

PARENTS  
& SIBLINGS

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## P A R E N T S & S I B L I N G S

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### **FATHER: SYED MARATIB ALI**

My grandfather, Syed Wazir Ali, came from a family living in Tobian Gali, a narrow lane in Hatta Bazaar, which is near Rang Mahal in Lahore's walled city. The family must have been doing reasonably well because they owned property and had their own graveyard. In 1858, they established a small shop in the Lahore Cantonment and in 1875 my grandfather set up a business in Ferozepur, then one of the largest army cantonments in India. It was a large provision store carrying food, clothing, furniture, and household goods combined with a business as contractors for individual regiments of the British Army. This would involve supplying everything, from furniture, through barbers, to *Punkba* pullers. Many testimonials speak highly of their service, especially their ability to support regiments on campaign. My grandfather developed a reputation as a reliable businessman and made a reasonable living. This enabled him to own the property where the shop was located and the adjoining house. He also made money from property in Ferozepur that was rented out to the British Army.

My father, Syed Maratib Ali, was born in Lahore on the 10th of June, 1882. He was the third child of Syed Wazir Ali. His eldest sister, Nawab Bibi, was born in 1876 and his elder brother, Syed Ahsan Ali, was born in 1879. Both boys attended school in Ferozepur and helped their father in his business. Shortly before my grandfather's demise in 1900, the main shop in Ferozepur burnt down and the entire stock and records were reduced to ashes. People who owed money to them vanished and people to whom they owed money came to ask for it! The money they borrowed was from money-lenders; there were no banks then who would lend money for the purchase of property and all landlords were in debt to money-lenders; they always complained about the high rates of interest.

After my grandfather's death in 1900, the brothers inherited the business, in those days known as 'The Oilman's Store'. My grandfather had a good standing among people in the Cantonment and when he died there were many friends in the city happy to help my uncle and father. My grandfather's first wife had died after having three children. He married again and he had three sons and a daughter by his second wife, who was much younger than him. As usually happens in such circumstances, when my grandfather died, the second family wanted their share of his legacy. His friends put their heads together and, I assume, money was borrowed to pay off the second wife and various creditors.

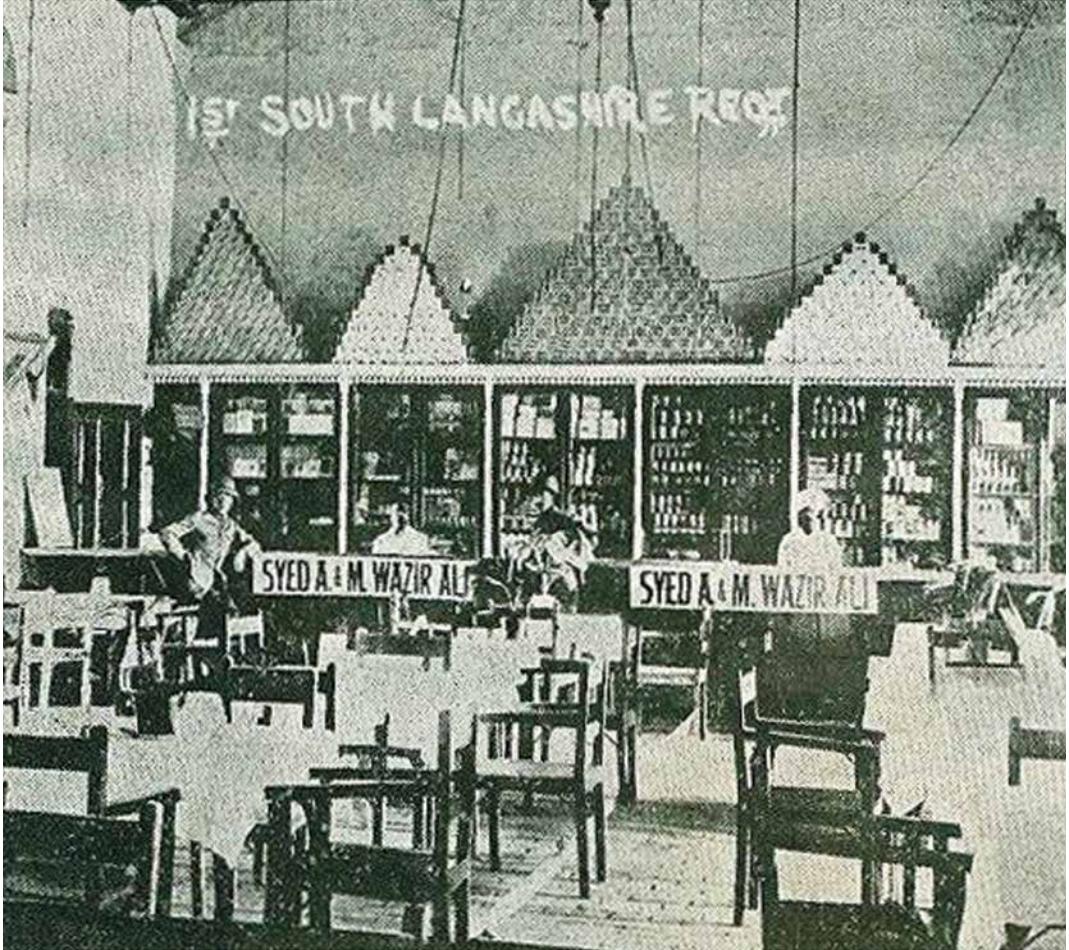
The official name of my grandfather's business was 'Wazir Ali & Sons'. Since my uncle and father had paid the other family off, they were advised by my grandfather's friends to form a new company, 'Syed Wazir Ali's Sons', later 'Syed A&M Wazir Ali' – 'A' stood for my uncle Ahsan Ali and 'M' for my father Maratib Ali. They still, however, had to take responsibility for all the money owed to money-lenders and their ambition was to be debt-free. They worked hard and achieved this within ten years, by which time their operational base had moved from Ferozepur to Lahore. Once they had repaid their obligations, they never looked back. God is very kind: they went from strength to strength in their business and by the time I was born they were a wealthy family, ranking among the more prosperous Muslim families of Lahore (not many Muslims were in business in the Punjab at that time). Their business and properties were in their joint names, and so were their bank accounts, until my uncle died in 1942.

After ten years of struggle, my father became a 'lakhpati', which was a lot of money in those days! Earlier Rs. 100 had meant a lot to him. After my parents' marriage, my father and uncle had an office in old Anarkali, opposite

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*One of the 'Coffee Bar' shops run by Syed A & M Wazir Ali that catered to British Regiments*

Tollington Market, which was one of their starting points in Lahore when they moved there. The first day, in about 1904, when the manager had a Rs. 100 note changed to smaller notes, the two brothers started to weep because this small fortune was being broken up!

While my uncle, Syed Ahsan Ali, had a greater flair for business, bargained competently, and had acumen and ability in purchasing goods, my father applied his energy to the detailed aspects of the business and had a special aptitude and interest in developing contacts and building good relations with their business acquaintances. He was 18 years old when my grandfather died, and was totally devoted to his brother, who was three years his senior.

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*Faqir Syed Iftikharuddin (Maternal grandfather)*

### PARENTS' MARRIAGE

My uncle's marriage to a relative of his mother's had already been decided by my grandfather. His second wife was the grand-daughter of Raja Jahandad Khan from District Hazara. When my father came of age, he and my uncle sought advice from the friends of my grandfather about a family for him to marry into. He learnt that Faqir Syed Iftikharuddin had a daughter and through a family friend, he contacted him and made a proposal for his second daughter, Mubarik Begum. Faqir Iftikharuddin interviewed my father and was very impressed by him. He went inside and asked his wife to give him a ring and a shawl and then put the ring on my father's finger and the shawl on his shoulders, the mark of his acceptance. His wife questioned the suitability of this person but Faqir Iftikharuddin said, 'Today I have seen a wise and mature head on young shoulders.' My parents were married in 1904.

In those days, the Faqir family ranked among the gentry of Lahore. They had prestige, property, and the distinction of having had members serve as key Ministers in the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In addition, Faqir Iftikharuddin was among the chiefs of Punjab and was a senior official in government. People asked him how he could give his daughter away to a boxwalla (this was the terminology used by the British for a businessman). Though my father belonged to a Syed family but they just had a shop in Ferozepur! However, my grandfather judged wisely for his favourite daughter.

Faqir Syed Iftikharuddin was a member of the Indian Political Service, the elite service of the British Empire. Some of the brightest brains were in the Political Service as foreign emissaries. He was posted as the Resident in Tonk State (Rajasthan), where he did well. In 1906, he accompanied the Amir of Afghanistan on a tour of India. In his official report, of which I obtained a copy from the India Office Library, he described the tour as largely successful on both sides and that 'the

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No. 99 of 1910.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.  
FOREIGN DEPARTMENT.

SECRET.  
Frontier.



To  
THE RIGHT HON'BLE VISCOUNT MORLEY OF BLACKBURN, O.M.,  
*His Majesty's Secretary of State for India.*

SIMLA, the 21st July 1910.

MY LORD,

We have the honour to report that at a farewell interview, which was granted on the 22nd June 1910, by His Majesty the Amir to Fakir Saiyid Iftikhar-ud-din, British Agent at Kabul, on the eve of the latter's return to India, on retirement from his appointment, the Amir conferred upon him the order of "Izzat" as a mark of His Majesty's pleasure.

2. We recommend that His Majesty the King's gracious permission be granted to Fakir Saiyid Iftikhar-ud-din to wear this decoration. A similar concession was granted, in accordance with the orders conveyed in paragraph 10 of Your Lordship's military despatch No. 93, dated the 7th June 1907, to certain other officers upon whom the Amir had conferred decorations; and, as in the case of those officers, we would also recommend that the decoration presented to Fakir Saiyid Iftikhar-ud-din should be treated as a medal under the Foreign Office Regulations of 1885, instead of as an order under the Regulations of 1808.

We have the honour to be,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's most obedient, humble servants,

*Minto*  
*Creagh*  
*Geny Kitwood Wilson*  
*W. H. D. ...*  
*W. H. D. ...*  
*W. H. D. ...*  
*W. H. D. ...*

*A page from the Afghanistan report of Faqir Syed Iftikharuddin*

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Punjab Mohammedans, both old and new fashioned, have formed a good opinion of him, though there was some gossip among the Lahore Mohammedans at his Majesty having worn an English hat! He was then posted as the British Agent in Kabul, from 1907 to 1910. His mother was from the Afghan royal family and he himself toured Afghanistan with the Amir for seven whole months. The Government was very pleased with his work in Kabul and he was awarded the title of CIE (Commander of the Indian Empire).

Faqir Iftikharuddin died in 1914 at the age of 46 and the downfall of *Faqirkhana* started while my father's financial means improved day by day. However, he always looked up to the Faqir family and respected and supported them. On one occasion in the early 1940s he bought a property in Bhati Gate from a member of the family, to assist that person and to honour the family by creating an *Imam Bargah* there. He named it Imam Bargah Mubarik Begum, after his wife.

### THE GROWTH OF THE BUSINESS

When my maternal grandfather accompanied the Amir of Afghanistan in India, his son-in-law, my father, got the opportunity to look after the King's entourage and travelled throughout India with them. This was the big break for my uncle and father, to be recognized by the government in Delhi, and it brought their firm more business with the British Army. Because of their hard work and the quality of their service, they soon became the largest contractors to the British Army in India, spread all over the country. The contracts were to look after individual British regiments when they visited India and they would last till the regiments went back to England after a stay of four to five years. To supervise the business, my uncle and father had to travel a great deal and it would not be wrong to say that for more than half of their working lives, my father and uncle were away from home.

Every British regiment chose a contractor from an approved list, based on recommendations, and this contractor followed the regiment, which normally moved from one military station in India to another every two or three years. In all, there were perhaps thirty such military stations and, at any one time, our family firm had a contract with seven to ten different regiments. This meant that our business was spread over a similar number of locations, which could be as far away as Rangoon in Burma, Chittagong at the eastern fringe of India, Madras in South India, Bombay in Western India, Peshawar and beyond it on the Khyber Pass, Landikotal.

There was very close liaison between the civilian administration and the army, which was kept informed of any problems brewing among the civilian population. That is why outside every large city, such as Delhi or Lahore, there was a cantonment, to quell any uprising in the city. In addition, strategic places served as hubs from where the army could be moved very swiftly. One was Rawalpindi, from where the army could get to the Frontier, where the Northern Command was established. A cantonment in Jhansi served Central India while Nasik, outside Bombay, controlled that city. Lucknow itself had an army centre although there was also one in Faizabad to control both Lucknow and Allahabad. Patna in Bihar was another centre. For Calcutta, there was an army presence in Barrackpur, and Assam was controlled from Shillong. Ammunition was produced in Jabalpur, in central India, and Sikanderabad was used as a base to control Hyderabad. Bangalore and Belgaum were used to control the South and Pune, while the cantonment at Ahmednagar looked after the Marathas. During the

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 4/36 Left Allahabad at 10 Pm. and Arrived  
 at Lucknow at 6 am on the 18th.  
 12/36 Left Lucknow at 2 Pm for Dehra Dohore  
 18/36 Reached Lahore from Lucknow at 7 am  
 20/36 Left Dehra at 7 am, Reached Meerut  
 at 10 am, left at 11 am Reached <sup>Lahore</sup> ~~Meerut~~  
 21/36 Left for Ambala at 11 Pm  
 22/36 Arrived at Ambala at 7 am. and left  
 for Lahore at 12 Pm Reached Lahore 7 1/2 Pm  
 27/6 Left Lahore at 9 Pm. and Reached Bombay  
 on 29th at 10 am.  
 28/6 Train 29/6 Bombay.  
 3/7.36. left at 30 clock, arrived at 7.30. at Poona & left  
 at 11. Pm and came back to Bombay at 8 Pm  
 on 4th.  
 8/7/36. Left Bombay at 9 Pm, with Desires & Am  
 Baber and reached on foot at 8 am, Lahore and  
 then went to Batala for mian Sir Fazal Khan  
 Bahri at procession  
 9/7.36 mian Sir Fazal-i Khiani Wred to night  
 10.7.36 Reached Lahore from Bombay at 8 am.  
 15/7.36 Left for Rawalchi at 9 am.

*An excerpt from Syed Maratib Ali's diary*

War, 80,000 Italian Prisoners of War (POWs) captured in North Africa were brought to the Bairagarh Camp in Bhopal where we looked after them. We also had the contract for the other POW Camp in Dehru Dun, where the Germans were kept. The Germans were there in hundreds, not thousands, but one of them was Heinrich Harrar, who escaped and went through Tibet, finally returning to Germany where he wrote a book about his experience<sup>1</sup>.

My father's diary is fascinating; he was always on the train! Each business was self-contained and each had managers – people they had groomed. They hired people who were men of integrity: Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, without any favour. Everybody was autonomous and each business was an independent profit centre.

<sup>1</sup> 'Seven Years in Tibet', 1952.

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### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FAMILY BUSINESS

The business was owned equally by my father and uncle. When my uncle died in 1942, my father had to pay off his brother's two wives and three daughters. My uncle also had one son who was a minor at that time. My father talked to the younger wife and her brother, who represented the family, and said, 'Even though I am going to take over the business, I do not want my nephew to be disassociated from it.' After paying off my uncle's family, he was left with only half the fortune. My father re-established the partnership, with himself taking four annas out of sixteen. He gave three annas each to my two elder brothers and three annas he offered to the young son of my uncle, also six paisas (anna and a half) to me because I was a minor and six paisas to my other brother who was not active in business because he was not well. This is how he restructured the ownership, treating his sons and nephew as partners.

After Independence, the partners decided to start new ventures and make them limited companies. Shares were issued against the assets that they had owned in the businesses, thus converting a partnership into share ownership in limited companies. Unlike in other *seth* families, each of our family members was given his shares and we were allowed to keep or sell them. People were quite willing to buy these shares but we could also sell them internally. One of our companies, IGI Insurance, could naturally own shares and we decided that IGI Insurance would buy family members' shares at the market value. For example, if one of the daughters, whose families had their own needs and aspirations, wanted to sell shares, the market rate was checked and IGI would buy. The result is that IGI Insurance Company today is the owner of a large number of our group company shares and has become a kind of a holding company. I think this has served the family well. Everybody has the right to sell their shares to anybody, but the family members find it much more convenient to sell their shares to IGI because they get immediate cash.

Once I was invited by the Young Presidents Organisation in Karachi to speak to them. These were young budding *seths* and one of the main concerns in their family businesses was what to do with their elders. They wanted to know how our family tackled that issue. In our family there was no problem because, by the Grace of God, we have always had more challenges than the number of family members: there was enough work for all. My father was not one who wanted to control and was very generous – he treated our family business as a genuine partnership.

When the location of Packages was being discussed in 1955, I proposed that we set up the factory in Lahore. A major consideration was that both my parents were getting on in years and I wanted to be in Lahore with them in their old age. My eldest brother, Syed Amjad Ali, who had opted to serve the Government as early as 1950, was either abroad on a diplomatic assignment or in Karachi. My other brother, Syed Wajid Ali, was looking after our business affairs in Karachi, so I was the only one with an option to be with our parents in Lahore. Because I was there I spent a great deal of time with my father. Our relationship was very formal; I always treated him with the utmost respect and I had the same awe of him as I had as a child. He was very happy to see the development of Packages and he would often come to the plant and walk around. He never interfered in the business and was always keen to know if he could help in any way.

### FATHER'S BUSINESS AND PERSONAL ETHICS

My father received much respect in the business and political communities of the country. He conducted himself with impeccable manners and integrity; his object was always to be of service to others and his business was not

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dependent on the contacts that he was establishing socially. His purpose was to see how he could further the cause of improving others' lives, be it in education or in health. He thereby lived a very satisfactory life, with honour and respect from the community.

However, despite his standing in the country he still suffered slights from the British: he had a memory of riding in Murree and meeting an Englishman on foot, who stopped him and told him that he had to get down from the horse. He could not tolerate an Indian riding a horse past an Englishman walking on foot! My father carried that scar in his memory, and shared it with me.

He had a strong ethical feeling of obligation: after I had set up Packages Limited in 1957, my father called me and said, 'You have to employ Faqir Jalaluddin's grandson, Raziuddin, because I could not pay back what I owe to that family. Fifty years ago, this family provided accommodation to Col. Z. Ahmed<sup>2</sup>, who took care of my health. You have to pay back that debt by employing this young man at Packages.' Col. Ahmad was an old friend of my paternal grandfather's and one of the first Indian officers in the British army's Indian Medical Service. When he learnt that my father had TB, he took three months' leave and came to Lahore to treat the son of his old friend! My father's house in those days was modest, so Faqir Jalaluddin<sup>3</sup> hosted Col. Ahmad in his home. This is what made my father: he considered himself ever indebted to anyone who had done him a good turn.

Another example of his ethics: my mother came from an affluent family and came to a house that had very modest means. Early in their marriage, my mother asked my father to keep a buggy (a horse drawn carriage), the equivalent of a car today. In those days, most important



*Syed Maratib Ali 1882-1961 (Father)*

<sup>2</sup> Col. Z. Ahmed, from Assam, was the father of Mr. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, who became the President of India. He had married into an eminent Delhi family, with connections to the Loharu family and Nawab Asad Ullah Khan Ghalib, the poet.

<sup>3</sup> Faqir Jalaluddin was one of the first students to be admitted to Aitchison College and received a Gold Medal in 1890

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people had buggies. My father replied, 'How will I face the money-lenders to whom I owe money when I ride my buggy on the Mall Road? I will only have a buggy when I have paid off all my debts.'

My father was a person of very simple habits and he was very modest and austere in his personal life. He was a self-made person who learnt from others and throughout his life he was keen to improve his knowledge, conduct, and learning. He sought out people who knew more than he did and cultivated their acquaintance and friendship. He was very even in his relationships with people and maintained his friendship at the same temperature throughout his life irrespective of whether his friends went up or down in their position or wealth.

My father's whole effort in his life was to meet people who were better educated than him. He only had schooling for seven years; the rest he learnt by working. Exposure to people who were better equipped than him was his means of educating himself. He had this desire and urge to associate with people who were a step higher than him in skill or knowledge - but only people who were of good character. He never associated with people who indulged in wine, women and song, although he was not against serving alcohol at appropriate occasions. One of the people that my father regularly called on was Dr. Muhammad Iqbal and he made sure that if he needed anything, it was provided. Dr. Iqbal was a man of very few needs but if he needed anything, my father was there to help and he did the same for other people he knew. My father was a deeply religious man with a devout faith. He was a Shia, yet he respected and honoured people of all other sects and faiths.

My uncle and father used their own growing wealth for their business. The business generated money, which they either ploughed back or invested in property, which they never sold. Until 1915, they lived 'above their shop' in Anarkali after which they lived together in a house in Rattigan Road, next to Central Model School and across the road from Bradlaugh Hall, a prominent political meeting place, where Mahatma Gandhi and all the nationalist leaders used to come and address meetings. The house was named by my mother and was called 'Ashiana'. By 1932, the family had expanded and we moved into a house bought by my father on Davis Road. It was an independent bungalow named "Nasheman" by my mother. The house on Rattigan Road was rented out after my uncle subsequently built a very large house on the Canal Bank, taking the name "Ashiana" with him. The architect was Anderson, the chief architect of the Government of Punjab; it is very well designed and even today, eighty years later, it looks modern in appearance. Like my father, my uncle was meticulous about cleanliness and tidiness, which was why both brothers did so well in business; they would not accept anything that was not perfect. In 1955, my father built a much larger house in Gulberg and the name 'Nasheman' was transferred to this house.

My father was extremely humble in his lifestyle. For instance, when I got married, he visited every single member of my wife's mother's family, to say how pleased he was that she was joining our family. He was also very unbiased: he could see the good points in other people's children and the weaknesses in his own. He was a meticulous person and paid full attention to detail. I overheard him tell people, 'Always work with passion, not as a burden.' He was always neatly dressed and all his pencils were kept sharp. He did not use a sharpener but instead he kept an ivory knife in his pocket with which he used to sharpen his pencils. He always used copying pencils; I don't know why. He used to tell me, 'Beta, write things down, why keep something on your mind! Put those things in the mind which

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you cannot write.’ He was always carrying something on which to write notes. He wrote in both Urdu and English; he spoke Urdu within the family, as did my mother, because it was considered more formal and respectful, but my parents conversed primarily in Punjabi, their mother tongue. He was always impeccably dressed and had set habits. He used a cologne called ‘Shamel Naseem’, which was in a glass bottle with a glass stopper wrapped in silk. My sisters used to use his cologne and, to make up the quantity, they would add water in it. I remember my father saying, ‘What times! Now even the colognes are not pure any more!’

### FATHER IN PUBLIC LIFE

Starting from a humble background in the early 1900s, by the 1930s my father was recognised by the government as a businessman of integrity. In 1932, he was made a member of the Indian Trade Delegation to Afghanistan<sup>4</sup>. In 1935, he was made a Founding Director of the Reserve Bank of India. Prior to this, his activities were confined to his army contracting business. At the Bank, therefore, he moved into another circle and came into contact with senior members of the Government of India, especially in the Ministries of Finance, Industry and Commerce. In 1939, when Alkali & Allied Chemicals (later ICI India) set up a soda ash plant in Khewra, in the Punjab, they invited my father to be a member of its Board. This was again a distinction because ICI was among the top industries in India, at that time owned by the British. The Government recognized his merit and integrity and he was knighted in 1940.

When India refused to give Pakistan’s share of the cash assets at Independence, the Government asked my father to go to Delhi to talk to the Government of India. My father was picked because he knew the relevant people there and was much respected by them. Accompanying him was lawyer Ch. Nazir Ahmad<sup>5</sup>, who practiced in Sahiwal before Partition and later served as Pakistan’s Minister of Industries. They had a successful visit and were able to get Rs. 40 crore (Rupees Four Hundred Million) from the Government of India.

After Partition, the Government asked my father to take over Gulab Devi Hospital in Lahore. It became his main interest and he went there every day to make sure that the patients were looked after properly and that they had food and medicine. He rounded up some of the top people of Lahore to help him manage the Hospital. He brought in Dr. Amir-ud-Din and Mr. Nazir Ahmed Haroon, who was then Secretary of Finance, Punjab, and Molvi Karamat. ullah Sahib who used to be on the faculty of Aitchison College Lahore. These excellent people supported my father well. There were some others, whom my father did not know well, who suggested to him that they change the name of the Hospital. Gulab Devi was the wife of Lala Lajpat Rai; she died of TB and the Hindus of Punjab built the hospital in her memory, the foundation stone being laid by Mahatama Gandhi. My father knew the history and said, ‘No way. If we change the name, I will have nothing to do with this Hospital.’

My father did much social work. As a young student, I went to him and said he should set up a Trust and suggested various people to serve as Trustees. He said, ‘I will myself become the Trustee’. He set up his own Trust in 1939, which is now supporting education and health.

<sup>4</sup> The other prominent member in that delegation was Sir Shri Ram of Delhi Cloth Mills, Delhi. As far back as I can remember, they were very close friends. Sir Shri Ram was a very prominent industrialist of Delhi and had an outstanding distinction among the industrialists of India. He was nominated by the Nehru government to be a member of India’s first Planning Commission.

<sup>5</sup> His house used to be where the Siddique Trade Centre is now, on Gulberg’s Main Boulevard in Lahore.

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I was the youngest of his four sons and eighth of the nine living children. I used to call my father, 'Bhaijan'. I had a blend of respect, love, and some fear of him. When I came on the scene, from what I can recollect, my father was in and out of Lahore. Whenever he returned to Lahore, he invariably came via Delhi and always brought Delhi sweets for the family. These primarily consisted of '*soban halwa*', '*babsbi halwa*', and '*paitha*'.

He used to have contracts in Murree, looking after the troops stationed in Jheeka Gali, Kuldana, and Barian, where British soldiers moved for the summer. When I was as young as six years old and on holiday in Murree<sup>6</sup>, he took me along with him. He used to take me to the grocery bar, which was like a supermarket, and asked me to sit there and observe how customers came and went; this was to get me attuned to the work culture.

From the age of six onwards, whenever we had a party at our house, and these were only for men, my father made it a point that I should attend. This was so that I could be in the company of elders and learn from them. I was asked by my father to have meals at the main dining table whenever we had guests at our home. I remember sharing such meals with people like Chaudhry Zafrulla Khan<sup>7</sup>, who was a frequent visitor. This was a part of my grooming: to conduct myself properly in company.

### ENTERTAINING

My father had a passion for entertaining guests, which he learnt from his father (see the invitation for the Moharrum Majlis, sent out by my grandfather in 1898). Following his appointment as a Director of the Reserve Bank of India, my father had an annual dinner in Delhi in honour of the Finance Minister of the Government of India; this banquet was attended by senior members of the Indian Government. I had the occasion to attend more than one such party even though I was still a schoolboy. He was meticulous about the arrangements for guests. He was also very particular about which food to serve. For example, if lamb was on the menu it had to come from Peshawar, because the best quality of lamb was available there, and he would get partridges from Jhansi. This can be seen in the menu card for the lunch he gave in 1944 for the Quaid, then Mr. Jinnah, which bears his signature.

Any important visitor to Lahore whom he knew would either be staying at our house, Nasheman on Davis Road, or would be entertained to a meal. He would go out of his way to be of service to established politicians, whether they were in Government or otherwise. Whenever Mr. Jinnah came to Lahore, my father had a party in his honour and this continued right up to the time of Partition. My father was not a politician but he had a very devoted affection and loyalty to the Quaid. He would call on him in Delhi or Bombay when he travelled there and the Quaid-e-Azam received him with great courtesy and affection.

<sup>6</sup> From my earliest childhood, my mother and my unmarried sisters went for the summer holidays to the hills and depending on my father's commitments during the summer, we went to Murree, Simla, Dalhousie, or Srinagar. Except for Murree, where my uncle had bought property and where we went most, we went to rental accommodation.

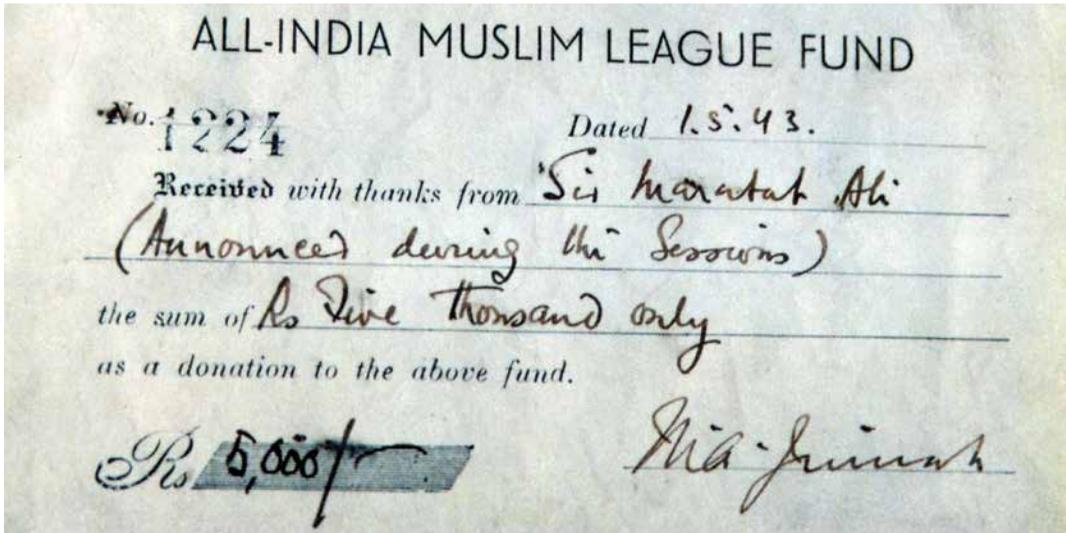
<sup>7</sup> See page 225



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*Receipt of donation from Syed Maratib Ali to All India Muslim League Fund dated 1<sup>st</sup> May 1943 acknowledged by the Quaid*

My father told me a very interesting story. He was negotiating the purchase of the land in which Mayfair Courts<sup>8</sup> and Ashiana were built, on Aziz Avenue. The whole plot was 25-30 acres. A Hindu broker was negotiating the sale and told him that the land was no longer available. My father was very keen on the property so he asked who had purchased the land. The buyers were Forman Christian College (FCC). So my father said, 'Go and offer 15-20% extra to the College and suggest they go further up, thereby getting double the land for the same amount of money.' This is why FCC is where it is today. Before that it used to be near the G.P.O., in the triangle north of Mall Road where now the YMCA and Bank Square are located. The Christian cemetery is also there as the area once belonged to the missionaries.

Once in two weeks, my closest school friend, Harcharan, and I were allowed to go to the movies. But in earlier days movies were considered the works of the devil. At that time, in the mid 1920s, a big piece of land in the triangular block between McLeod Road, Beadon Road, and Cooper Road was offered to my father. He went to inspect it but there were two cinemas there - Regents and Majestic. Three of his sons – Bhai Amjad, Bhai Afzal, and Bhai Wajid – were growing up and he feared that they would be corrupted by going to the cinema, so he turned down the offer.

My family owned a large piece of land opposite Lahore Gymkhana. A part of that land was acquired by the Government when the WAPDA Colony was built and compensation was paid in the form of the allocation of a plot of land to each member of the family. Each son and daughter of my brothers and sisters got a plot but they mostly sold them.

<sup>8</sup> Now demolished

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## P A R E N T S & S I B L I N G S

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*March 4, 1959 - Nasheman, Lahore - 55th Wedding Anniversary of Syed & Begum Maratib Ali.  
Syed & Begum Asad Ali who were married on February 27, 1959 appear prominently in this family photograph*

### FATHER'S PASSING AWAY

I used to visit my father every morning before going to work and my last visit to him was on 21st May 1961 when I had breakfast with him and my mother. After lunch at Packages, I got a message from the telephone operator that there was an urgent telephone call from home and without waiting to telephone home, I rushed to the house, where I was told that my father had had a heart attack. He had been quite hale and hearty till noon. He had an office in his house at Nasheman and he had been busy sending Eid cards to his friends. Dr. Balighur Rehman from Gulab Devi Hospital was already there and within ten minutes of my arrival in the house my father breathed his last. My brothers, Syed Amjad Ali, was in Washington on a Government mission and Syed Wajid Ali was in Copenhagen, Denmark, attending a meeting of the International Olympic Committee. The first problem for me was making arrangements for the funeral, but this was made easy because of the spontaneous and warm support from my colleagues at Packages. An issue to be decided was where he was to be buried because he had not given us any instructions. We asked his Secretary, who produced a copy of a letter he had addressed to the Commissioner of Lahore seeking permission to be buried in the Imam Bargah Mubarik Begum at Bhati Gate and on the copy he had affixed his full signature. For me this was his mandate. The funeral was attended by over a thousand people, and he was mourned by all who knew him. People came as soon as they heard the news and said, "Shahji was always there in our time of grief and need. We

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## P A R E N T S & S I B L I N G S

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*Syeda Mubarik Begum 1888-1969 (Mother)*

owe it to him.” Field Marshal Ayub Khan, the President of Pakistan, came specially to condole with the family.

We were able to put together his biography, which was published within a year of his death under the title of “Hayat-e-Maratib” written by my old teacher, Dr. Mohammad Abdul Lateef.

At times, I feel that it is good that my father is not here because he would not have been happy to see what has happened to this country. The whole value system that he cherished and looked up to has been destroyed. He would have been an unhappy person to see how sectarianism has raised its ugly head. There is corruption and there is no respect for gentlemen, for example teachers, those in the academic world, or the judiciary. Gentlemen in his day did not necessarily have a lot of money but they had a certain stature in society resulting from their personal conduct, character, and ability.

### **MOTHER: SYEDA MUBARIK BEGUM**

My mother was the second of the three daughters of Faqir Syed Iftikharuddin from his first wife. The eldest one was Faqir Waheeduddin’s mother, the middle one was my mother, and the youngest one was married, but had no issue. The other two daughters were married to near relatives but my mother was married outside the family, to a stranger and to someone who then came from a not so well-to-do station in life, neither socially nor economically. Faqir Syed Iftikharuddin had the foresight to recognize the ability and the potential of my father.

Faqir Syed Iftikharuddin raised his three daughters as if they were sons and spent a lot of time with them. They were educated at home but he ensured that they were well versed, not only in religious education but also in Persian and Urdu literature. All three daughters were taught to write well, not only in content but also in calligraphy.

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## P A R E N T S & S I B L I N G S

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Faqir Syed Iftikharuddin's friends were prominent people of the Punjab, not only Muslims but also Hindus and Sikhs. Because my maternal grandfather's ancestors had held important positions in the darbar of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, there was an understandable sympathy for the Sikhs in my mother's family. Faqir Syed Iftikharuddin was third or fourth generation after his elders who were Ranjit Singh's ministers.

When my mother and her two sisters were growing up, they worried that their father had no male issue. They persuaded him to marry again in the hope of having a male heir, with the result that their own mother took umbrage and estranged herself from her daughters. She was a strong and an unforgiving lady; for example, when she proposed that her first grandchild, who was a bit simple, should marry her brother's daughter (in the *Faqir Khana* family) he refused and she did not speak to him for twenty years! The daughters were keen to see their father married into a family of good lineage and found a family from Ferozabad near Delhi and arranged the marriage. A year later, in 1913, a son was born from the new marriage and was named Sirajuddin. Faqir Iftikharuddin died when the boy was a year old. The three sisters doted on their brother and raised him as their own son. Their step-mother was a stranger to Lahore; they provided her total support and forewent their share in the property of their father because they wanted their brother to inherit it. Sirajuddin went to Aitchison College and then Government College. He became a very well respected PCS officer and when he died of cancer, at the early age of 51, he was the Secretary for Food in the Punjab government. His sons, Waqaruddin and Anwaruddin, also served admirably as very well respected senior government officials.

### THE FAQIR FAMILY

The Faqirs were blessed with intelligence and creative minds. As a young kid, I remember my mother and her sisters recounting anecdotes about their ancestors, the three brothers who served in the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh - Faqir Azizuddin, Faqir Nuruddin and Faqir Imamuddin. Faqir Azizuddin was the Prime Minister of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Faqir Nuruddin was his Foreign Minister, and Faqir Imamuddin was the Governor of Qilla Gobindgarh in Amritsar. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had faith in them because he knew that the family was very pious and did not drink; they were well read and were trust-worthy.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh said that he wanted to give them a title and the three brothers said that there could be no better title than Faqir. Faqir Azizuddin wrote Persian poetry, which has been collected, compiled and published.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh picked Faqir Nuruddin to negotiate the Sutlej treaty with the British in 1809. The British were keen to know which was the Maharaja's blind eye. They asked Faqir Nuruddin, who replied, 'The Maharaja is my king; I have never had the courage to look into his eyes! I always keep my eyes downcast, so I don't know.' They sent a painting of the Queen to Maharaja Ranjit Singh and requested Faqir Nuruddin to reciprocate with a painting of the Maharaja. Faqir Nuruddin instructed the artist to portray the Maharaja aiming a gun, thus not revealing which was the bad eye.

The Maharaja used Faqir Azizuddin as an advisor. The Maharaja was fond of his favourite horse, Asp-e-Laila. One day, greatly upset, the Maharaja said to Faqir Sahib, 'Have you heard: Kharak Singh (the Maharaja's eldest son) has had the temerity to ride Asp-e-Laila today!' Faqir Sahib replied, 'Don't be upset. It was only his father's horse!'

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## P A R E N T S & S I B L I N G S

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In those days, there were very few Sikh teachers. Most of the teachers of the Kunwars (the princes) were Muslims and were called '*moulvis*'. One day an outraged Maharaja told Faqir Sahib, 'Have you heard that [a particular *moulvi*] has beaten the prince?' Faqir Sahib replied, 'You should be pleased with the *moulvi* and reward him for reprimanding the young prince.' Such was the Faqir's influence that the Maharaja viewed the incident in a new light and sent for the *moulvi*, who came into his presence trembling. The Maharaja asked him with which hand he beat the prince. The *moulvi* feared that his hand would be cut off so he put up his left hand but the Maharaja said, 'Put gold bangles on *moulvi* sahib's hand.'

This was a part of the legacy of the Faqirs. Each one of them had acquired a quick wit and their conduct towards each other was both literary and humorous. Most of the Faqir families once lived in Bazar-e-Hakiman, but they have gradually moved out, apart from my cousins in the *Faqir Khana*, who have maintained the house as a Museum, with Faqir Saifuddin as caretaker. He is the youngest son of Faqir Syed Mugheesuddin, the eldest son of Faqir Jalaluddin, who was my mother's uncle and established the Museum. He inherited a number of objects around which he built a large collection. Faqir Mugheesuddin added to it and now Faqir Saifuddin is preserving and expanding it. They have also given a few of their items as a special exhibit to the Lahore Museum.

The family's history as courtiers and their wit and intelligence stood them in very good stead with the British. The Faqirs were landed gentry but over the years their inheritance was diluted.

Because they came from the so-called aristocracy, the Faqirs were respected in society. Most of the people in the family were inducted into the civil service. For instance, there were two uncles of mine (cousins of my mother's) who were inducted into the Police, where they served their full term. Of course, the British would not tolerate any corruption and these gentlemen lived on incomes from their farms and other inherited properties. There was another uncle of mine (my mother's cousin) who joined the Railway. Nobody ever bothered about their rank! They went to work every day and put on the uniform but there was no question of working towards a promotion!

My first cousin, Faqir Syed Waheeduddin, joined the Army during World War II, when there was a rush to join the Army. Faqir Sahib was well read and intelligent; he joined as a Captain in the Recruitment Department and was soon promoted to Major and then Colonel within a period of three years. He was responsible for the recruitment of non-combatants, the people who served in the Army without uniform, for example the cooks, bearers, watermen, and others attached to each Regiment. The Commander-in-Chief had asked my father if he could help with this recruitment and my father introduced Faqir Waheeduddin, when he was already an army officer. After my Senior Cambridge examination in June 1941, Faqir Waheeduddin asked me to visit him in Madras, where he was posted (it was an important recruitment centre). This was my first visit to South India and I spent six weeks there; Faqir Sahib lived like a Maharaja.

### MY MOTHER'S LIFE AT HOME

During the first fifteen years of my mother's married life, she had to live modestly. My mother totally adapted herself to my father's family and groomed and encouraged my father. She raised a large family, four sons and six daughters, of whom one daughter died before she was five years old in a fire accident. All the rest matured and

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were married in her lifetime. All my brothers and sisters were sent to the best schools my father could afford and she encouraged all of them to study as much as was possible. My sisters went to Lady MacLagan School and later on they studied at Queen Mary College, one of the best girls' colleges in Lahore. My brothers went to Central Model School and then to Government College, Lahore. When I came of school-going age, I was first sent to Sacred Heart School for nursery and elementary education and when I reached the appropriate age, my mother had me admitted to Aitchison College, about which I write in the next chapter.

My mother stayed at home all day; her children were her life. She not only ensured that we were properly clothed and fed, but she also took a lot of interest in how we did at school and especially what kind of friends we had: not whether they came from a rich family or not, but whether they were people of good character. Through experience, she knew that the children of good parents were normally good influences. Like my father, my mother had no religious prejudice in the selection of our friends. She was brought up in a home that was conservative, where the social life of the women was confined to their gender, and they did not meet men from outside. Nonetheless, from an early age when I was at Aitchison College, she would insist, even though she was in *purdah*, on meeting my friends to see what kind of company I kept at Aitchison. Most of my friends were non-Muslims and she treated them with motherly affection.

My mother never made me feel that wealth was important. She always used to say that the motto of her family was '*Al Fakbro Fakri* – we are proud of being faqirs!' She said to me once, 'These women run after gold ornaments; do these things ever remain anyone's lasting companions?' Wealth is fine up to a point, but after that it is unimportant.

My three elder brothers had already completed their education when I started going to school. Therefore, I received more attention from my mother than my other brothers and sisters.

Because of her good education and wide experience in her parents' home, my mother had a broad vision and a great enthusiasm for literature and history. She travelled all over India with my father whenever it was possible for her to do so and made a point of visiting historical places and meeting literary personalities. She was in *purdah* and did not attend mixed gatherings but she bent the rules to the extent of one-to-one meetings with interesting men. Her elder sister, Bibi Jan, was married to Faqir Syed Najamuddin, who was a contemporary of Dr. Iqbal and a very close friend of his. Many-a-time when Dr. Muhammad Iqbal came to see Faqir Syed Najamuddin in Bazar-e-Hakiman, my mother was also there. In fact, when Dr. Muhammad Iqbal moved from Sialkot to Lahore, he stayed for a while in Bazar-e-Hakiman at the residence of Hakim Aminuddin<sup>9</sup> and it is here that he recited one of his early couplets.

When my mother went to Lucknow in the 1920s, she sought out Pandit Ratan Nath Sarshar, the author of "Fasana-e-Aazad" of which she had already read all four volumes. Many years later, she accompanied my father to Burma and in Rangoon she made a point of visiting the grave of the last Mughal emperor of Delhi, Bahadur Shah Zafar.

<sup>9</sup> Founder of the Hakim family, who set up a clinic in Bhati Gate. The family availed itself of modern education and became members of the Government and successful lawyers.

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My mother was very keen on travelling, mainly for the sake of acquiring knowledge. She was totally at home wherever she went. She had a special feeling for Afghanistan because her father had served there for a number of years in the British Embassy and her maternal grandmother came from Kabul. Once she went with me by car to Kabul. She also went for Umra (pilgrimage) to Saudi Arabia with my father and earlier on for 'ziaraats' to Iraq and Syria. She travelled to England with my father and sister in 1955. My father and my mother were invited to a Garden Party in Buckingham Palace and she was very pleased to be presented to the Queen.

She was deeply religious and a devout shia. Both my parents were shias but they had a liberal attitude towards religion and never tried to influence me as to how I should offer my prayers. I first learnt my prayers when I went to Aitchison College and in those days we had just one class for religious instructions. The *moulvi* sahib was sunni and he taught us the sunni way of prayer.

My father was totally devoted to my mother and when his circumstances improved, he ensured that she led a comfortable life. She was not interested in expensive clothes or jewellery. Her only desire was to raise her children so that they would bring a good name to the family. Four of my sisters were married outside the family, to men from the landed gentry and because of the way she had raised them, these girls took educated and enlightened ideas to the remote villages of Shah Jewna in Jhang where two of my sisters are married, one to Qatalpur, and to Renala in Okara District where my fourth sister was given away. My fifth sister was married to Syed Akhtar Ahsan, son of my father's brother, Syed Ahsan Ali, and brother of my wife Perwin.

From the time I could write and whenever I was away from Lahore, even during my school days, my mother was extremely keen that I should write to her regularly and she would respond with punctuality. When I finished my studies in Lahore, and while I was waiting to get admission abroad to an American University, I spent part of my time away from Lahore in Bhopal and Bombay as part of my initiation into the family's business. My mother kept in touch with me through letters and I could feel that she had a very special love for me. On my return from America in December 1947, when I was visiting Lahore from Karachi, I was invited to dinner by Qurban Ali Khan<sup>10</sup>, who was a very dear friend of the family and very kind to me. At 9 p.m. my mother rang Bhai Amjad to ask, 'How will Babar get home?' Bhai Amjad said, 'Ma Jee, if he can come back from America, he can also return from GOR (Government Officers Residences)!' For her, I had not grown up. Bhai Amjad used to call our mother 'Ma Jee'. I used to call her 'Bahooji' as did everybody, since the time she came to my father's home as a young bride.

She would come to Karachi for months to be with me. When her health was weakening through old age, she wanted to remain in Lahore and I was happy that Packages provided me the opportunity to live in Lahore. For a year, after we moved to Lahore, our house was under construction so we had no home of our own. My parents had moved into a new house, which had never been my home, and my wife was keen to stay with her mother, so I was happy to live there for a year, but every morning I had breakfast with my mother before I went to work. My breakfast consisted

<sup>10</sup> He was the I.G. Police Lahore after whom Qurban Lines is named. He joined the Police as an ASP and then rose to the rank of I.G. He became the I.G. responsible for Anti-Corruption in the whole of India. After Partition, Sardar Patel became the Interior Minister of India and he asked Mr. Qurban Ali Khan to stay on in India but he elected to go to Pakistan. After retirement, he became the Governor of Balochistan, and also served as the Minister of Interior and the Governor of NWFP.

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## PARENTS & SIBLINGS

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*Parents' graves at Imambargah Mubarik Begum*

of almonds that had been soaked overnight and pink Kashmiri tea with '*baqarkhani*' (a spiced flat-bread). This practice I followed until the last day of my mother's life. I went to see her in the evening as well. Whenever I visited her I knew that she had been looking forward to my visit. She never talked about any subject that would depress me as she felt that my mind should be free from any worries; whenever I visited her, she would only talk about pleasant things. My business took me abroad frequently. She was always very concerned whenever I stepped into an aeroplane even though by then it had become a normal mode of travel.

My father's death came all of a sudden but she bore it with tremendous fortitude and courage. As this was the first death in our family in forty years, she was very concerned as to how her children would take this loss and she acted very bravely and did not show her own emotion, so that her children could bear the loss sensibly.

In September 1969, I was sent by the Government to be a delegate to the U.N. General Assembly in New York. While I was there, on October 29th, I received the sad news that Bhai Afzal had suddenly died of heart failure. I could not leave New York earlier than November 20 and when I returned to Lahore, I found that the loss of my brother had completely shattered my mother. She had lost her appetite and one could see that she had lost interest in life and was looking forward to her own end. Her health was deteriorating rapidly. I maintained my

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## P A R E N T S & S I B L I N G S

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routine of visiting her for breakfast every morning as I felt that this was one occasion that she looked forward to every day. Towards the end of December 1969, her condition deteriorated further and she ran a high temperature. Her kidneys were failing. When I visited her for my last breakfast with her on 29th December, she was lying down in bed. As I entered the room, she sat up just to show me that she was not that sick! She insisted on my having breakfast and as usual it was laid out very elaborately on the table in her room. That evening her condition worsened and at 10 p.m. she breathed her last.

She had sent for my eldest brother, Syed Amjad Ali, two days before she died and instructed him that she wanted to have a 'kacha' grave and not a concrete one with marble as had been constructed, for my father. Her funeral was as well attended as my father's and she was buried by his side in the Imam Bargah that was named after her.

Her going away created a tremendous void in my life and I still have not been able to overcome her loss. After 29th December 1969, I have not had the courage to drink green Kashmiri tea as it would never be the same for me again, and would reinforce the knowledge that I would never again receive the kind of love that was showered on me by my mother.

Her biography, written like my father's, by Dr. Mohammad Abdul Lateef, was published as Hayat-e-Mubarik. In 1996, the Babar Ali Foundation launched a scholarship programme named after Syeda Mubarik Begum, for needy female graduate and post-graduate students in public sector institutions. Up to June 2011, around 4,000 female students from all over Pakistan had benefitted from the scholarship scheme.

### **BROTHERS**

My eldest brother, Syed Amjad Ali, was born on 6th July 1906. Being the second child of my parents and the first son, he was the apple of their eyes and also of my uncle, Syed Ahsan Ali, who till then had only two daughters. He was also the favourite child of my mother's youngest sister, who had no children of her own; so he was brought up with more attention than any of my other brothers and sisters. My second brother, Syed Afzal Ali, born in 1909, was afflicted with Meningitis at an early age, which impaired his education. He still took a lot of interest in the family business and was very much loved. My third brother, Syed Wajid Ali, was born in 1911. He grew up in a competitive environment, with no special pampering. He accepted the rough and tumble of life. Whereas Bhai Amjad was a good student and was keen to do well at school and later on at college, Bhai Wajid, who was five years his junior, had little time for studies and gave all his time to extracurricular activities like caring for his dogs and looking after the horses of the family. He had too many distractions in Lahore, so my eldest brother and father decided to send him to Bishop Cotton School in Simla, where he was educated for a few years. He took his matriculation examination and joined Government College, Lahore. In order to discipline him, my father and brother enrolled him in the Army as a 'Y' cadet. This was one route to getting a commission in the Army: you served as an apprentice for a few years and if there was a mutual liking between the cadet and the Army, then you could make a career as a commissioned officer. This was a natural home for him as he found himself in a congenial environment, doing physical work requiring guts and stamina. However, no sooner had he settled down in military life, after a couple of years my father and uncle decided that they wanted him to help them in running the business.

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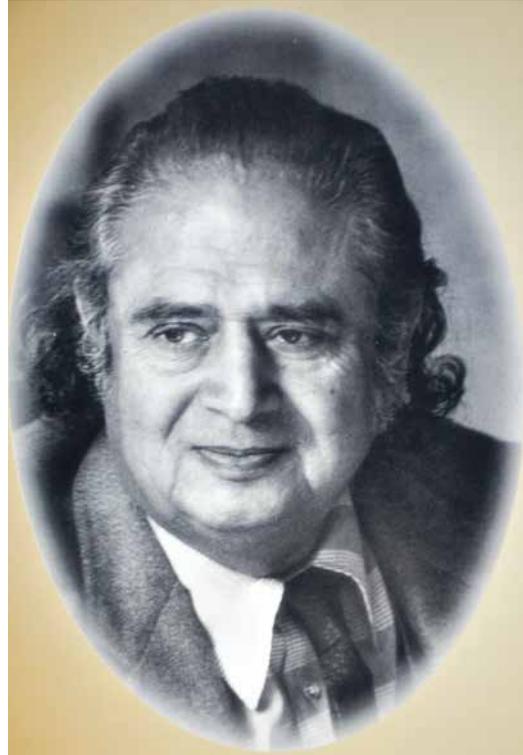
## P A R E N T S & S I B L I N G S

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### **SYED AMJAD ALI**

Being her first son, my mother had put a lot of emphasis on Bhai Amjad's education and upbringing and wished that, like her father, he should go into government service. He went to Government College and did his B.A. Honours. He then went abroad in 1931 and joined the Inner Temple to read for the Bar in England. Meanwhile, the Round Table Conference had started in England, where the British government was talking to the Indian leadership about the future political status of India. They were not thinking of freedom for India but dominion status, like Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

My father knew the top Muslim leadership of India – Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, Sir Fazl-e-Hussain, Sir Zafrulla Khan, Sir Shafaat Ahmed, and Mr. A.H. Ghaznavi, some of who were members of the Muslim Delegation to the Round Table Conference. My father suggested to Sir Zafrulla that, as Bhai Amjad was in London, the Muslim delegates could use him as their Honorary Secretary. This exposed Bhai Amjad to Indian politics when Gandhi was the sole representative of the Congress Party. At the Conference, Bhai Amjad was noticed by the Aga Khan and thereafter, whenever he visited India, he asked Bhai Amjad to be his assistant. It was a great benefit to be exposed to the Aga Khan's wealth of experience. Bhai Amjad thus entered the political arena. The first election in India was held in 1937, soon after the passage of the India Bill, which resulted from the Round Table Conference and through which the Indians were given more power. Sir Fazl-e-Hussain, a lawyer from Batala, set up the Unionist Party in the Punjab and said to my father, 'I want you to give your son to the Punjab.' As Bhai Amjad was not interested in the army contracting business, he was very pleased. Sir Fazl-e-Hussain made Bhai Amjad Assistant Secretary of the Unionist Party and a member of the Party's Secretariat. This Party, constituted in Nawab Mamdot's house, was a new political party, mostly based on the landed gentry of the Punjab, with participation from Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.



*Syed Amjad Ali 1906-1997 (Brother)*

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## P A R E N T S & S I B L I N G S

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Bhai Amjad filed papers for a seat in the Central Assembly in Delhi but his papers were rejected because candidates had to have personal property to be eligible for standing in the elections. Although the family had a lot of property there was nothing in his own name. He thus did not get the ticket and was disqualified. He instead got elected to the Punjab Assembly from Zeera in Ferozepur. Because of his education and background, having lived in England, and due to his having rubbed shoulders with people like the Aga Khan and having attended Round Table Conferences, Sir Sikander Hayat<sup>11</sup>, Sir Fazl-e-Hussain's successor, selected him as the Private Parliamentary Secretary. In those days, you had three tiers in the Unionist Party: Minister, Parliamentary Secretary, and Private Parliamentary Secretary. At the young age of 28 years, Sir Sikander made Bhai Amjad the Private Parliamentary Secretary of the Unionist Party. The Parliamentary Secretary was Mir Maqbool, Sir Sikander's brother-in-law. Bhai Amjad was made a part of Sir Sikander's entourage because he was someone who spent his own money, was always available, and was generous in entertaining. He was part of the team that went to Bombay for the meeting at which the Sikander-Jinnah Pact was negotiated. Bhai Wajid was in Bombay at that time and he played host to the entire Lahore delegation.

Sir Sikander died suddenly of heart failure in 1942, on the day that two of his sons, Shaukat Hayat and Azmat Hayat, and his daughter Tahira celebrated their weddings<sup>12</sup>. Sir Sikander Hayat was succeeded by Khizar Hayat, who picked Bhai Amjad as his right hand man because he wanted somebody of integrity to guide him. By 1945, when Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah emerged as the undisputed leader of the Muslims of India and the demand for Pakistan was asserting itself, there was a plea that Khizar Hayat should give up the Unionist Party and join the Muslim League, which unfortunately did not happen. Our whole family supported the Quaid but Bhai Amjad's loyalty was to Khizar Hayat. There was tremendous pressure on Bhai Amjad to join the Muslim League. Eventually, Bhai Amjad went to Khizar to apologise for leaving him. Khizar said, 'Et tu Brutus', to which my brother replied, 'It is not just family pressure. This is where the future of the country lies.' My brother's reluctance to abandon Sir Khizar Hayat was known both to the Muslim League as well as to the Quaid-e-Azam. When elections were held in 1946, Bhai Amjad, who had done a lot of work in Zeera, Ferozepur, applied for the ticket again but it was awarded to Mian Bashir Ahmad from the Baghbanpura family of Lahore. This was his first major setback.

Between 1945 and 1947, Bhai Amjad spent a lot of time in Delhi, where he had many friends in the Government as well as in politics. After Partition, Bhai Amjad was readily recognised as a person with ability and resources, who could be put to use for the nation. When I started work in 1948, Bhai Amjad was attending to business in Karachi but he only worked from 9 to 1 and his commitment to business was peripheral. He was good at ideas but left it to others to implement them. He was pleased when in 1950 he was asked to go to Washington as a member of a special mission to negotiate with the International Monetary Fund over the value of the Pakistani rupee. The British Pound had devalued and the international community thought the rupee should devalue too, but Pakistan

<sup>11</sup> Sir Sikander Hayat was an outstanding politician and Chief Minister of Punjab after the 1937 elections, heading the Unionist Party which consisted of leading landlords among Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs of the Punjab. He became the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India when it was created. Prior to that he was the first Muslim Governor of the Punjab. When, in summer, the Governor was on leave, Sir Sikander was the Acting Governor. See page 221.

<sup>12</sup> I remember Hakeem Ahmed Shuja was there and he said, 'The scene does not change so fast even on the cinema screen as has happened today!'

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## P A R E N T S & S I B L I N G S

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wanted to keep its value up in order to import machinery for industrialisation<sup>13</sup>. This he successfully achieved with the able support of Mr. Anwar Ali, who subsequently became the head of the Saudi Monetary Agency.

Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan appreciated both my brothers because he recognized that they were prepared to serve their country. When there was a shortage of wheat in the country, Liaquat Ali Khan asked Bhai Amjad, since he knew people in America, to go there and buy wheat. Bhai Amjad travelled at his own expense and this was another national contribution.

Bhai Amjad was appointed Pakistan's first Economic Minister in Washington and in 1954 Pakistan's Ambassador to the USA. He brought great credit to Pakistan. In 1955, he was asked by the Government to be the Finance Minister of Pakistan, where he remained till 1958 when General Iskandar Mirza and General Ayub declared Martial Law and abrogated the Constitution. Two years later, Bhai Amjad was asked by the Government to be Chairman of the Investment Promotion Bureau and then again he was made Ambassador, this time to the United Nations, where he served till 1966.

He then represented Pakistan on more than one of the Permanent Committees of the United Nations. He endeared himself to the U.N. system, which he came to know extremely well. He generously entertained hundreds of participants at the United Nations and contributed to the deliberations of the Organization. The U.N. recognized his merit and made him Chairman of the Committee on Contributions. For thirty years running he was elected head of this Committee by the entire United Nations; it was an honorary job and he attended its meetings regularly. The U.N. would pay for his travel and stay in New York. He was also the first Chairman of ECOSOC (Economic & Social Council of the United Nations), which recognized his many contributions. In the United Nations he knew everyone, from the security guard at the gate to the Secretary General. He would invite them for lunch and feel equally comfortable eating with the security guard or the Secretary General.

Bhai Amjad perfectly understood the internal politics of the U.N. He said to me that he had told Kofi Annan ten years before he became the Secretary General that he could rise to that level. At that time, Kofi Annan was in the third tier of the hierarchy, with about twenty people at the same level. Bhai Amjad advised him, 'I know the United Nations well. You will become the Secretary General but you should not display any interest. Just keep doing your work well, don't show your ambition; ultimately you will get there.'

Bhai Amjad never retired from the U.N. He used to go to New York three times a year and used to stop over in London for two to three weeks and then come back to Lahore. He was always looking forward to his next visit. When he realized that he could not travel any more, it was the end. He died on March 5, 1997.

Since my childhood, I have had a great deal of respect and a certain amount of in-built fear of my eldest brother

<sup>13</sup> Pakistan at that time had a positive trade balance. We had jute, cotton and rice. There were very few imports and the complete budget of the Army was Rs. 100 crore.

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## P A R E N T S   &   S I B L I N G S

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*Syed Wajid Ali 1911-2008 (Brother)*

because of our twenty years' age difference. However, he always treated me with the utmost consideration and gave me as much love as he gave to his own children.

### **SYED WAJID ALI**

Bhai Wajid was away from Lahore throughout my school life except for two or three visits a year to see my mother while he was working for the family business south of Delhi. After I completed my university education, I went to spend time with him in Bombay, where he lived for a number of years, and from him too I got a great deal of love. He had been introduced to Mr. Jinnah by my father, and with his genial disposition, it was not long before he developed a personal relationship with the Quaid-e-Azam and Miss Jinnah. He was among the few people who had the privilege of visiting their house without a prior appointment.

The Quaid used to dote on him because of his charm and sincerity. He made Bhai Wajid a member of the four-person Frontier Committee on June 14, 1947, to make arrangements for and oversee the Referendum in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) to decide whether NWFP was to join Pakistan. The other members of this four-person Committee were Mr. I.I. Chundrigar, Mr. Ghazanfar Ali Khan and Pir Sahib of Manki Sharif. Bhai Wajid was asked to handle all financial matters.

Bhai Wajid had a charming personality. Like my father, he enjoyed meeting people who were better educated than him. He had a one-on-one personal relationship with a very large number of people. Bhai Wajid was a leader and had a tremendous sense of drive. He had not studied modern management but during World War II he was feeding 100,000 soldiers a day, organizing it extremely well in ten different towns.

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## PARENTS & SIBLINGS

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*Wedding of Syed Wajid Ali 1940: L to R: Syed Amjad Ali, Syed Maratib Ali, Syed Wajid Ali, Syed Absan Ali, Governor Punjab Sir Henry Craik and Mr. Haswari (Father-in-law of Syed Wajid Ali)*

He was a member of the International Olympic Committee for 40 years. I followed him as a delegate from Pakistan at the International Labour Organisation in 1969. Although he had left ten years earlier as a member of the Governing Council, the staff asked me if I was related to Syed Wajid Ali. Wherever he went, people singled him out because he spoke very well and was blessed with good intuition. I always used to consult him on business matters. Among us brothers, we had complete trust in each other.

I received affection in very large measure from both Bhai Amjad and Bhai Wajid. Bhai Amjad never showed it while Bhai Wajid was not shy of demonstrating his love. They both gave me the opportunity to talk to them openly and frankly, especially as far as business and family matters were concerned, and, invariably, they have both heeded my advice despite my being many years younger. I never found them to show any partiality for their own sons and daughters in preference to me.

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## PARENTS & SIBLINGS

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*Syed Afzal Ali 1909-1969 (Brother)*

### **SYED AFZAL ALI**

I had a third brother, Afzal Ali, who was not so active in business because of the childhood Meningitis, but he participated in business whenever possible. He raised a family of five daughters and a son who have all done well. He and his wife, my sister-in-law, enjoyed living with my mother and lived with her till my mother passed away. Even after the death of my parents, she continued to live in the house till her death.

### **SISTERS**

The eldest child of my parents was a daughter, Baji Surraya, the next three children were sons, described above. The next four were daughters, Baji Fakhra, Baji Gullo (who died before she was five years old in a fire accident), Baji Kishwar, and Baji Sarwat. Then I arrived, and after me was Sitwat. As far back as I can remember, I saw more of my sisters, of whom only Baji Surraya was then married (when I was a year old), than my brothers. I was one boy among the four girls in the family. My mother and my sisters all pampered me and I received a lot of love and affection from them. From 1935 onwards, one by one they were all married, but our relationship remained extremely close and I became equally fond of their husbands who were admitted to our family and treated as additional sons of my parents.

My mother was a great believer in educating daughters because, as she often used to say, 'If you educate a girl you are educating a whole family because a girl who later on becomes a mother is the tree under whose shadow sits a whole family.' My mother raised her five daughters with this object in mind: that they would one day raise five families who would bring credit to our family, and this is what happened. Although none of them pursued higher education and my eldest sister was only educated up to the 5th class, the other four matriculated. Four of my five sisters were married to landed gentry who came from conservative rural areas and these sisters were able to participate in the development of their husbands, their families, and improve their whole environment.