqbal Singh, asked for my future planning on which I expressed my desire for higher studies in case I do not face the crunch of normal expense and the same is given to me through one source. My father was of the opinion that I should start earning but Ch. Iqbal Singh immediately agreed to bear all my expenses solely which was a matter of pride / joy for me. The total family was together on the day and we had a very pleasant & sumptuous dinner together, and exchanged pleasantries till late in night. However, I was awake almost whole night counting the amount of love and sacrifice of the family for me and was extremely thankful to almighty for his kindness to pull me from the deadliest position/s I was placed and make my further travel of life easier.

The very next day on the advice of my elders I proceeded to Delhi to get advice for finalising the course of higher study in consultation with my uncle (Phupher ji) Sh. Kidar Nath Barry who was considered

to be the most knowledgeable and enlightened man in the family. Uncle advised me for pursuing the comparatively new field i.e. Chartered Accountancy and we made extensive enquiries and searched for the seat for articles which could be located with Mohinder Puri & Co Connaught Palace, who accepted to give me articles on the condition, we deposit an amount of rupees 5000 as security with him and a nominal stipend would be paid to me during the period of my articles.

I went to Roper where my brother & father had wine contracts, for getting the amount for the deposit, which was given to me through blank cheque with advise to request Mohinder Puri (who was again a distant relation) to have minimum amount.

Reaching Delhi I kept my luggage at bhuwaji's house and straight went to Mohinder Puri's office but lucky or otherwise he was not in the office and I went to Rameshwar Bahri (My Nephew) who was working with Irvin Hospital at that period of time. Rameshwar apprised me that my detailed marks sheet was received and I had top ranking marks in the economics in which I wanted admission and he suggested me to take admission in the economics in Delhi School of Economics, in which my nephew Sarv Malhotra had already taken admission. He convinced me to leave the idea of perusing CA which was not in line with my temperament as self respecting and bit adamant person would not be able to serve as subordinate for four years. The next day which was probably the last day of admission I went to the university and got the admission in Economics.

I started living with my Bhuwaji (fathers' sister), uncle and my cousins Kuldeep Nath and Kulyash Nath in their small house. I used to go to the university on the bicycle and in the beginning felt very difficult to adjust in the class, due to co-education, difficulty in understanding of English accent of the teachers and bearing of hypocrisy of the Delhi students. More over the toppers of almost all the universities of India and even abroad students had taken the admission in this university, making the study very competitive. At a point of time we got so much frustrated that I went to Punjab University Chandigarh for migration, where on looking at the marks

the Dean of the university, immediately agreed to give me his special approval but I did not accept the same, since the atmosphere and faculty of Delhi was marvellous—worlds best and Punjab university was in no comparison.

The living in bhuwaji's house in the company of my dearest cousins was very pleasurable and hospitality & love of my uncle and aunt unparalleled – the house was my second house but the accommodation was very short hence after some time I shifted to a big house of my uncle (Chacha Ji), near old railway station, where my cousin Mohan Lal Kapoor with his friend Gurcharan Lal was living with a servant (Mangal Singh) on sharing basis – a very pleasurable and comfortable stay. However, after some time my cousin shifted to Jullunder and I had no choice but to think of shift at another place.

Sarv (my nephew) was also studying Economics in Delhi School and was feeling difficulty for studies as the accommodation with his brother Rameshwar Bahri was very less and resultantly we both jointly hired one room at Rohtak Road where we could study peacefully and sleep. The house of Rameshwar was near bye and we used to have our food with him; I would never be able to forget the good gesture/ kindness extended by our revered bhabi Janak Rani, she was extremely nice that in spite of her small children would get up in the morning and cook chapattis for both of us which we would take as lunch with water only and later a cup of tea at Ramjas College. The time passed on i.e. Starting for the university on the bicycles from New Rohtak Road in the morning and only coming back late evening after the close of Rana Dey library (Delhi School of Economics).

During the second half of my finals my brother purchased a small house at Paharganj, he got vacated upper portion by giving some amount as pagri and advised me to stay there so that lower portion of the house could also be vacated, hence I had no option but to shift there and remain for rest of the period. At this place I develop some lifelong friends like, Pershotam Chopra, Sat Paul Bedi, Krishan Lal Arora, Madan Lal Gaur and Madan Mohan Verma. Pershotam Chopra was my co student of economics and my study partner and we both were serious about our studies but We used to go to the university

together by bus no 21 and make lot of fun while in the bus and study in the Rana Dey Library of the Delhi school for hours.

While at Paharganj I used to go to Panipat every alternate weak, get my clothes washed and bring a big box of white butter for my consumption.

Pahar Ganj house was surrounded by the relations of my Bhabhi Raj Rani (My mother like) and I used to get sweats etc. at every occasion from the residents as her son and was frequently compelled for the meals. I used to keep distance from the young girls/shy but they would often come to my room and gossip and gradually became somewhat friendly. On my passing Master degree all the girls of the street approached my Bhabhi for the party which she gladly agreed but on their demand to call me to participate in the treat she replied that I was very shy gentleman and would not come amidst girls--- what a joke.

Opposite to the house of M M Verma a family was living who had four young daughters, one night one of them took me at their roof top, where I found all the sisters, who tried to flirt with me but my culture came into the way / got afraid also and on some pretext skipped from there and never went again. At occasions the girls acquainted with me tried to cross the limit but I did not let them do it. At this point of time I was not averse/ afraid of friendship/ gossip with girls was my hobby but was only interested to have pure and simple relationship which I learnt from Pershotam Chopra. In nut shell it would be pertinent to write that girls used to be impressed with us and at occasions would pass great remarks and the poor me has only one-point agenda—carrier and the family culture.

The Paharganj had famous sweat shop of desi ghee of Ram Parshad which was very costly but we all the above mentioned friends who were perusing higher studies and considered scholars, used to go to his shop after dinner, with very limited money available with us and the owner as mark of respect and love for students/ studies used to give liberal sweats and dry fruit as per our demand—what a great attitude.

The friends like Sat Paul Bedi and others used to give me challenge to make a particular girl friend/ talk, which I used to achieve. One such Challenge was thrown to me to make friendship with Poonam who was friendly to our friend Krishan Lal Arora (Archivist) and met me in a party. Very next week there was another function where the girl the demonstrated being good friend of mine. Poonam has been sincere friend to me for a pretty long time and wanted to marry me for which I told her to tell her parents to approach my parents after I get settled—the time never came and still I miss her.

The two years of master of economics passed very peacefully; I used to get the required expenses as per my asking, but I was very judicious in my spending which was crystal clear to the family.

I passed my Masters of Economics in the year 1960 and received degree from the hands of Sarv Pali Dr. Radhakrishnan, Then chancellor of the university. My family was very proud of my achievement, specially my father who would now talk with head high and gladly took me to different known big shots with grace. My father and I went to the big elegant house of Dr. B. N. Chopra (Dr. Chopra was our close relation and the grandson of Dewan Mool Raj Chopra, Raja of Multan) then Economic advisor to Government of India who immediately got me appointed on a temporary job of research assistant. I started looking emphatically for different jobs and would do any job which came in my way, to sustain myself and to quench my long awaited desire for earning. In this period, I worked as part time invigilator for Times of India, Economic tuitions, helping Dr. Chamberlain for collecting material for his book, teaching in S N DAS GUPTA College, Delhi public College etc. My earning per month was over 1000/ rupees per month which was exorbitant in those days—but unluckily I started finishing these jobs one by one and loosing income and finally left with a lecturer post with Delhi College at rupees 350/ per month.

I would like to mention that my friend Pran Chabrra took me to Manchanda (principal) Delhi Public College Pusa Road for lectures in Economics but the later declined, and on enquiring told Pran

Chhabbra that he could not afford to keep faculty which is hand some as well as young for girls sections and there was no vacancy for boys section--What a paradox that one's good personality becomes a hindrance.

The private tuitions I got through Krishan Kumar Arora, were from elite society and all girls i.e. Inder Kaur daughter of big industrialist, two daughters of SD Verma top official in banking industry, Sudershan daughter of owner of Kaka hotel new Delhi. The girls had interest in me and the parents of most of them were ascertaining my family status.

Some of my friends like Prithvi Raj Chopra got immigration to U K for which I tried but had to drop in the mid, due to lack of support, rather opposition of the family specially my mother who loved me to the extreme and paucity of money to show for obtaining visa. However I helped my nephew Rajinder Chopra to leave far England.

My father wanted me to join some government job to which I was averse due to less salary and main earning from bribe, however due to his insisting & his high recommendations, I applied for Delhi Police and Central excise and went through the recruitment process just to please him,

My appetite for studies/ knowledge and craving for good carrier was not fulfilled and the money was available to me for the purpose (had full support of my brother), hence made enquiries and found a new lucrative area of study, Social Work which was quite paying in India and one could also get immigration to U K, Canada and USA.

The family business was at Gurgaon those days and I approached my brother who gladly agreed my proposal of joining MSW and I applied for the course. I vividly remember the remarks of my dear father--“Iqbal Singh tu enu kharab kar daega hun kum vi karan de su” you will spoil him let him work and settle.” The admission in the school was very tough & competitive but I got the interview call and after passing through various tough interviewing process spreading on two full days got the admission with specialisation of Labour Welfare &

Personnel Management (the top ranking Course). The course was very tough and time consuming and it was almost compulsory and inevitable to live in the hostel hence I got the admission in the Jublee Hall – the university's best post graduate's hostel for boys.

The life in the Jublee Hall was very good since it had good atmosphere for study, more over to be away from unwanted guests and noise, I opted for top floor. The food and other ancillary services in the hostel were excellent, and now I had no money crunch: I used to get the required money, without any hitch, however my whole family new that I am serious for study and not a spendthrift.

The Delhi School of Social Work was a premier institute in Asia started by YWCA in Lucknow and later shifted to Delhi. It was an autonomous body, oriented towards social work with specialisation of four streams—Labour Welfare & personnel Management, Rural Welfare, Institutional Welfare and Medical Welfare and was awarding Master's Degree in Social Work. It had only forty seats and was affiliated with Delhi University. The School was a co- education institute with almost equal ratio of boys and girls. The School used to utilise its first two weeks for introduction, socialisation, understanding the class fellows, understanding of school liberal norms & traditions, importance of field work etc. with emphasis on inter-personal relations. The tradition of the school was that every year at least one marriage used to be solemnised between the students. At this point of time I was also acclimatised with co-education and Delhi culture and was popular with girls but was very choosy (considered high head): I took fancy of Mohisini of my class and developed some understanding and wanted to develop friendship, but she left just after orientation programme, never to meet me again, in the juniors I took fancy for two girls –Borde and Kamat who very clearly told me in the very beginning that I was a gentle and handsome boy with great personality but they already had boyfriends. However, I was very friendly, social with all the students and been elected as the president of a few prestigious forums. In the School Bhushan Lal Bhasin ,V S K Sood and me very close friends and as a result even in the formal organised introduction (with nick names and special qualities) of the class we were mentioned in the

introduction of V S K Sood; means brave, saint and prince, he is one of the three guess the other two. Bhushan Lal Bhasin later told me that on the very first day when he came to check up his admission he got attracted to me and tacitly offered his friendship that Kapoors are generally handsome and when I was handsome than Miss Kapoor would also be beautiful and he would approach through me but bad luck miss Kapoor was not beautiful.

The school was in barracks and girls hostel was within the school premises and had a small canteen /mess which was run by one couple, called Mosa & Masi who used to cook for the girl hostellers and serve tea etc. to all. The school had strict discipline and punctuality and the gap between two periods used to be very less, hardly one could sip tea but fun was to have one set of tea and share and even sip together from the cup as well as saucer, which looked like a complete family atmosphere.

The study at Delhi School of Social work was very hard, particularly for the labour specialisation under the hard task master and cruel Prof. K N Vaid but was very enjoyable also as there used to be frequent seminars, speeches by renowned speakers, drama, dance, and music and field work, Camp etc--- This was part of the curriculum and learning process. Our Annual camp was organised at Alipur under the commandership of Prof. K N Vaid, who made us to work the minutest details and formed the different committees and distributed the duties. It was severe winter and further aggravated by the consistent rain, the tents were uprooted- the Principal Prof. Rane Dey was worried who came with trucks and other vehicles to take the campers back to the school but on basically instigation of Prof. K N Vaid the students refused to go back and decided to face the weather on which the principal was happy on our courage and went back. The challenge before us was to re erect the semi uprooted tents and to concentrate on basically two tents i.e. girls tent and big common tent which the boys saved by holding the pegs by putting stones and sitting over them, while rain was pouring heavily—Courageous and enjoyable. The group completed the duration of the camp successfully and the required work and came to school with laurels.

Professor K N Vaid developed some wrong notion about me that I am high headed, handsome and comparatively less strong/weak for labour field and in the beginning even told my distant cousin APJ Singh Lamba, (remained faculty earlier) about the same. He also told APJ Lamba that he would set me right and make me strong and as a result Professor Vaid always put me with the toughest agencies and toughest task masters like Mr. Chopra Sabzi Mandi, Malhotra, Bata Shoe Co. Faridabad, Dunlop Rubber / Tyre Company Shahganj Calcutta and always assigned me the toughest tasks, which made me tough and high stress bearing personality in life though had to loose marks percentage in the exam.

CHAPTER 11

The examinations were over and the students had to complete 10 weeks of practical training, as part fulfilment of the degree course where I was placed with Dunlop Rubber Co. Sahaganj (again the toughest) which was about--- kilometre from Calcutta. The place for me was new, climate here was sultry, people absolutely non helping and dry and I was only student placed for field work at this place where at other places the students have been enjoying of togetherness in the company—Vaid Sahib Maan Gae Aapke decision ko ;however I had some references of distant relations and family friends which was a great consolation for finding some accommodation etc.

Kuch Baat hae hum mae ki mitti nehi hasti humari ----

I reached Calcutta and straight away from the railway station went to Dunlop Co. Head office, Free School Street, where I was instructed to report to Mr. Stiffle, the training officer at the factory at Sahaganj, which was in suburb of Calcutta/Kolkata about 40 kilometre and one had to go by train till Bandel railway station and from there to Sahaganj by company bus.

The problem before me now was to find some night shelter /stay hence I went to Madan Lal, Qemtilal, and Parkash Chopra (all of them had their business in the same complex) who were relations of my brother-in-law, they warmly welcomed me and everyone wanted to take me with him to his house but Madan lal convinced others to take me with him. Reaching Madan Lal's house, I saw the family had one big bed room set in a very congested area where he was living with his two kids, the room had one big cot where they compelled me to sleep and all of them slept on the ground in spite my maximum resistance—What a great hospitality. I spent two days with them initially and these days Qemtilal took me for sightseeing and on the next Monday as per the instruction from the school I reported at the factory to the training department.

The training department head Mr. Stiffle briefed me about the factory its rules and regulations applicable on me, gave me some material pertaining to this aspect. He discussed with me about my stay arrangements during the training period and allotted me a bachelor accommodation and authority letter to use the company canteen and the entry card of the factory. Mr Stiffle discussed with me the training programme, the report submitting and my introduction with various department heads but showed his inability of introduction/ time with CEO, and on my request for the same, suggested that in case I had the guts can get time from him directly. *A few days after while the CEO was on round of the factory I gathered courage, gave my introduction sought time from him which he allotted at 8.30 am*, right on the next day morning before the production meeting and our discussions continued 10-15 minutes after 9 am (regular time of the meeting) this extension made me known as smart guy which gave me privilege for further seeking time with the departmental heads.

Sahaganj was a small town where hardly existed any private business, property in the village including the eateries. Dunlop Company was spread on 239 acres' land and had modern factory, accommodation for all employees, officers club etc. and a beautiful, modern and highly subsidised canteen but preparations was absolutely Bengali style and not compatible with our taste. The Company had some more summer trainees and a few of their own probationary officers, of Northern India Origin who again had difficulty of food hence often in the evenings we used to go to the bye pass about five km from our dwelling to eat Urd Dal & Tandoori Roti Etc, in Punjabi style from Sheer-e Punjab Dhaba, and would specially get prepared dal and egg omelette and Chulah Chapati from Sardar ji's a small Dhaba near the factory at lunch. After some days we got another relief in Mathurs – A manager in the factory would frequently invite me and M S Madan for dinner.

The Factory was very neat & clean, greenery all-around, and river Hooghly flowing nearby for transporting and was giving the place a picturesque view. The area was very much prone to malaria, mosquito's/bed bugs but Dunlop had eradicated this problem fully

with efforts of its effective department of over 35 experienced persons. The working schedule in the factory and report writing for the school and copy to the training department for me was quite time consuming and taxing but the company of other trainees, nice surroundings made it pleasant. The company used to remain closed on Saturdays and Sundays and on these days we all trainees, generally would go to explore Calcutta and meet relatives and friends which was again a good change. However, ten weeks training ended and I decided with a few friends to stay back during the last week end at Sahaganj to see the surrounding, enjoy boat and steamer ride and cross the river to see other side town Chinsura etc. On Saturday the clouds were in the sky the climate turned excellent but it was heavy rain in the afternoon and we enjoyed the trip though we got totally wet as we were not carrying umbrella like bengalies. However, one thing I have not forgotten: we went to a restaurant at Chinsura and ordered for meals and were told that there was no meat preparation hence we had no choice but to order vegetarian meals of Bengali style only, but could see a customer being served meat and on our pointing out to the bearer the reply was “It was not meat, it was MASU on this we had a hearty laugh and realised our weakness of not knowing Bengali.

On the last Sunday again we came back quite late at night after sightseeing and was told by the watchman that some family had come to meet me and handed over an envelope embossed over it Dev Dutt Dewan.

I was dead tired but there was also great anxiety to know who was this family which drove from Calcutta to see me and I had never heard of their name, occupied by these thoughts I opened my room flung self on the bed and started reading the contents of the letter which read we are the close relation of your brother's business links and had come to ask your welfare and invite you to stay at our house while in Calcutta, otherwise let them know my availability and where about so that they could contact.

On the training finished and after receiving farewell party, leaving certificates etc. left for Calcutta. My friend M.S. Madaan suggested

me not to go back to Delhi leaving ample job opportunities in Calcutta. He offered me the membership of his close group on the condition I would not ask any money from home, stay with them and they would bear all my genuine expenses till I get a job. The group apprised me about their tried methods of searching job in Calcutta and handed over a note book of addresses of big concerns with the name of their CEO/ MD specially of the north India origin and was told that I would have to daily go in the different direction and meet the officials with CV and report back progress to the group in the evening for further action. I started the mission job search but decided to stay presently with M L Chopra but was fully conscious of their hardship of accommodation and was embarrassment with their giving of utmost respect and hospitality, specially their having only one cot and force me to sleep on the same and all of them sleeping on the floor. However, I had another reference of Som Nath puri (uncle of my friend Surinder Sehgal) chief manager of one of the branches of central bank of India, whom I gave my introduction and apprised him of my where about etc. On the telephone. The man was extremely nice and convinced me to stay with them in their house in Bollyganj where he was staying with his infant daughter and wife which I agreed. – The house was big, well decorated, the hosts were very hospitable informal like own maternal uncle and aunt and resultantly stay here was very comfortable and enjoyable. I, now vigorously started my mission job hunt and during the process I went to the head office of Kalinga Tubes – a very big company where the managing director was Sikander Lal Kapoor. On reaching the office I gave my request slip to the receptionist mentioning place Delhi and purpose of my visit personal and after about fifteen minutes enquired from the receptionist whether she had send my slip, on which the reply was that I should sit cool since all the people sitting in the hall were only waiting to see Mr, Kapoor. To my great surprised I had just gone back on the seat that had call from the reception and the peon ushered me in the big room of Mr. Kapoor. I gave my quick, short and crisp introduction and a copy of my cv to Mr. Kapoor who was quite pleased and revealed that he belongs to Hafizabad. He enquired about the welfare of some people known to him, my family and told that presently he is not in a position to accommodate me in his company

however kept my cv with him and advised me to come next week and by that time he would arrange to get me fixed up in some good company. The progress was reported to the group and Mr. Puri who were very happy but suggested me to continue further efforts till confirmed which I continued.

The ill luck or otherwise I was down with fever and on checking it was diagnosed typhoid fever and recommended complete bed rest. I felt helpless and not wanted to burden the Puris – I expressed my desire to go back to Panipat but Mr. Puri claimed full right and was very angry that how I had this thought hence I remained in his house for about 30 days as sick man (remarkable care, proper food and medicine all their expenses) – Cannot be compensated.

After recovery I went to see Dewans whom I visited a number of times and even stayed with them for two three nights. The Dewans were jolly forward people living in medium class good house in central Calcutta and extended me extreme hospitality i.e. most of dinners were hosted in good hotels. The Dewans had their vested interest in me of which I was not aware and was very surprised /impressed for their extreme hospitality/ sycophancy which I dully communicated to my family at Panipat.

I had almost recovered my health and was opined that climate of Bengal was not suitable to me hence proceeded to Panipat with intention to search job in Northern India.

On reaching Panipat I started emphatically searching job since the same was my utmost priority and need, accordingly I used to scan through newspapers Situation Vacant and contact my known people in Delhi. After a few days I came across temporary vacancy of research assistant with DCM (chemical division) which was suitable to my qualification of Masters in Economics- I applied and got selected, the job was of ground nut survey for three months and the result of Social Work Masters was also likely to be declared by this period hence I accepted the same.

About 25 candidates selected were apprised with culture of different zones and given comprehensive training for eliciting data from the farmers etc. for two weeks. My team was allotted ground nut growing area around Ludhiana. Dr. H.S. Singh, head of research division formed an impression that I having delicate personality with fair complexion and unaware of the village culture may feel difficulty in approaching the villagers and would not agree to my having agricultural/village background.

The Punjab and specially Ludhiana was extremely hot those days hence I planned the strategy that whole of the team to stay at one place and proceed to work after breakfast not later than seven in the morning and come back at about two pm and after computation of data and report to head office in Delhi full enjoyment in the evening. Mr. Patel, the deputy head of the division came for our checking and was extremely happy with performance of the group and also informed that we were ahead of all the group till date.

We manipulated to complete the target three days ahead of the schedule by doing some extra work and proceeded unofficially to our houses ahead of Dewali holidays which was a great pleasure for all of us.

After dewali everybody got busy in his affairs and as scheduled I reported on my duty and handover the papers etc. since the job was only temporary and completed. Dr. H.S. Singh was very much impressed with my personality and work and strongly convinced me and got selected for the marketing job which was not compatible to my specialisation, hence did not join.

I had applied for the Govt. Job -- Assistant Secretary Federation of Consumer Co-operative Stores and the interview letter received by me only day before the interview. I was not in favour of doing Govt. Job but this job seemed good hence I proceeded to Chandigarh early morning to reach venue before 9 am. The interview started around 10.30. The Board consisted of eight high level personalities of Panjab like Sh. K L Poswal S. Darbara Singh, Sh. D.D Puri and others.

There were about 10 candidates and the interview completed by 1.30 PM and the board members left for the lunch and candidates were served lunch in the office. After lunch four person including me were detained ,given Stenographers and told to go to different cabins and dictate on the topics assigned to each one in 45 minutes. The subjects were dictated by us and we left for places. As regards me I went to my brothers' in laws and met Sh. Sat Paul whom I told the purpose my interview. Sat Paul told that he knows Sh. K.L Poswal very well and also knows where he could be at this time hence We Can Meet and know the result etc. It was around 7.30 we went to the house of Mr Bindra (Director Food and Supply) and found K L Poswal there enjoying his drinks who greeted us with warmth and offered drinks. Sat Paul introduced me to Mr Poswal and the later said that was I the same person in the interview and my replying in affirmative congratulated me for the selection. I was very happy and taking a few snacks we left and staying with Sat Paul for the night I left for Panipat where everyone was happy to know this good news.

I waited for over a week for the letter and then went to Chandigarh to enquire/receive the letter. There in the office I met Deputy Secretary Mr. Makker who told that my letter is ready but his conscious has not allowed him to dispatch. Mr. Makker pulled out the letter from his drawer and gave me which read I am placed on the top of the waiting list. Mr Makker told that I was selected but the decision was changed as S. Darbara Singh Wanted to appoint his nephew, who has already joined and sitting in the fourth cabin and presently or in near future there is no vacancy. I thanked Mr. Makker and left with heavy heart and firm decision not to serve Government.

I started emphatically hunting job of my specialisation, Mr. B.L. Bhasin (my friend) invited me to Bombay with the promise that he would get me job there hence I went to Bombay appeared in a few interviews but mean time got an interview call from Bee Gee corporation Patiala to report for interview in Delhi hence with the consent of Bhasin I went for the interview and got selected and joined the duty at Patiala.

I reached Panipat and met my father at the wine shop, who greeted me with great love & affection and proudly told me that my engagement ceremony was scheduled day before Dewali and on my reaction told me that the people are coming from Jullunder and they were the same people whose relative I met in Bombay and had spoken high of them. My father was a strict man of principles and there was no custom of seeing the would be fiancé/wife in the family, hence in a very serene mood I proceeded to see my brothers on the other shop and then to go home. Subsequently I met my brothers, sisters and all the family and registered my objections, pleaded before everybody to stop the function but none could speak against the wishes of my autocratic father. However, I was convinced that with this short notice nothing can be done however I would be given chance to see the girl later.

Gratitude:-

I have lived enviable professional life received a number of awards and appreciation , done lot of social work and contribution in education,

and now have three affectionate and caring sons Sanjiv, Varun, Vikram and their wives and grandchildren faring well. My wife is also caring well.

I express my gratitude to the love/co-operation blessing of my family and some good friends who I would call them Parishta,

PARTITION STORY

Kewal Krishan Behl



Story told by-

Dr. Sameer Behl

MBBS, MD

Marengo Asia Hospital

Faridabad (Haryana)

Father's parental village was Jandraka, which was a big village on the Banks of Ravi river. It was 130 km southwest of Lahore, in Present day Pakistan. nearest town was Okara which was also the tehsil headquarter. These days Okara is a full fledged district. Jandraka was about 30-35 km away from Okara.

My father belonged to a rich landlord family. They had lot of land and many people working for them. His family around the time of partition was staying in Okara for the purpose of education of children, because Okara being a urban centre had better education facilities.

When communal riots started, specially just before partition, most of it was in the urban areas like Rawalpindi, Lahore, Amritsar, Multan, and village areas were relatively spared of the riots. So our family thought that the situation is not good that time in the town, let us move to our parental village Jandraka, and we will come back when the situation improves. So they all shifted to Jandraka from Okara. But what actually happened was the opposite of this.

The wind of hatred and communalism started spreading so deeply and pervasively that it became a consensus that Hindus, whether in villages or in towns will not be allowed to stay in Pakistan. A frenzy or passion or madness took over the majority population. They would either kill the minority people or banish them or converted them to their religion. The same thing happened in the Indian Punjab that time called East Punjab. Here it became a consensus that no Muslim will be allowed to remain here. Although the minority population was sizeable (around 30% each side) but violence started to clean them off .So in such difficult time and in this

scenario, no place remained safe. However, towns became relatively more safe because of some police and military presence. In the village, there was absolutely no protection and the village population became completely vulnerable to riots and communal violence. This was the opposite of what our family people had thought when they shifted to their parental village.

Now coming to the Hindu Sikh and Muslim harmony in our village. Hindus and Sikhs were considered the same and in many families of the village, half the members were Sikhs and half were Hindus. So this village Jandraka was a Hindu Sikh dominated village that was a large village, which now is a full fledged Mandi when I visited it in 2007, but this village was surrounded by more than 84 Muslim dominated villages. The Muslims of our village and nearby areas were very friendly and favourable to us Hindu Sikhs. Being big landlords, our ancestors had provided financial and other help to Muslim community. Our family had provided some land and money to build a mosque also. One of the poor muslim massion who had himself built the mosque was particularly friendly and indebted to us. His name was 'Chiragdeen'. Soon this man was going to be our saviour.

But friendliness of our village Muslims was not the case with Muslim villages which were slightly far away.

So as I had said earlier, the communal situation was so bad that it was consensus among Muslims that the Hindus will either be killed or converted to Islam. Muslims of 84 surrounding villages decided to attack us and eliminate us. We got this news through our village Muslims who were themselves very worried about this..

The attack actually happened also, but was averted due to an incident which our ancestors describe as a 'miracle'. When the armed muslim mob came to attack us, a Babaji appeared on a white horse and wearing white clothes and said to them in Punjabi — “Twade pindaan te Sikh pae gayen han” meaning your villages have been attacked by Sikh people. So the Muslims who had come to attack us, retreated to their villages for defence.

But soon we came to know that they were planning another bigger attack on Thursday night ie Juma Raat in which they were not going to leave anyone in our village. It was almost a certainty that we would be killed soon if we don't convert to Islam, but that was the last thing which our people would do, and they would accept death rather than giving up their religion. We will die fighting till the end and give as much resistance as possible.

The situation was extremely tense as it was only a few days that the attack would happen, and if anything had to be done, we had only three or four days for that. The village elders and wise people were actively thinking what to do but did not have much options.

Now coming to the national level again, things had become so bad that there was widespread killing all around, and even the military had become communal. The Muslim military in Pakistan, especially the Baloch regiment, was killing Hindus at various places. Every Hindu in so-called Pakistan region was unsafe and every Muslim in East Punjab ie Indian Punjab was equally unsafe .Seeing the situation getting out of control, Nehru and Liyakat Ali ,who are the respective leaders of their countries decided that population transfer was the only possible solution to whatever madness was happening. The leaders of the two nations, decided that Hindu military will go to Pakistan and who ever wants to come to India, they will bring those people here. The same would happen to East Punjab ie Indian Punjab, where Muslim military from Pakistan will come and take Muslims to Pakistan.

Military would come first to urban areas and towns and then go vulnerable villages to bring people to towns. The population of villages which were not so vulnerable would reach the towns by their own.

Now coming to our situation at Jandraka, our village elders came to know that Hindu military has either come to Okara(which was the nearest town), or is soon going to come there. The question was, will they come to our village to save us? Even bigger question was how would anybody reach

Okara to ask for help? Whoever will try to go there will be killed by muslims in the way because that was largely a muslim dominated area.

Now what happened is the Central theme of the story and how our village muslims helped us to reach Okara safely. That itself is a big example of how even in such adversity, Hindus were helped by Muslims to escape to safety.

From our side, it was the only option that somebody goes to Okara and brings the Hindu military to the village. For this my father's paternal uncle (Chachaji), whose name was Lala Kundan Lal was appointed as the leader. He was highly educated and intelligent person, and was a graduate. Later when he came to India, he also became a teacher and principal of a college. He was considered the most practically wise person and was given the responsibility to go to Okara.

The Muslim community helped in this and appointed a person who would take him. I had earlier mention that a mission named 'Chiragdeen' felt indebted to us because of the help we have given to the muslims earlier. So he took up the responsibly of saving us and took Lala Kundan Lal on his bicycle to Okara, which was 35 km from the village. On the way he was stopped many times by Muslim people who even tried to attack Lala Kundan Lal, but Chiragdeen fooled those Muslims by saying that he is taking this person, to convert to Islam—"Mein isko Kalma pada kar musalmaan banane le ja raha hoon" that's what he told everyone and also said that once this Hindu becomes a Muslim, his whole village will also convert. This is how by lying to all the people who stopped him in the way he somehow managed to take Lala Kundan Lal safely to Okara. This was an act of benovelence for which our people have always been grateful to him, and even when we came to India, there was a regular correspondence with him through letters and we always expressed our gratitude for all the help he provided us.

When Kundan Lal ji reached Okara, he got the information- that very day a unit of Hindu military has come. He found out where they had camped and

reached them. It was a unit of Dogra regiment. He met their officer and told him about the situation in his village. The officer replied that their unit had just come. First they will collect and study the map of the area, understand the basic geography, talk to government officials about situation in different areas and villages. Only then they will decide when and where to go. Therefore he cannot send his troops at such a short notice in a totally new area which they had not studied.

Kundan Lal Ji argued that it was Tuesday on that day and on Thursday night, his village was going to be attacked, and it was a confirmed news. Even if you come after that, then of what use will it be for us, since we all will be dead by then. Kundan Lalji requested him again and again, but the officer did not agree. Kundan Lal ji was thinking how to convince these people of the enormous seriousness of the situation.

In the meantime, refreshment in the form of tea came for the soldiers. Kundan Lal Ji was naturally very upset that time. In his emotional outburst he said that Muslims by force will put cows meat in Hindus' mouth and there will be no one to protect the Hindus. It is your duty to prevent all this, and if you don't do that, then actually it is in your mouth that cow's meat will go. All that you eat and drink, including the tea you are having right now, contains the flesh of our holy cow, if you fail to protect us.

Hearing this, one of the non-commissioned officers got agitated and in anger, he said to Kundan Lalji -“I will go with you”. Then he turned to his officer and said to him, “Sir, I am going with this person to his village. If you want, you can ask for my Courtmarshal later on, but I am not going to let people die in his village.” So he took a jeep and a machine gun in it along with maybe one or two soldiers and went with Kundan Lal Ji to our village Jandraka.

When they reached the village, lot of people on seeing the military vehicle thought that the communal military of Muslims ie the Baloch regiment has come, and now they will kill everyone. Many thought that their last time

has come. It was a practice that time that before dying people used to kill their daughters and all young women of the family and if possible dump the dead bodies of women in some well or pit. This was done to prevent any sexual crime against their women, and did not let the enemy touch them.

In our village many people were planning to do this to their girls when Kundan Lalji came down from the jeep and told everyone that it was not the enemy, but our own military, which has come to take us to safety. Everyone took a sigh of relief then. Everyone was told to get ready in one or two hours and they should leave the village as soon as possible. Everyone started preparing and collected whatever belongings they could take with them, especially the money and gold.

Lot of people were not convinced that they were going forever. They thought after sometime, they would come back to their village. One of the logic which they used to think is that in history whenever power has changed, it is only the ruler and the administration which changes. The common population never gets changed. In their language, it was commonly said “Raja Badalta Hai, Praja Nahi Badalti.” But little did they know that this was actually going to happen.

Many people hid their valuables and gold somewhere, in the hope that when they come back, they will recover them. Many even gave the custody of such things to their Muslim friends. I don't know whether anyone from our family did that, but when in 2007, I went to Jandraka, I came to know that many other families had done so and there belonging and wealth was utilised later by friendly Muslims.

Anyway, in a few hours, the whole village and the area got ready to go. With one machine gun vehicle and maybe two or three soldiers with some weapons, thousands of people followed them on foot. I am told by my father that some villages which came in the way had converted to Islam earlier, thinking that otherwise they will be killed. Now, when they saw the

Hindus going with protection of the military, they also joined us to go to India. I think they started sometime in the evening and reached Okara by maybe in the morning or in the afternoon next day.

So when they reached Okara, it was divided into two parts, one the Hindu Okara, and the other the Muslim Okara. This was done to prevent any unnecessary rioting among Hindus and Muslims, and also due to logistic reason of shifting the whole population of Hindu Okara through 'Kafilas'.

Kafila means a group of people often thousands of people walking together under the protection of the military. Once all the Hindus from the tehsil or district got collected in the town, they were taken together as a group to India. Mostly they were on foot and also carrying some of their belongings with them. For old people, pregnant ladies, children or disabled, the military used to take them in trucks and other vehicles. Such Kafilas would carry 30,000 or 40000 people and in some large districts like Lahore, Rawalpindi or Faisalabad, even population of lakhs was accommodated in these Kafilas.

The other option by which people were going to India was by train. People had started going on train quite early, but unfortunately, whatever trains went without security in the early phase could not reach the border because they were massacred on the way. The train was stopped on some pretext, and then the rioters from nearby areas would come with weapons and kill everybody, including children, women, and the elderly along with the young people. On our railway line that was from Multan to Lahore, a lot of trains had been butchered. But now Hindu military had reached and the trains had started moving with their security. Military vehicle with machine gun and some soldiers used to go with each train, and this is how the trains had started reaching the Indian border now.

Now coming to our family story, there were children, like my father was in eighth class and his younger brother was even four years younger to him. Other members of family were elder brother and elder sister of father

along with father and mother. So for them, military people said that some of their vehicles would be coming after sometime, and if they want, the lady and children can stay back and come in those vehicles. Maybe there were children of some more families and their ladies who stayed back with our family. Grandfather, however, had to go with the Kafila on foot. Rest of the family stayed back waiting for the military vehicles to come.

But the dangerous thing which happened was that those vehicles never arrived. The whole Hindu Okara got emptied after people went in the Kafila. Only few children and the ladies of the families who had stayed back remained in the town. This was particularly dangerous because of the communal situation and the hatred between the communities. They were most likely going to be killed by the Muslim rioters if they soon did not leave that place. But how to do that, that was the question?

Soon they heard the whistle of an arriving train reaching the nearby railway station. They all quickly moved to the railway station to get into the train. Fortunately, that train was running with the security of Indian military. They were from the Gurkha regiment. The train was running on Multan to Lahore line. Coming from Multan it was scheduled to leave the way to Lahore and turn towards Ferozpur in India. This turn would be from a place called 'Raiwind' which was near Lahore, from where it would reach Ferozpur via a town called 'Kasoor'.

On the railway station, some people were giving water to others and saying 'Hindu Paani, Hindu Paani, Hindu Paani' meaning 'Hindu water'. It was so unfortunate that even the water was communalised. My father was very naughty, and he went off the train and started giving water to others by saying "Hindu Paani, Hindu Paani". In the meantime, the engine whistled indicating that it the train was soon going to leave. Father's brother was frantically looking for him and found him giving water to others. He scolded him and probably slapped him also and by holding his hand, pulled him into the train. This is how they all left Okara and the train started its journey towards India.

All trains were overloaded. The inside was packed with people and also the roof of the train had loads of people sitting on it. Our elders tell that before that train 12 trains had been massacred on way to India. Most of the trains were being cut between Raiwind and Kasoor, the two towns just preceding Ferozpur.

So this train, which our family boarded was running with the security of Gurkha regiment, as I had already described, they had vehicles and machine guns and soldiers accompanying the train.

Now the train driver of this train was a Muslim. He used to do mischief in the sense that he used to stop the train at a place where the rioting mob would come and attack the train, killing everybody. He must have done that earlier and now he tried to do the same thing with our train, but was not able to do it because of the military security.

But still at a railway station near Kasoor, he tried this tactic, hoping that the Gurkhas might go here and there if he tried to confuse them. Even if the Gurkhas moved away from the train for a brief period the mob can come and massacre the train. The confusion he created was that they don't have permission to go ahead. He said that this is the last station for the train. No train will cross this station. This is the train of Pakistan and a train from India will come and take everybody there. This train will take the Muslims who are coming from India in the Indian train. The station master of that station was hand in glove with the driver who used to give red signal so that trains can be stopped. Together they were doing this drama. Actually this was totally a lie, and they did this in the hope that the military security might move away to ask the truth from somewhere else, maybe across the border or from some other station and they may get the opportunity to kill everyone in the train.

But our people i.e Hindus in the train knew that the driver and station master were fooling them. They did not let the Gurkhas go anywhere. One of the persons in the train was engine driver himself. He said to the muslim

driver that if you are not taking the train, then give me the permission to take the train to India, but those people were not agreeing to it. So the arguments and verbal fight continued for many hours, but the driver and the station master would not relent.

Just then, on the side track, a train full of Muslims came from Indian side and was going towards Kasoor. This train did not stop and crossed the station in full speed. Seeing this, our people got furious. The lie of the driver and station master was exposed, and the Gurkhas also got angry. One of them put his gun on the station master's head and said if you don't give the signal, then he will kill him. The driver of the train was pushed down from the train and the Hindu driver who was in the train, started the train. This is how their life was saved and they reached Ferozpur on 5th September 1947. On reaching there, it was a wave of jubilation and happiness. Everyone got reassured that eventually their life is saved.

They stayed near the Ferozpur station for a few days and our grandfather who had come in the Kafila separately found the family there. Now at Ferozpur two very dangerous things happen to them. First was that due to scarcity of drinking water, some of the people, including the family of my grandfather's brothers drank water from a nearby well. After drinking the water, they immediately had severe gastroenteritis, which was life threatening. Later they came to know that the well contained the dead bodies of people who had been killed and thrown into the well. Most likely they would have been muslims who were massacred. Anyway, this was a serious thing, but fortunately, everyone got recovered from the Gastroenteritis.

The second calamity which they had to face was that of flooding of Sutlej river. Water started accumulating in the town and also in the railway station and its level was progressively increasing. Since the railway track is higher than other places, our family people got into one of the trains which was stationed, but soon the water which was rising came inside the train too. So they got to the topmost berth of the train, but it seemed that water

level, which was rising, would come there also. So they thought that now they are going to die and grandfather started praying intensely.

But soon a miracle of sorts occurred and one of the walls lining the compound of the railway station suddenly broke by the weight of water, and a lot of water flowed outside the station, which decreased the water level in the train and at other places in the station. This is how their life was saved that time.

Fearing that water may return, they went to a high bridge near the railway station. There they stayed for a few days. Food was scarce and I think they manage to light a fire and had to eat boiled vegetation, which had collected nearby. How they survived those days on the bridge I don't exactly remember, but they were able to tide over the time period of the flood and eventually were saved.

Now they didn't exactly know where to go. They were roaming about here and there. They went to Ludhiana, where some houses of Muslims had got emptied. They lived in those houses for 2-3 months but had to vacate. My grandfather went to a place someplace in Madhya Pradesh for sometime, but eventually could not settle there also.

After sometime, the land rehabilitation process started. The land vacated by Muslims from Indian part of Punjab would be allotted to the people who had come from Pakistan and had owned land there. Actual permanent land allotment would take a lot of time after proper records would have exchanged among Indian and Pakistani establishment(eventually it turned out to be many years after partition).But for the interim period, within few months of partition, the government did temporary allotment of small pieces of land, so that they can earn a living out of it by agriculture or related activities.

My father's family took that land near the land allotted to his maternal uncle (Mamaji) because Mamaji was emotionally very attached to father's mother, ie his sister and was ready to help in any way he could.

But the problem was that my grandfather had always done educated sedentary work or run a shop of Ayurvedic Pharmacy. Being a big landlord, he had not directly done agriculture himself with his own hands.. Even father's elder brother had not done that work and had lived mainly in urban areas. So he went to Delhi, to settle there. Younger brother of father was of tender age, may be of 10 years, and therefore he was also not ready for doing agriculture or any other earning activity. So, Mamaji of my father said that since someone has to work, my father will not go to school, but will have to get involved in activities for earning money .Father did agricultural activities and also worked in a shop selling consumer items. One thing he told about that was that he used to sell bangles also, and didn't like putting bangles on ladies' wrists.

Since all other children including the children from his Mamaji's family were going to school, and he was the only one left, he got very disturbed. So once, when his elder brother visited them and was going back to Delhi, he climbed on the bus roof without telling anybody. In the way when the bus stopped, then my Tayaji came to know that father was also on the bus and was going to Delhi. Once in Delhi they tried to take the help of their Massi. Mausaji was a wealthy businessman in rural Lahore, his village name was Kot Radha Kishan. When he and his family came to India, they settled in Kingsway Camp in Delhi. But even they were not able to get father settle down in any good employment or education. He did many menial jobs like job of Peon, newspaper seller, selling bananas and jamuns on the road etc.

Having difficulty in settling down in Delhi father eventually returned back to his family in Mohna Pundari in Kaithal. But this time he was able to get admitted in ninth standard of the school. He did 9th and 10th from that place.

He again went to Delhi now, and took admission in class 11, which was that time called FA. So this was a college which was run by Punjab University at Birla Mandir. It was an evening college for people who would

work in the daytime and study in the evening, from maybe 4 or 5 o'clock in evening to 10 o'clock in the night. Along with his elder brother, he also started doing business of selling seeds for the farmers. They probably procured a shop in old Sabji Mandi and also used to sleep in the shop in the night. Then after sometime, he got a government job in telephone exchange of Connaught Place. He used to work the whole night. His shift being usually 12 o'clock in the midnight to 8 o'clock in the morning. He also got involved in employee union's work and used to do union work in the morning time, then, after sleeping for sometime, he would go to camp College at Birla Mandir for his studies and completed graduation from there. After completing graduation, he left studies and for six years, he did only telephone exchange job and probably the business of seeds along with the employee union work.

Then, by 1962, when he was of 28 years of age. His younger brother, who had completed his masters in sociology by then, motivated father to pursue Masters studies. Father resigned from his government job at telephone exchange and on advice of his younger brother joined MA Social Work (Personnel) of Delhi University. To understand it in contemporary terms it was equivalent of present day MBA in Human Resource. Younger brother not only motivated and advised him regarding further study, but bore the financial burden of his fees and his hostel stay at Jubilee hall in Delhi University. Due to this, first time since he had come to Delhi, he was not working and was totally devoting his time to studies. Such was the strong family bond, which they enjoyed.

After completing his masters, he became an HR professional. Did his internship from a company called Metalbox in Faridabad town near Delhi. After that, he got permanent employment in a company called 'Nuchem Plastics' where he worked till his retirement. He got married and has been staying in Faridabad since then. He has well settled two sons one daughter and grand son & grand daughter.