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My date of birth is authenticated by an entry in my father's diary, which reads:
"30th June 1926 at 3 am, by the Grace of Almighty a son was born – Babar Ali".

I was born after four sisters, so there was great jubilation and happiness on my arrival. I attended the kindergarten classes and received my primary education at Sacred Heart School, Lahore, which was within a twenty minutes walk from the house where we then lived on Rattigan Road.

AITCHISON COLLEGE

In 1934, I was eight years old, which was the age limit up to which boys could study at Sacred Heart School. In October 1934, I joined Aitchison Chiefs College, as it was then known, in Form 1, the junior most class.

My father did not send his elder sons to Aitchison because he could not afford it at the time¹⁴. Besides, it was an exclusive College for the Chiefs of Punjab and out of reach of the business community. The only reason I could get in was because my maternal uncle, Faqir Sirajuddin, and my brother-in-law, Syed Mubarak Ali Shah, had studied there. If they had applied the law very strictly, I was actually not entitled to be admitted because none of the connections were from my father's antecedents. In those days, there used to be a published book called, 'The Chiefs of the Punjab', and your name had to be in that book before you could apply for admission to Aitchison. Nonetheless, my eldest sister, Surraya, married to Syed Mubarak Ali Shah, took me to the College to meet with Moulvi Karamatullah, a member of its teaching staff who had been a tutor to her husband, and Moulvi Sahib introduced me to the Principal, Mr. C.H. Barry, who allowed me to join. My father was not in Lahore at the time I was admitted to the College; when he returned and saw me in school uniform, he was very happy.

My family already had social contacts with the leading families of Lahore but, of course, when I joined Aitchison College, I was in another league altogether as about half the Aitchisonians were from outside Lahore; they were from the States of Patiala, Bahawalpur, Khairpur, and the Kulu Hill State. We also had the sons of the landed gentry from Punjab, mainly Muslims and Sikhs. I was the only one I can remember whose father was in business. Sometimes other students teased me as a 'contractor's son' and tears used to roll down my cheeks when I heard this expression!

Joining Aitchison really opened a new world for me. I was the 84th student on the rolls of the College in October 1934¹⁵. The School had a very elaborate programme, starting with physical training in the morning, a whole day of studies, and compulsory games in the afternoon. Even Sundays were not free. In each class, we were hardly 10 to 12 students, with the result that we got to know each other well and the friendship with some of my classmates has lasted till today. In the first year, I was able to settle down in my studies and my class position was second after the first annual examination. I spent the next nine years at the School and I was always able to maintain a position as one of the top two students in the class. Almost every year, I got a scholastic prize on Founders Day and in the School Certificate Examination of Cambridge University I won two Gold Medals for standing first in History and Geography as well as in Science and Mathematics. This was very heartening as I won two of the three

¹⁴ In 1934, the School fee at Aitchison was Rs. 105 per month. By contrast when I joined Government College in 1944, the fee was Rs. 28 per month.

¹⁵ By the time I left, there were 120 pupils in all.

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Medals awarded to our class. In the Higher School Certificate, I stood first among the science students and was second in the whole class.

When I got to Aitchison in 1934, I could neither read nor write in Urdu, even though we spoke Urdu within the family. My parents conversed primarily in Punjabi, their mother tongue, but they both spoke to us in Urdu because it was considered to be more formal and respectful. The only time I failed in any subject at Aitchison was in Urdu. My mother employed a calligraphist who started me writing on a *takhti* (wooden tablet) and that is how I improved my Urdu handwriting. Due to our father's engagements and travelling, my mother played an active role in our upbringing and made up for his absence. However, whenever my father was in town, he would go and meet with our teachers and the principals to make sure that each of us was being properly educated.

At games, I was above average. I was in the swimming team at Aitchison and won my colours. I got a position in the College tennis squad, won tennis colours, and in my final year I was able to make it to the cricket team, and was given colours. The above three colours enabled me to wear the full College Blazer which was a much coveted award, as no more than two or three students per year acquired this distinction.

TEACHERS

I was very fortunate that throughout my stay at Aitchison, Mr. C.H. Barry was the Principal, infusing new life into the College when he took over in 1933 until his retirement in 1946. He was an excellent teacher, a great disciplinarian, and a rabid Tory. I remember my father had brought me a felt hat from England and I wore it to a cricket match at Aitchison. Mr. Barry came up to me and asked, 'What is your nationality?' I said, 'I am an Indian' and he said, 'Why are you wearing a hat that is not Indian?'

In 1941, my friend Harcharan wrote a letter to Mahatama Gandhi, who was on a fast unto death in jail, that he was praying for his life and he fully supported his cause. The letter was intercepted by the CID and sent back to Mr. Barry. I remember we were sitting in our class and the peon, a short Muslim fellow, whom we called the Angel of Death, came and asked for Harcharan Singh to see the Principal. Mr. Barry asked him, 'Harcharan, did you recently write a letter to anybody?' Harcharan replied, 'Yes, I regularly write to my mother.' Mr. Barry said, 'No, anybody in politics?' Harcharan said, 'Yes, I wrote to Mahatama Gandhi.' Mr. Barry asked him what he had written. Harcharan told him and Mr. Barry said, 'You are a student here, you should not be bothered by these things. You should concentrate on your studies. Politics will come later.'

After Partition in 1947, Harcharan was elected to the East Punjab Assembly and was a Deputy Minister. On a visit to his village, the Inspector of the Police Station in the village came to pay his respects to Harcharan and brought his file, which was in the Police Station. Harcharan was very surprised to find in the file a letter from Mr. Barry to the Deputy Commissioner (D.C.) of Ferozpur saying 'Harcharan Singh Brar is a student of Aitchison College. He is a snake in the grass. You have to watch him!' That letter went to the D.C. and was then passed on to the Police Station in Harcharan's village. This was before Partition and shows how the British kept an eye on their political opponents. Harcharan told me that he could use that letter as a certificate of distinction in the Congress Party!

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I was once nearly caned at Aitchison. Mr. Gwynn was the Games Master. I was very keen on tennis and I went up to him and said, 'I want to see the tennis match between Iftikhar and Ghaus at the Carson Institute.' It was probably a long day and he said, 'No, you have to play games.' I still went to see the match and found that Mr. Gwynn was also there! He gave me a dirty look and the next morning he said to me, 'You disobeyed me. I am going to recommend that you be caned by Mr. Barry.' It was winter and I wore shorts under my trousers so that the caning would not hurt me. When I got to school, the Principal's peon came and called me to his office. Frightened, I went there. Mr. Barry was sitting along with Lala Dhani Ram, the Head Master, and Mr. Gwynn. Mr. Barry said, 'You disobeyed Mr. Gwynn.' I apologised and he said, 'You are very lucky. Today I have a bad pain in my back. You see this cane: I would have used it on you but I will spare you.' He thus let me off and that was the nearest I got to any punishment.

I was in touch with Mr. Barry from 1984 to 1993 when he passed away in Netherfields, U.K. He helped my cousin, Aijazuddin, in writing "The First Hundred Years of Aitchison College", which was printed in 1986 to commemorate the first centennial celebrations of the College. I remember seeing Mr. Barry some three years before he died in 1993, when he was 85 years old and I had not seen him for forty years. I wrote to him in 1985 to say that I was setting up an Institute of Education for the training of teachers in Lahore. I knew that Mr. Barry, after retiring from Aitchison in 1947, was posted as Inspector of Schools in Manchester as his first job after he left India. I sought his help in preparing a blueprint for the teacher training school. He visited me in London, accompanied by the then Inspector of Schools to give me advice on teacher training. I addressed Mr. Barry as 'Sir'. He said to his colleague, 'I taught him forty years ago and he still calls me 'Sir'!'

It was ingrained in us to treat our teachers with reverence and this has remained with me for all my life. I was fortunate that throughout my stay, we had one Principal and among the other members of the staff there were very few changes, with the result that we got to know them very well and were able to benefit from their guidance and affection. I was fortunate in maintaining relationships with many of my teachers long after I left Aitchison and after their retirements; in most cases I was able to see them regularly before they passed away. Among them were Khan Anwar Sikandar Khan, Chaudhry Shahbaz Khan, and Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah. Shah Sahib¹⁶ belonged to an old Syed family of Lahore; he knew my elders and he took a great deal of interest in me. He saw that I conducted myself correctly. He was in charge of swimming and under his tutelage I learnt to swim and take part in competitive swimming. He was our science teacher but like other teachers he was also responsible for supervising games. He had the distinction of being the first Pakistani Principal of Aitchison and after his retirement from the College, he very kindly accepted my request to help and advise me at Packages Limited. He stayed with me till his demise in 1979.

We also had very distinguished non-Muslim teachers at Aitchison, starting with Rai Bahadur Dhani Ram Kapila, who was the Headmaster, Sardar Harnam Singh, and Sardar Gajinder Singh. I had the same love from all my non-Muslim teachers. The school environment was totally free of communalism with the result that even today I am totally comfortable with non-Muslims. Non-Muslim teachers migrated to India after 1947, but I was able to

¹⁶ See pages 51, 52

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see some of them during my subsequent visits to India. All of them have now passed away. Among the Sikhs, Sardar Harnam Singh, our Mathematics teacher, was very kind. He was an outstanding hockey player in his day. Hockey was a very prominent game in Lahore and Punjab and to play for the District of Lahore team between 1920 and 1940 you had to be an outstanding player. If you played for F.C. College or Government College, you were bound to play for Punjab. Regular tournaments were held throughout the year.

I was a good student and if you were one, you automatically became a favourite of your teachers. When I had been at Aitchison for little more than a year, and no more than nine years old, Sardar Harnam Singh was our class master. He made me responsible for the storing and issuance of stationery to our class. This was the way we were taught responsibility and leadership. I can never forget an incident on the hockey field one particular afternoon when I was about 13 years old. Games for us were compulsory, which meant that we had to attend the games period every school day. On this particular day, I was captain of my side and playing in the position of centre-forward. The opposing centre-half not only marked me closely but repeatedly hooked my stick from behind which is against the rules of the game. I warned him twice, and in exasperation when he did it the third time, I waved my stick at him without any intention of hitting him. This was noticed by Sardar Harnam Singh, who was in charge of the game. He immediately sent me off the ground and asked me to run round the field during the rest of the game. This punishment was most humiliating as I was the senior-most boy on the field, but it taught me a lesson for the rest of my life, which was never to lose one's temper on the playing field, whatever the provocation.

In our days at Aitchison College, the 'full blazer' was the most coveted achievement and it was only awarded on the basis of one's performance in sports. You had to be in the College team and a colour-holder in at least three games including riding, swimming and athletics to qualify for it. Once I qualified for the full blazer, the one with yellow piping, I went to Sardar Harnam Singh, who was in charge of monitoring this award. I informed him of my completing the requirements for the blazer and he told me that he would verify it. Sardar Sahib took two months to do so; I didn't have the courage to ask him again. I was not allowed to order a blazer until it was announced in the College Assembly but once the announcement was made, I went straight to Pitman's tailor on the Mall to make the order. It was the most coveted recognition at Aitchison, like a knighthood. Now there is also an academic blazer at Aitchison, with blue piping.

The Principal at Aitchison till 1947 was always from Britain and there were a number of British teachers as well. Among the British teachers, one who had a very strong influence on me from an academic point of view was Victor Kiernan. He taught us English and he was not a run-of-the-mill Britisher. He was a fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and came out to India in 1938. He joined Aitchison in 1941 after a stint at Sikh National College. He returned to the U.K. in 1945 and became a lecturer and then Professor of Modern History at Edinburgh University. I saw in his biography, which recently came out on his 80th birthday, that he was a Communist!

At Aitchison, there was as much emphasis on grooming us for good behaviour as on acquiring knowledge and learning; this was passed on to us both on the playing field and in the classroom. The teachers at Aitchison taught

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us how to discern the difference between right and wrong. They taught us good personal conduct, to be truthful, not to back-bite, to be modest and humble, and not to show off.

A deliberate purpose of the College was to inculcate western knowledge in the ruling elite class and the curriculum was designed as such. For instance, we were hardly taught any Indian history; we were taught British history, about the colonies in North America and how the savage Red Indians were civilized! The history of India that we were exposed to was designed to show how British rule brought good to India – for instance the abolition of *sati* (an Indian wife burning herself on the funeral pyre of her husband). Now of course we know how the British conquered India but we, as students, were made to feel that it was a blessing that the British had come to India and we always felt that they were superior to us. It took some decades after they left to rid myself of this complex.

Another aspect of our education, taught by Chaudhry Shahbaz Khan, was Agriculture. In those days the curriculum was designed for the landed gentry and, therefore, agriculture was a compulsory subject for three years for Aitchisonians. We were even taught to plough the fields with bullocks. Our whole class was taken to the Agriculture College at Lyallpur (now Faisalabad) to spend four days seeing different aspects of agriculture.

Today, the teacher has become a mercenary. He is only interested in delivering his lecture or lesson and then he has to be out because he has to go elsewhere to give another lecture or tuition. In my day, the salary of an Aitchison College teacher was no more than Rs. 500, similar to what a Provincial Civil Officer would earn. It was a reasonable salary but I remember that our teachers had only one set of clothes for the winter and another set for the summer; you seldom saw them in new clothes. Their shirts would be washed at home. There was no teacher at Aitchison who had a car; they used bicycles, as did some of the pupils such as me.

SCHOOL FRIENDS AND SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

We were a hundred odd students at Aitchison and everybody knew everybody. Among my first friends at Aitchison were Suraj Shamsher, son of Lala Rup Chand of the distinguished Mela Ram family of Lahore, and his younger brother, Ranbir Shamsher. Ranbir died while at school after an appendix operation. This was the first death of a student at Aitchison while I was there and it was a traumatic experience because the entire school followed the funeral procession from their family house on Egerton Road on foot to the cremation ground outside Taxali Gate, a distance of over three miles. It was very sad to see a dear friend's body engulfed in flames; the pyre was lit by his unfortunate father.

When I was new at the school, there was a student, Surinder Singh Tikka, a Tikka Sahib of Nalagarh, who was some four years senior to me. 'Tikka' meant Prince but I didn't know that. In my innocence, I asked him why people called him Tikka Sahib. The good and kind person that he was, he said there was a mole on his forehead because of which everybody called him 'Tikka'! After Partition, he became a favourite of Mrs. Gandhi and was posted as the Food Commissioner of India. The last time I saw him was in the foyer of the Oberoi Hotel in Delhi where he was buying pastries for his family. I met him after an interval of twenty years and in one second time had disappeared. This was only a few weeks before he died of heart failure. He was a very good wicket-keeper in the College cricket team.

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Sardar Ahmad Khan, son of Colonel Hamid Hussain, the Military Secretary to the Maharaja of Patiala, joined Class II in 1935 and remained my classmate until 1941 when he left school after taking the School Certificate Examination. He subsequently joined the Patiala Forces and served in the Indian Army in the Middle East during the War. After the creation of Pakistan, he was in our Army. I established contact with him in 1948 when he served in the Governor General's Bodyguard in Karachi, first as an Adjutant and later as the Commandant. We both played in a polo tournament in Karachi in February 1958 where he met with a fatal accident. He was in a coma for almost ten days but never left the hospital alive. I had the sorrow of participating in this very dear friend's funeral, when he was buried with full military honours with Governor-General Iskander Mirza among the mourners. His son, Adnan, who was then only three years old, grew into a very promising young man, and I had the privilege of having him work at one of my business organisations for a number of years after he had returned from the USA, having completed his education.

Among my other classmates were Raghvindra Singh and Ganindra Singh, both sons of the Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala, and Mohammad Abbas and Haroon Rasheed, sons of Nawab Sadiq Mohammad Khan of Bahawalpur. These early classmates did not progress in their studies.

In 1937, Harcharan Singh Brar¹⁷ from Ferozepur joined our class. He was some three or four years older than the rest of us. He was a very hard-working student and especially good at mathematics. Very soon, Harcharan and I became friends and this friendship lasted till his death in 2009. I can say that Harcharan was my closest friend, and it was a privilege to have had a friend like him almost all my life! I visited him in India on a regular basis and our families are just as close – his daughter, his son, his grand-children all call me 'Dadaji', and they are more free with me than with their own parents.

Some boys smoked but this habit was looked down upon. Patiala boys, of course, were baptized into alcohol at an early age. Harcharan Singh Brar never touched alcohol because his brother had died of its abuse. There were some boys in our group who drank or smoked but they did not force it upon us. Like every class, we had some clowns too, who were poor academically but generally good sportsmen. They were not ostracized; indeed there was a lot of liking for them. We avoided the fellow students that we did not like.

On the sports field, we played games with boys from other classes. We used to play games six days a week and Sardar Harnam Singh used to referee our hockey games. I lived with my family on Davis Road and went home after studies in the afternoon but always returned to participate in sports every day, six days a week.

My interest in horse riding started at Aitchison. In my days, riding was compulsory and the first time I was made to sit on a horse was my first day at Aitchison! I was fortunate enough to ride very regularly from that first day to some forty years after I left Aitchison. I played low handicap polo for at least ten years and maintained a stable of horses till 1980. I became a member of the Lahore Gymkhana when I was a student in 1944 and I am probably now the oldest member. I was proposed by two Englishmen: one was Mr. Gwynn, seconded by Mr. Bustin, the

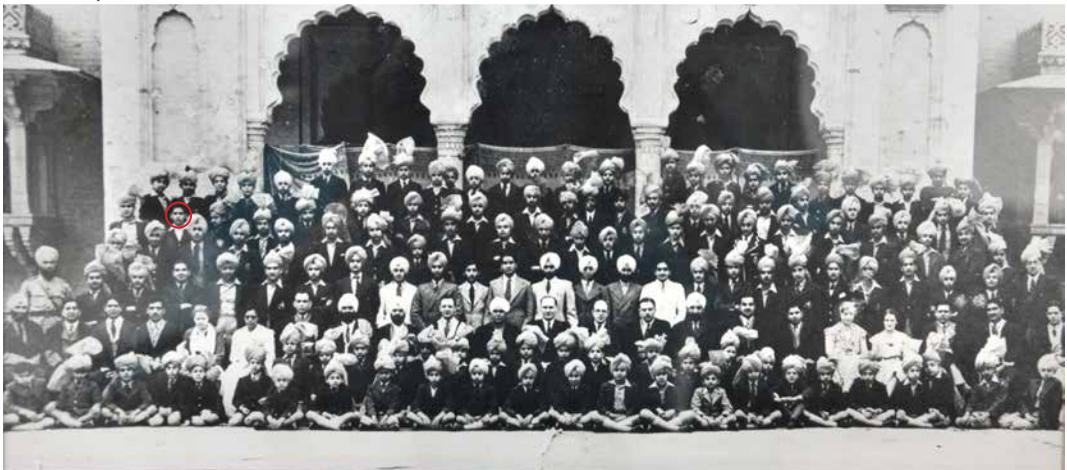
¹⁷ See pages 48 - 51 for more on Harcharan Singh Brar



1935: Full College



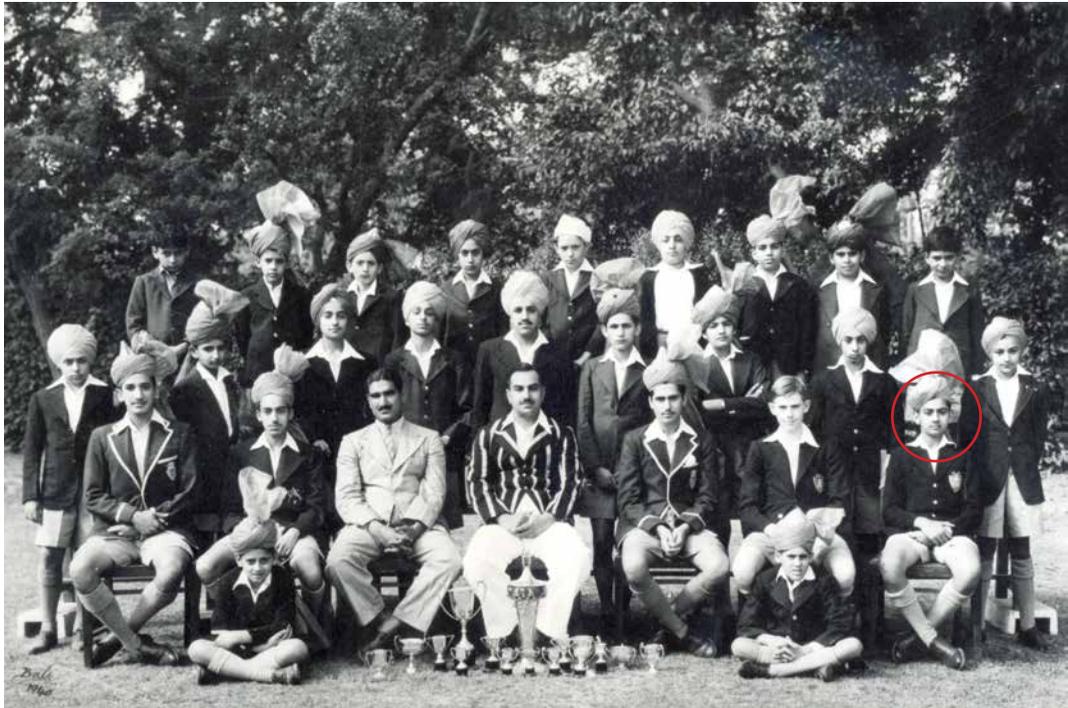
1935: Godley House



1940: Full College

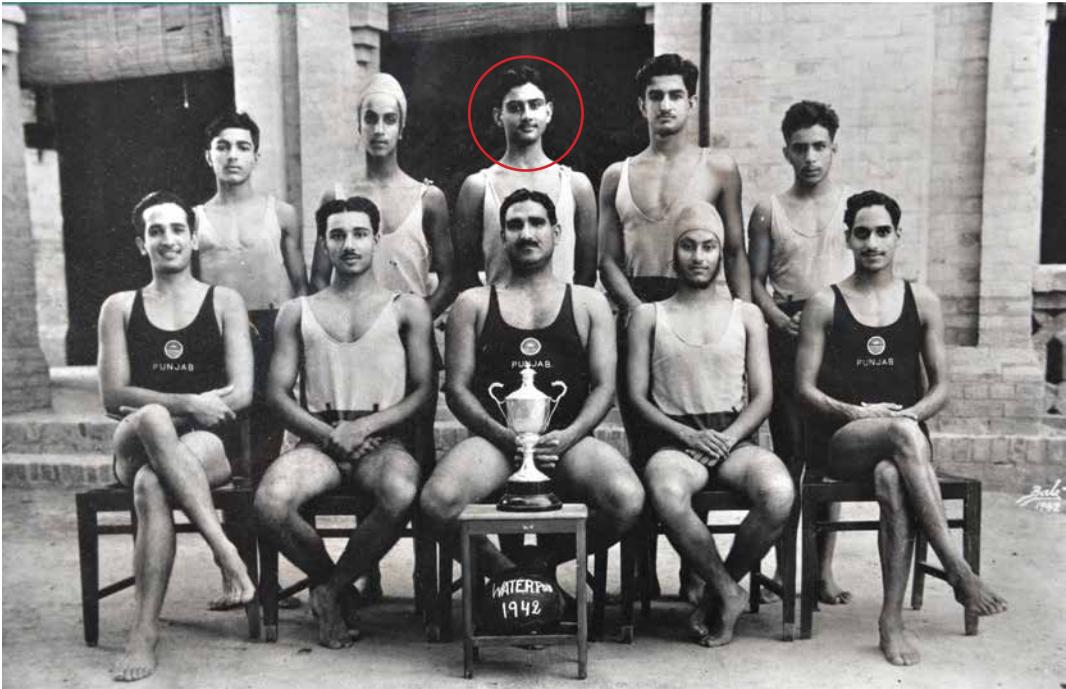


1941: Jubilee House



1939: Jubilee House, Aitchison College, Lahore

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1942: Water Polo team

editor of the Civil and Military Gazette. Mr. Gwynn had taken me to the Gymkhana during a cricket match, to introduce me. There was no interview. The process was simple. Your name went up and you were either taken in or rejected.

The nine years at Aitchison went past very quickly, with my total involvement in school activities. I feel I learnt as much on the hockey, cricket, and tennis grounds as I did in the classroom. It was one large family, and there was no bias or discrimination on the basis of religion. The teachers, who were Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians, treated students fairly, without any prejudice. There was much respect for teachers among students, and equally a great deal of affection for students from teachers. Aitchison inculcated a tremendous family feeling among the students and this was not only for one's classmates but also for all the other students. This comradeship has been a source of tremendous strength throughout my life.

RELATIONSHIP WITH AITCHISON

I never 'left' Aitchison and remained in touch with my teachers and the school because Aitchison was like a mother to me. It still is. Once or twice a day a message comes to me about Aitchison and I always give it priority and address it straightaway; I never tell them that I am busy. This relationship never changes, irrespective of whether I like the Principal or not. I owe so much to that institution. Aitchison has done so much for so many

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Babar Ali Library at Aitchison College, Lahore

people. Unfortunately, there is no culture of giving in this country, especially to institutions that have given so much to the people who have benefited from them.

The gates for the main building and the junior school were given by me to Aitchison College soon after my father died in 1961. He had been on the Board of the school from before Partition till he passed away in 1961. I had the gates designed by National College of Arts faculty and some students (Ms. Abidi Abbasi, Ahmad Khan, and I think, Nayyar Ali Dada). They produced the design and also found me a blacksmith to make the gates, which are still very sturdy. Outside the gates is the monogram of Aitchison and on the inside there is a plaque saying that it was a gift in memory of my father. Inside the Junior School, another plaque says that it was a gift from me as a former student. The design was so much liked that many gates in Punjab have been copied from it, for instance the gates at Bagh-e-Jinnah. I also helped Aitchison with the design of the auditorium. I didn't pay for it but I helped find a good architect, Anwar Pasha. On their Centenary in 1986, I presented a library to Aitchison College, which the College named after me.

I am very fond of former Principal Shamim Khan at Aitchison, who told me that parents had come and demanded that he give the Gold Medal to their sons. Sometimes he even got a telephone call from Government House asking the Principal to give the Gold Medal to a particular boy! In my days, it was unthinkable that anybody

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1986: With Harcharan Singh Brar at the opening of the Aitchison College Library

would even raise the question of an award with the Principal or staff, whether it was a colour at sports or recognition in the classroom.

OTHER MEMORIES

A cruel prank

Our H.Sc. class boys who were boarders lived in Bungalow No. 2. Its warden was a teacher, Mr. Jagdish Lal, who was a cricketer of repute. Once he was on leave playing for the Northern India Cricket Association and in his place a Sikh teacher had been asked to sleep in Bungalow No. 2. I and a group of students went onto the roof of the bungalow and hung alarm clocks in the chimney at different heights, with alarms going off every hour from 1 o'clock in the morning till 5 am! The teacher who was subjected to this prank did not say a word to anyone. When we checked the next day, all the clocks had gone!

The Fruit Vendor

My pocket money was Rs. 5, but this was generously supplemented by my mother. The money was spent at the fruit shop at Aitchison. Meher, the vendor, used to extend credit to us but he had no written account; all was from memory and we were always in debt to him! My friend Harcharan had a very good sense of humour and he used to tell Mehar, 'The payment for your fruit dries out more blood in our bodies than the amount of blood that your fruit makes in us.'

The Council of State

While I was studying at Aitchison, there was a long tradition of a forum called the Council of State, which was held once a fortnight until it was disbanded during the War. This Council of State ran like a Parliament, with the Principal in a wig, sitting in the Speaker's chair in the middle of the hall. It was mandatory for all students of Class III and above to participate and

¹⁸ Zulfiqar Bokhari's father

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teachers would encourage us to take part in the debates and helped us write speeches. The Chiragh Din Debating Cup was given to the best speaker. In these Declamation contests, we used to be given three or four topics to choose from.

I remember a particular Declamation contest in 1941, when we were given some five topics to speak on. One was 'purna svraj', i.e., complete independence. I spoke in this debate with the assistance of my brother-in-law, Syed Mubarak Ali Shah¹⁸, who helped me with my speech. The person who was declared the winner was Romesh Thapar¹⁹, a very brilliant speaker who later became a prominent journalist in India. His uncle was a senior medical officer in the British Army and Romesh had come to Aitchison from Bishop Cotton School. In his fiery speech, he referred to Mr. Churchill as 'that Bull-dog Churchill'. An Englishman was sitting in the audience who was guardian to the heir-apparent of Chamba State. He went to the Governor and told him about the abuse to the British Prime Minister! The Governor called for an explanation from our Principal, Mr. Barry, who happened to be ill that evening and had not attended. All the students were summoned by the Principal, who conveyed the wrath of the Governor to us. Mr. Barry was very fond of Romesh and a compromise was reached that Romesh would make a conciliatory speech on our Founders Day, when the Governor would be there.

The Princes

During our days at the College, we marvelled at prominent former Aitchisonians – the Maharaja of Patiala, the Nawab of Pataudi and other great sportsmen. Bhupinder Singh of Patiala was totally devoted to Aitchison College and even as the Maharaja referred to the Principal as 'Sir'. When the school faced bankruptcy because there were too few students, the Principal wrote to the Maharaja for help. The Maharaja arranged for the sons of chiefs from Patiala to be sent to Aitchison, including two Muslims, who were sponsored by Patiala State. One was Khalifa Saeed Hassan from Samana, near Patiala. The other was a very dear classmate of mine, Ahmed Khan, whose father was military secretary to the Maharaja.

While I was at Aitchison, a very memorable occasion was the celebration of the Golden Jubilee in 1936, when for one week in March, old boys of the College, many of whom were distinguished members of the princely families of Northern India, participated in various sports and other functions. The Maharaja of Patiala came with full pomp and we saw five or six Rolls Royce cars going round the campus showing the Maharanis where the Maharaja had grown up.

The Maharaja died around 1940, while I was at Aitchison. The College was closed to pay respects to his memory; he had done so much for Aitchison and was a great benefactor. King Edward Medical College also received a major donation from him and Patiala Block there was named after him.

Many of the students at Aitchison were from the princely families of Northern India - Patiala Kapurthala, Bahawalpur, Khairpur, Bugti, Lasbela, etc. Although these boys had such different backgrounds from us commoners, we had no difficulty in interacting with them. During my time, eight of Maharaja Patiala's sons (Kunwars) were at

¹⁹ Brother of the Indian historian Romila Thapar

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the College. They did not put on any false airs with us because they were our school-mates, even though they arrived in a Rolls Royce. They lived in Patiala House, opposite the Governor's House on the Mall, now the site of Ministers' houses and the Pearl Continental.

When I was in Class IV, we had a teacher, Sardar Gajinder Singh, who hailed from Gujranwala. His son, Jagdarshan, was a classmate of mine (he later became an Engineer General in the Indian Army). In addition to Patiala's sons, we had a boy from another princely state in the class who said something which upset Sardar Gajinder Singh; he said to the boy 'Kanwar Sahib, don't think too much about your money, many characterless people have a lot of money!' I still remember that. Most of our teachers used to speak in English or Urdu but Sardar Gajinder Singh would break into Punjabi to explain something. I remember him once explaining what standard time was; he said, 'When the sun crosses my head, it is my noon time and when it crosses your head, it is your noon time.' These teachers were not selected merely on the basis of their intellect and command of a subject, but for the ability to develop good characters in the boys. Such was Aitchison College!

HARCHARAN SINGH BRAR

Harcharan was my closest friend at school and he was very mature for his years. I did not know his background till much later: his mother was his guide, ensuring that he went to the right school. Like me, his older brothers had not gone to Aitchison but she sent Harcharan there because she believed that he would be well groomed and would make the right contacts. Harcharan and I were both good students and although we competed for the top position in the class, we accepted the results of the examinations and never begrudged each other's better results.

My mother was in purdah but she insisted on seeing Harcharan every time he came to our house, when he would touch her feet. It reminded her of her ancestors who served in Ranjit Singh's court. When he visited, she would say, 'Harcharan is my 'badshah'!' and 'My 'badshah' has arrived!'. Harcharan gave her the same love that he gave to his own mother and she encouraged my friendship with him.

From the very beginning, Harcharan was an Indian nationalist, and he knew that I was an enthusiastic supporter of the Muslim League and Pakistan, but that did not dampen our friendship. While we were at Aitchison, around 1941, he and I both attended a meeting addressed by Mr. Jinnah outside Mochi Gate. We sat very close to the dais from where Mr. Jinnah spoke, and we happened to sit next to Mian Mohammad Shafi, who was then a reporter working for the Civil and Military Gazette, one of the two English papers in Lahore at that time. He was known as "Meem Sheen", and was a veteran and much-respected journalist. My friendship with him goes back to that evening outside Mochi Gate and lasted till his death in 1993.

When I came back from America in December 1947, Qurban Ali Khan was I.G. of Police in the Punjab, based in Lahore. I had been away during Partition so I only read in the newspaper what happened and did not have any personal experience of the upheaval here. I went to see Khan Sahib and I told him I had a friend, Harcharan, in India whom I wanted to meet. He asked me where he lived and I told him that my friend lived in Ferozepur. He said, 'If he can come to the border, I will send you in the I.G.'s jeep to the border and you can meet in no man's land.' Harcharan knew everybody on that side; he got permission and we met in no man's land. In those days,

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there were no bananas in Pakistan so he had brought some bananas for me. I had brought some ties for him from America. We enjoyed our meeting but the army people did not allow us to exchange our gifts. I came back in the I.G.'s jeep and Harcharan went back to India.

At university in Lahore, Harcharan zeroed in on a lady whom he later married. She was two years senior to us; she was in M.A. and we were in B.A. He said to me, 'I have seen somebody; you must see her.' We saw her walking from Government College to the Punjab University with a friend. She happened to be a very good athlete and was a Champion at the College. Harcharan was a Jat Sikh and he was very particular about being a Sidhu Brar! He found out that she was also a Jat. Harcharan was very political in his thinking and ambition (while at Aitchison, he was always reading The Tribune when everybody else read The Civil & Military Gazette and he would attend all the political meetings when any Indian leader came to town). He discovered that this girl's father and uncle were both in jail and there was no way of our approaching the family for the hand of the lady. He found somebody who could visit them in jail and inform them that there was this Jat Sikh who wanted the hand of their daughter. When they were released, we found an intermediary to take the proposal. She came from very good stock; she was the niece of Sardar Partab Singh Kairon, who later on became the Chief Minister in East Punjab, and her father was a card-carrying Communist. In the twenties, the family had gone to America and then to Russia. When they came back to India, they were put in jail by the British. Partab Singh Kairon joined the Congress Party but the girl's father remained a Communist till the day he died. Harcharan's wife passed away in 2013.

Harcharan went into politics, serving as a Minister in the Indian Punjab Government. When Sardar Beant Singh, the Chief Minister, died in a bomb explosion in 1995, he became the Chief Minister of Punjab.

Harcharan got into horse breeding with Sonny Habibullah, a very dear friend of mine, and a horse enthusiast. The Habibullahs were from a very good *taluqdar* family in Lucknow. Sonny had come to Pakistan and had taken citizenship, but he could not tear himself away from India as he had very close friends there. During Harcharan's visits to Pakistan, he got very close to my brother, Bhai Wajid, who also bred horses, so Harcharan got interested in breeding too. The Habibullahs had a Stud Farm in Bhopal in partnership with a Bombay family called Gokal Das, who were Gujratis. Habibullah asked me to introduce him to Harcharan, in order to start a horse-breeding farm in Ferozepur. I then acted as a midwife to get Sonny Habibullah and his brother General Inayatullah (a General in the Indian Army) to join with Harcharan and take their horses from Bhopal to Harcharan's farm in Punjab. It started as a partnership: land and infrastructure was provided by Harcharan and horses brought in by the Habibullahs.

When Harcharan's son, Sunny, came of age, he started taking an interest in the horse breeding but the Habibullahs did not treat him well and had a low opinion of his capability. Harcharan didn't like his son to be ignored so the partnership soured. I went to Delhi and realized that the relationship could not survive. I told Sonny Habibullah and Harcharan that the best thing was to part ways. They appointed me the arbitrator and I decided that the Habibullahs should take back the horses they brought. I told Harcharan that he should pay Habibullahs off by giving them Rs. 1 million so that they could get started elsewhere. He wrote a cheque there and then without a question and handed it over to them. After 5-7 years, I said to Harcharan that I felt a little guilty that I had been a

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bit harsh on him in the transaction. He said, 'If you had said I should give Rs. 2 million, I would even have given that without a question!' He trusted me totally. I said, 'You see, I gave them enough money for them to start elsewhere, otherwise they would have been on the road. You had brought them from an established set up, you provided them a new home; it did not work out, so they had to have enough resources to start a new operation.'

I now interact with his daughter with whom I am very close, a continuation of my relationship with Harcharan. This friendship lasted more than seven decades and somehow I took it for granted that it will always be there. About 15 years ago he called me and said he had just been to Madras and had a medical check up. Some of his arteries were blocked and the doctors recommended a by-pass. I knew the head of the Cleveland Clinic who was with me at Harvard so I asked Harcharan to tell me when he would like to go to Cleveland and which surgeon he would like for the operation. He wanted Dr. Loop and wanted me to accompany him, to which I readily agreed. I said I would of course go but that he should take his son, Sunny, along. He said, 'I don't need Sunny because you will be there!' I remained with him till he was out of Intensive Care. His wife, of course, was with him and she then allowed me to return to Pakistan.

On 16th September 2009, Perwin and I had to make the sad journey to Sarai Nanga for the *bhog* ceremony for my dear friend, Harcharan. *Bhog* is the last of the ten days of mourning after the demise of an individual. It is also the occasion to nominate the family lineage successor of the deceased and this ceremony is called *dastar bandi*.

Harcharan 's daughter Bubli Brar had made excellent arrangements for us right from the Customs & Transit Lounge at Wagah and we drove in a Government vehicle piloted by a police car all the way from Attari to Sarai Nanga. The police vehicle escorted us to the next district where another escort took over. Between Attari and Sarai Nanga, we passed through five districts – Amritsar, Taran Tarran, Ferozepur, Faridkot, and finally Mukhtsar.

The *bhog* ceremony started at 11 am. The big dais, constructed to accommodate over 100 people, was where the Sikh holy book Garanth Sahib was placed and for two hours there was recitation from the Garanth Sahib and religious songs accompanied by music. It was amazing to see the turn out of the masses – over 15,000 had congregated over a large field that had been specially prepared for the occasion! Despite the heat, the audience was in a quiet and sombre mood.

Also on the dais were the Chief Minister of Punjab, Mr. Badal, and two of his Cabinet Ministers. There were also two Union Ministers – Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad, Minister of Health, and the Maharani of Patiala, Minister of State for External Affairs. Among other dignitaries, there to pay homage, was the Maharaja of Patiala's younger brother, head of the Bias Group.

It was very touching to see the large crowd of men, women, and children of all ages sitting in the sun in scorching heat for over three hours. The entire ceremony was conducted with utmost dignity and solemnity. The masses were invited to have their food after the function in the various *gurudwaras* in Sarai Nanga and dignitaries were entertained by the Brar family to a well-prepared meal.

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To me personally, this was a very sad occasion because it was the first time that I had been in Sarai Nanga when Harcharan was not there!

On our return, we specially asked to travel via Ferozepur Cantonment, the starting point of my father's business life, where in my childhood, I often used to go with my parents. My father and uncle always looked back to Ferozepur as their business home. They acquired over thirty bungalows in Ferozepur Cantonment and in 1921, they constructed one of the largest residential buildings there, naming it after their father and calling it 'Wazir Ali Building'. I was amazed to see that even sixty-two years after Partition, the building, even though ill-kept, was still inhabited. After 1947, the building was allotted to over twenty families who migrated from Pakistan to India and though the name of the building had been erased by whitewash, they still referred to it as 'Wazir Ali Building'. The rest of the premises of the store that my family had built and maintained right till the time of Partition had been replaced by a number of ill designed and shabby structures and the original buildings could not be discerned.

SYED ZULFIQAR ALI SHAH

Shah Sahib was my teacher at Aitchison College. He took a great deal of interest in me and was my mentor. Almost every student would specially look up to a particular faculty member and I was lucky that I had a good personal relationship with more than one teacher, of whom Zulfiqar Shah Sahib was one. He was a very complete person: he was an outstanding sportsman during his student days and had an excellent academic and sporting career at Government College, where he was captain of the college cricket team in the 1930s. After he joined Aitchison as a member of the staff, he maintained a fine balance between his teaching in the classroom, of Maths and Science, and his coaching on the playing field and he took a very special interest in my studies and games. He was also my housemaster. While at Aitchison, he was appointed Headmaster of Indian Mercantile Marine Traineeship Dufferin in Bombay. All trainees who went into the Indian Merchant Navy went through Dufferin. That was their IMA or Kakul and it was under the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India. The first Indian Headmaster of Dufferin was Mr. U. Karamat. Prior to that they always had an Englishman. After Partition, Shah Sahib came from Bombay to Karachi and got a position in the Ministry of Commerce. He was posted as Trade Commissioner, serving first in Kabul and then in Sri Lanka. The post of the Principal of Aitchison College fell vacant and he was appointed and served in the position for about four or five years until *Nawab* Kalabagh became the Governor of Punjab in 1960. The Nawab abrogated the School's constitution and put himself and other politicians onto the Governing Body.

Nawab Kalabagh had been at Aitchison and had had a poor relationship with Shah Sahib, while his particular mentor was a gentleman by the name of *Moulvi* Karamatullah. *Moulvi* Sahib had cultivated the Nawab of Bahawalpur when he was a student at Aitchison and became a guardian of Nawab Bahawalpur's sons, also at Aitchison²⁰. *Moulvi* Sahib was not a sportsman and was only an average teacher, so when Mr. Barry became Principal in 1933, *Moulvi* Sahib was one of the first teachers to be retired from Aitchison. Thinking that Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah had a role in this, Nawab Kalabagh, when he became the Governor, had no tolerance for Shah Sahib as Principal. One fine day, he just fired him and got in Abdul Ali Khan as the new Principal. This came as a total shock to me. My father had just

²⁰ Moulvi Sahib was also very close to our family because he was the guardian and teacher of two of my brothers-in-law, Syed Mubarak Ali Shah and Syed Abid Hussain.

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passed away and I requested Shah Sahib to come to Packages where he then spent the rest of his days, in the office two doors away from mine. I told him we needed a mentor after the demise of my father and he was a source of great comfort to me. He initiated for Packages the sponsorship of the Jafar Memorial Hockey Tournament, which has been held every year since 1961. As an elderly person, young business executives at Packages would consult him. If there were issues with labour or anything else, he would be a good influence. We published Amir Khusru's complete works under his supervision. He was a healthy influence on all of us and everyone respected him. He was a great influence on my life as a teacher and later on at Packages.

When Henna and Hyder were growing up, Zulfiqar Ali Shah would spend an hour every evening with them, talking to them about different subjects, especially religion and shiaism. Both Henna and Hyder are more devoted shias than me! Shah Sahib had beautiful handwriting, both in English and in Urdu, and he tried to improve their's. He would also guide them in the different subjects they were studying.

GOVERNMENT COLLEGE

I thoroughly enjoyed my stay at Aitchison. I loved it and was very sad to leave. We took the Higher School Certificate Examination of Cambridge University in December 1943 and most of our class joined Government College, Lahore, in January 1944, in the Third Year. Normally, the Third Year classes were admitted in May after the Intermediate examination but as the Higher School Certificate Examination took place in December, we were allowed to join the Third Year classes in January which meant that we took the B.A. Examination in 15 months as against two years after the Intermediate Examination. Fortunately, I had an Aitchisonian friend, Padamindra Singh of Patiala, who studied Physics and Chemistry as I did, and during all the 15 months that we spent at Government College, we were together most of the time. My very good friend Harcharan Singh Brar also joined Government College but he studied Economics and Political Science. We only had the optional Urdu in common and for the rest of the time we were in different classrooms, but I saw Harcharan as often as I could during free time in the College. I was happy when the 15 months at Government College were over, when I had taken the B.Sc. Examination of Punjab University.

Going to Government College Lahore from Aitchison was like going from a 5-star to a 2-star hotel – the physical facilities in Aitchison were much superior, the grounds were tremendous, the roads were good, even the equipment in the laboratories was better and, of course, we were a much smaller group of students at Aitchison, with individual attention by the teachers in comparison to Government College. It took me many months to get adjusted to a different environment. The most important differentiating feature between the two institutions was the varied background of the students - at Government College students came from different schools, varied walks of life, and spoke different languages. The boys from Aitchison or the Doon School had a different standard of conduct and treated the staff with more respect. The students from those two schools hung together rather than socialize with the rest. Our study hours at Government College were brief and the contact with the faculty was minimal. We went there at 9 a.m. and returned home at 2.30 p.m.

G.D. Sondhi was the Principal of Government College in our time. Both his daughters, Urmilla and Sonu, were studying at the College at that time. I was telling Urmilla about ten years ago that 'half the boys were in love with

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one sister, and the other half with the other sister!' She asked me, 'Who were you in love with?' I said, 'Both!' While talking about Government College, I would like to mention my teachers. As against Aitchison where I spent nine years and got to know the teaching staff very well, there was not much opportunity to meet the faculty at Government College at close range except the ones that I met in the Chemistry and Physics laboratories. I got to know Professor H.R. Sarna who was an eminent Physicist and Mr. Sundar Lal Aggarwal, who took a lot of interest in guiding me in my Chemistry practicals. I kept in close contact with Mr. Aggarwal. He went to the United States in 1946, got his Doctorate at Cornell and stayed on to become the Head of Research & Development at General Tyre. I was very happy to meet him after a lapse of almost forty years in 1985 when he travelled from Akron, Ohio to meet me in Cleveland.

I had the good fortune to take Urdu as my optional subject and to attend lectures by Sufi Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum. I did not know him at that time but subsequently, thirty years later, got to know him well. He wrote a number of books at my request, which were published and distributed to his admirers by Packages Limited.

We were taught English by a very interesting Hindu gentleman named Baldoon Dheengra. He was an Oxford graduate and, I remember, he used to come to College on a Raleigh bicycle, the height of technical sophistication in those days! Later on, Mr. Ashfaq Ali Khan replaced him. There was a world of difference between Professor Dheengra and Mr. Ashfaq Ali Khan in their teaching abilities. Mr. Ashfaq Ali Khan had just started while Mr. Dheengra was an experienced teacher, always very well prepared and very formal, with an Oxford accent. Mr. Ashfaq Ali Khan later became the Principal of Government College and a road near the College.

I did fairly well in the B.Sc. Final University exams; I came second in my College and stood 14th in the University among 664 candidates. While at Government College, I spent most of my vacations in Bhopal in Central India, where I acquired a different kind of knowledge. The family business, as purveyors to the British Army in India, had expanded considerably during the 1939-45 War and among the additional opportunities provided to the firm was the provision of food and other needs to the Prisoners of War in Bhopal. My elder brothers, Syed Amjad Ali and Syed Wajid Ali, visited Bhopal in connection with the business and they were introduced to the Nawab of Bhopal.

Very soon they saw an opportunity to acquire a large tract of land consisting of 2,000 acres of irrigated and 8,000 acres of 'barani' land, which mostly consisted of forests. It was called 'Palakmati Farms' and during the vacations from Government College, I made a beeline for Bhopal because of its attractions. I was hardly eighteen years old and my brothers gave me the opportunity to go and work with the management of the farm and to monitor their efforts, but the big attraction to me was the abundance of 'shikar' there, both gamebirds (partridge and quail), as well as blackbuck, chital, sambar, 'nilgai' and chinkara. Panthers and tigers were seen on our land but I never came across them. My brothers set up a horse-breeding farm and established mechanised farming with tractors and harvesters long before these were introduced on a large scale elsewhere in India. The quality of the land was very poor, however, and financially the farming venture was a total disaster, but I had much fun being involved in various aspects of this establishment and, of course, the greatest excitement was to go into the forest looking for wild game. This exposure to managing money and people and getting involved in growing crops added a new dimension to my learning at an early age.

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UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, ANN ARBOR

The big question for me after I had passed my B.Sc. exams was what to do next. I was very keen to go to America for higher studies and, with my science background, I wanted to gain admission to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) for a Program called Business & Engineering. In May 1945, when the Punjab University results came out, World War II was still on and even during the rest of that year the War atmosphere prevailed. Though peace in Europe was officially declared in May 1945, Japan only surrendered two months later. The atmosphere in India remained more or less on a war footing for the rest of the year because of the demobilisation of millions of soldiers, of whom many hundreds of thousands were Europeans and Americans who had to be shipped back home.

Our family was in business, but business administration as a subject was not known outside the USA. The subject started at Harvard and was taught at other universities but in those days very few universities offered it. America was the country to go to for studies in the years 1945-1947 but at the time it was very difficult to get university admission. Under the G.I. Bill of Rights every American who had served in the Army had the right to education even at university level. All the universities were, therefore, flooded with applicants. In addition, there was a large contingent of Indians who went to America for studies under some British or American plan. Irshad Hussain (later the first General Manager of Packages Limited) was one of the people to be picked to go to Harvard. I was pestering him to get me admitted to the Harvard Business School. At that time, I was only twenty years old and I did not realize that to study at Business School you had to have acquired some work experience. I was, therefore, too young to get in. I was also trying to get into MIT and I used my father's influence with the Indian Ambassador and with the Education Attache, Mr. Sundaram. I made his life miserable by sending him cable after cable! All my pocket money was spent on sending these applications to the US for admission.

One of my teachers from Government College, Sunder Lal Aggarwal, had got into Cornell. At that time, the Minister of Education in Punjab was Nawab Ashiq Hussain Qureshi. Most of these people were in and out of our home because they were friends of my father, my brothers, and my brother-in-law, Syed Mubarik Ali Shah. I had written a letter to Ashiq Qureshi and requested him to support the application of Sunder Lal Aggarwal. Sunder Lal was thus beholden to me for getting him the scholarship and guided me as to which universities I should apply to for admission. After three months and some thirty applications sent to different universities in America, I received a letter of admission to the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. When I arrived in Ann Arbor and had settled down, I got an admission letter from MIT, but I didn't follow it up.

My father and mother were not keen on my going abroad. My mother was extremely fond of me and she did not want me to go overseas. My father wanted me to join the family business. He, from his own experience, felt that higher learning could be substituted by hard work. Among my classmates and close friends, Padamindra Singh got admission to study Civil Engineering at the London University, and Suraj Shamsher, with whom I maintained a very close relationship from my first day at school and whose parents and grandparents were close family friends, left for studies in Ohio in the summer of 1946. I went to see him off at the Ballard Pier in Bombay. My father observed to my mother, 'Now we are in trouble! His friend has gone, and now he will not stay here!' My elder brother, Bhai Amjad had been abroad, but he had gone to England and that too when he was mature and married. I was twenty but they

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finally relented and agreed to my going to Ann Arbor. In 1946, there was no air service from India to the United States and sea passages were regulated by the Government because ships were still requisitioned by the Government for the movement of troops. With great difficulty, I managed to get a berth on a ship of the Union Castle Line called 'Sterling Castle'. Union Castle normally plied between Scotland and South Africa, but this vessel had been converted into a troop ship. We were six people bunked into a double berth compartment. My parents went to Bombay to see me off and my father took the trouble to come on board the ship and introduce me to a number of his friends who were travelling with me from Bombay to Southampton. We sailed around the 20th of December 1946. It was my first time abroad and I was greatly excited. An *Imam Zamin* was, of course, put on my arm. So the departure was nostalgic.

There were some twenty senior officers of the then Indian Army on the ship, the highest ranked being Brigadier K.M. Cariappa. He subsequently became the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of independent India. We also had Colonel Iftikhar Khan who was among the first Muslim generals in the Pakistan Army, and Major Haji Iftikhar Ahmad who subsequently became a General. All these gentlemen treated me with tremendous kindness. Mr. A.T. Naqvi, ICS, was going to England to attend the Imperial Defence College. He later became the Chief Commissioner of Karachi and remained a good friend for the rest of his life. My father wanted to make sure that I sat at the right dining table and when he discovered that Major Haji Iftikhar Ahmad was on board, he sent him a message that he would like me to sit at his table. I remember when we sat down for our first meal, I was hesitant to eat meat because I was not sure whether it was 'halal' or not. Major Haji said, 'If I can eat it even though I am a Haji, why can't you eat it! Are you a bigger Haji than me?' That was the end of my worrying about eating *zabiba* (halal meat) or otherwise.



1946: Relatives see off Syed Babar Ali at the Lahore Railway Station on his departure for the U.S.

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The conditions within the cabin were austere for six people in a room designed for two, but now with three tiers of bunks. Luckily though, it was winter, a good time of the year. We went via the Suez Canal and Gibraltar. At Port Said I bought some 'luqum' – a local sweet. You had to send money in a basket on a rope and the product travelled the same way. As the 'luqum' was coming up, somebody put his head out of a porthole below and grabbed it. That was the end of the One Pound that I had spent on 'luqum'! I was also introduced to the game 'Deck Cricket', which was played with a soft ball and a net on the deck.

I had a few hundred Pounds and Dollars, which my father had given me; all that was allowed under the rules. The Dollars were for the school fees plus a monthly allowance sanctioned by the Reserve Bank of India. At that time, one got four Dollars to the Pound and thirteen Rupees to the Pound, therefore about three Rupees to the dollar. Initially I took a bank draft and I remember that it was signed by Mr. Nazir Ahmed, Mr. Hayat Ahmed Khan's brother, who was working for Lloyds Bank²¹.

We arrived in Southampton on the 7th of January 1947. I was met by Syed Fazal Shah, who had migrated before the War and was married to a cousin of my father's. He ran a small readymade garment store in Whitechapel Lane, very close to where Punjab Kabab House now is, in the East End of London. That winter was one of the coldest in English history. England was very short of food and was run under the regime of coupons. One egg every two weeks was the ration, and no butter! But in the East End, Indians used to eat chicken and parathas, because they knew the loopholes in the system. For four shillings, you could eat chicken curry in a bowl and the paratha cooked in butter! I stayed in Bayswater at the Coberg Court Hotel, now called Coberg Hotel, near Queensway Tube Station. I stayed there for two weeks till I got my passage across to America. There was a massive power shortage in those days and it was quite cold outside but the rooms were heated. I remember we were not allowed to have a bath every day! I was not used to sleeping with the lights off so the first night I kept the light on in my room. The next morning, there was a letter from the Manager to say that the light in my room was on the whole night. He wanted me to switch the light off when I retired for the night.

One could see the destruction from the War all over London. The St. Paul's area was particularly badly affected. They had taken away the debris but you could see the walls that were now only three to four feet high indicating the boundaries of buildings. My father's friend, General Dunford, a former QMG of India, had travelled on the same boat from Bombay and took me on a sightseeing tour of London by bus. I had read about London and had heard about Buckingham Palace and knew where it was on the Mall. I also knew about Admiralty Arch, Trafalgar Square, Hyde Park, and Marble Arch, where one turns left to go to Queensway. When I saw all these places, I was over-awed, having been brought up to look up to England and the English!

I remember going to the Windmill Theatre on that first visit to London. They said 'the show never stops' and it was

²¹ I can never forget visiting Nazir Ahmed in the Bank. He was the Head Clerk and in those days everybody wrote with an old-fashioned pen that you dipped in the inkpot. I still remember the very neat blotting paper worn on his left cuff, which he would use to blot after each signature. He had, of course, to sign many hundred times a day. I was given the original bank draft and I remember it was on Irving Trust, New York. They were correspondents of the Lloyds Bank.

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1947: London

indeed a round-the-clock programme. This was for British soldiers, in London for R&R. I have never been there since. The first meal in London, I remember, I had at Shafi's Restaurant, the main watering hole for Oxbridge and local Indians, in Leicester Square. It was owned by a Hindu, a fellow called Lalji, but called 'Shafi's Restaurant'!

I spent most of my two weeks in London going to the India Office to secure my passage across the Atlantic because you had to be sponsored by the High Commission. I remember the High Commissioner had a Christian secretary called Dudley Pound and I had to pay my 'salam' to him every day. Every berth across the Atlantic was allocated. Hundreds and thousands of troops had to be repatriated from Europe back to North America. With great difficulty, I finally got a berth on the Cunard Liner 'Aquitania' which had the distinction of having four funnels. The ship took us from Southampton to Halifax in Nova Scotia, Canada. While the voyage from Bombay to Southampton was very pleasant and smooth, this trip across the Atlantic was rough and I hardly came out of my cabin during the five-day journey. I was very happy to get off in Canada, where the winter was no less severe. I travelled from Halifax to Detroit with a change of trains in Montreal, Toronto and Windsor. The journey took three nights with a break in Montreal. Windsor is the last station on the Canadian side, from where you go under the river and arrive in Detroit. I travelled in a Pullman sleeper where train seats become beds at night. At the end was the lounge where you had the washbasin and the 'loo'. I used to shave with a cut-throat (the straight edge) razor in those days and when I pulled it out to shave, a fellow passenger remarked: 'Oh, a real hero!' In American

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Western films you often saw the hero shaving with a straight edge! He said, 'I am seeing a real hero for the first time in my life!' The journey was heavenly, with excellent food, compared to the sea voyage. From Detroit, I took a train to Ann Arbor, only an hour away, and I was very happy to finally arrive at my destination, which was to have a big impact on the rest of my life.

The day after I arrived in Ann Arbor, I presented myself at the School of Business Administration and met with the Dean, who enrolled me in the BBA classes. I did not have any prior experience of the American educational system, which runs on a semester basis, which means that you complete a particular course during a semester and if you pass you get credit for it. It required almost three years to get a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration, and a year more to get the Master's Degree. I was not prepared for such a long stay away from home. This was my first time abroad and the first time I had been away from my family for any length of time, so I decided that I would only spend two semesters in Michigan, to take Business Administration courses which I thought would be useful in broadening my knowledge. But I did decide to take full advantage of my stay, to see and learn as much of the working of business in America as was feasible. I did not miss an opportunity to visit factories: an aeroplane manufacturing plant, a paper mill in Kalamazoo, and the Kellogg cereal manufacturing plant in Battle Creek. Detroit was the home of automobile manufacture. I visited Ford, Chrysler, and Kaiser-Frazer car and truck plants.

Fortunately, within the first week of my arrival, I met a group of very fine American students, Jay Nolan, Don Levleit, and Peter King, who have remained my good friends. Don died in 1985 and Jay Nolan passed away in the late 90s. All three belonged to Michigan and during my subsequent visits to Ann Arbor we met together on several occasions in later years. They were a few years older than me because all three of them had served in the American Forces during the War and, like many of the students at the university, they were studying under the GI Bill of Rights, which meant that the American Government was paying for their education. I also met with a Gujrati Indian, Desai, who was very helpful.

Before the War, Michigan University's total strength was about 10,000. After the War, and the promulgation of the GI Bill of Rights, this swelled to 30,000. When I arrived in Michigan, the University was looking for housing outside the campus and converting barracks at Willow Run into housing for students. I went to look at this housing and was amazed to see a car standing with its engine running. I asked my friend why that car engine was running and he said it's cheaper to keep the car running than to restart it. In those days, petrol was 25 cents to a gallon. Overall, I noticed a totally new culture and environment, not having seen many American films. The affluence of America, and the size and scale of everything, the highways and cars, struck me. One was totally over-awed by the abundance: one could go to a soda fountain and eat ice cream galore.

America's openness was inspiring. You were accepted with complete sincerity as a student of the University. Everybody was helpful and friendly. This was unlike in England, where they did not speak to you unless you were introduced. Here, everybody wanted to be helpful. There was no bias against me as an Indian.

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I learnt to dance at classes in the University. There were women who volunteered to come to the International Centre of Michigan University to teach foreign students how to dance as an introduction to the American society. I learnt the Fox Trot, Waltz, the Rumba and the Samba. I remember at my first dance at the University, I was shaking and fully concentrating so that I would not step on my partner's foot. At the Main Ball in Ann Arbor, all senior and foreign students participated. You just walked across and asked your friends for a dance. I thought it was a very good way of interacting with the opposite sex. It was the done thing and my parents never objected to it. My father would never go to a dance, but my brothers did.

I remember talking to my friends and saying 'I don't see that many good looking girls on the campus' and was told 'they are all married off.' I also talked to mothers who used to nag their daughters, saying 'You had better find a husband, otherwise you will be a spinster. All the good boys will be gone by the time you decide to get married!' And this was said to girls of twenty-one. This was the American mothers' approach to their daughters. There was a big pressure on girls as soon as they turned twenty-one. I remember a friend of mine asked me to take his sister out on a date; we had double dating, and triple dating – three boys and three girls.

At the University of Michigan, we used to have fish on Fridays. Whether you are a practicing Catholic or not, fish is the standard item on the American menu at universities. On Saturday, we had turkey. On Sunday they gave us chicken croquettes. It was the leftovers of the previous day, turned into a croquette – something like a samosa. On Monday, it was chicken cake –the same turkey, again labelled differently.

I arrived in America in early 1947. At that time Pakistan was demanded by the Muslims of India but it was not expected to be a reality in the near future. In March 1947, I received a letter from Bhai Abid Hussain, who was married to my third sister, Baji Kishwar, and was a Member of the Central Assembly in Delhi, saying that Pakistan was close to realisation. The total Indian community at Ann Arbor including Muslims was about seventy and we met very frequently at the International Centre. At the Centre, I saw a notice asking for speakers who would go and address various clubs and organisations that wanted to know about foreign students and the countries they came from. I volunteered and had the opportunity to address a number of associations and clubs within a few hours' driving distance of Ann Arbor. My talk was mostly to explain why the Muslims of India were anxious to have Pakistan. This was a very educational experience because I learnt to talk in front of strangers and was able to make a small contribution towards creating awareness of the cause of Pakistan. What surprised me was that at the end of the speaking assignment, I was given an envelope with money in it, \$5 or \$10: for a student a welcome reward. Once I spoke at a Rotary Club and was paid a generous \$15. So I collected about \$45 from my speaking assignments, which I donated to the Muslim students organization in Toronto run by Ameen Tareen, Irshad Ahmed and Shamim A. Mian.

Our relationship with the other communities, especially with the non-Muslim Indians, was extremely cordial and correct. When the Partition of India was announced and the independence of the two countries was declared, we decided to have a joint celebration of the independence of India and Pakistan at the Rackham Auditorium. The Indian national flag was to be similar to the tri-colour of the Indian Congress Party flag, the only addition being

IF BRITISH WITHDRAW:

Indian Students See Country Able To Solve Its Problems

Six Indian students representing both Hindu and Moslem viewpoints said yesterday that the present Indian government should be able to handle the situation in India when the British move out,

although they admitted some time will be required to settle Hindu-Moslem differences.

No Difference

B. Nasiruddin from Calcutta said that Britain's stepping out should not make much difference as she has already lost all practical control over the country.

The deep rooted differences between the Hindus and Moslems, however, will take some time to settle, Nasiruddin said. He added that the problem will be more easily settled when the British move out.

Declaring that Nehru is a capable leader, Rohit Desai from Bombay said that India is fully capable of taking care of herself.

Warning that a crisis will be precipitated if the Congress does not make concessions to the Mos-

lem League, Ali Barbar of Lahore said that in the past the Congress has been slow in compromising with the League. Barbar said the Moslems prefer to settle their differences now rather than postpone them to some future date.

Capable Government

No disturbance on a major scale was foreseen by M. T. Govind of Madras. He said the present Indian government is capable of handling the situation. Govind declared that Britain has been indirectly responsible for past clashes between Hindus and Moslems.

H. B. Desai of Bombay emphasized that the two major political parties will not be able to come to terms within a short time.

V. C. Chandan, an American citizen formerly of India, said that the situation in India is part of a trend apparent throughout the world. Chandan said that the people of India throughout their history have been able to settle their differences, and the Moslems and Hindus will be able to reach a solution now.

April 1947: Ann Arbor News, Michigan, USA

the Ashoka wheel in the middle of the flag. The Pakistan flag was announced just before the creation of the new country and we only had a description of it. Kamla Chaudhry, a Hindu lady who came from Lahore, and who was a graduate student at the University, was kind enough to stitch the Pakistan flag, which was hoisted beside the Indian flag at the rostrum of the Auditorium.

I had informed my father that I would stay at the University for two semesters, after which I would want to get practical experience of industry in the United States. But before that I went on a trip across the USA with my friend Suraj and his younger brother Shakti from the Mela Ram family of Lahore, who were at Aitchison with me.

EDUCATION

I went down to Columbus, Ohio, where they resided and we started on our journey in a new Packard convertible that Suraj had bought. We motored from Columbus to Indianapolis, through Kansas City to Denver, Colorado, then on to Salt Lake City in Utah, through the Yellowstone National Park and Glacier National Park, and then to Seattle in Washington State. From there, we motored south along the Pacific coast to San Francisco and further on to Los Angeles, then on to Reno, Nevada, and from there to Boulder Dam, then to Flagstaff in New Mexico, and back to Denver. We travelled north to the Black Hills in Montana and then east to Chicago and further southeast, back to Columbus, Ohio, where we ended our trip.

This five-week journey of almost 8,000 miles was a very educational experience, which not only taught us the geography of the United States but also introduced us to so many different people. We stayed mostly in small towns in private homes and had the opportunity of living with lower-middle class American families, who were very easy to get on with. They were kind and sympathetic to foreign travellers, but were very business-like. This was a time when not many people from our part of the world had been to America and certainly not to the remote areas where we went. The scale of the country over-awed me. The ease with which we could travel, the people we met, and the way we were welcomed everywhere was just amazing. We did not feel discriminated against and we saw orderliness and activity everywhere. California impressed us the most because there was such tremendous prosperity there, even compared with elsewhere in America. However there was discrimination against the blacks, who were not even allowed to come and sit at a soda fountain. At that time, we were, in a way, used to such discrimination because in India we had encountered constant belittling prejudice by the British, while on the railway stations you had 'Hindu water' and 'Muslim water', so we had been brought up with these sorts of barriers. However, there was still opportunity in the US for anybody to do anything. When I came back home, for the first year I was miserable. I could not get adjusted; Pakistan had just been created and there was a shortage of everything. I wished I had stayed on in America!

During the last days of United India, when Pakistan's boundary was being decided, our home in Lahore, Nasheman on Davies Road, was the centre of the preparatory work being undertaken by the Muslim League organisations under the leadership of Sir Zafrulla Khan. He was a very close friend of the family and soon after the creation of Pakistan, the Quaid-e-Azam appointed him as the first Foreign Minister. Sir Chaudhry Zafrulla was asked to lead Pakistan's delegation to the United Nations at Lake Success in New York. My father asked him if there was a possibility of my working as his assistant during his stay in New York. Sir Zafrulla had known me from childhood and, in fact, he had tried to get me admitted to an American university during 1945-46. After we had returned from our car journey, I was very glad to receive a letter from Sir Zafrulla inviting me to New York to work with the Pakistan Delegation.

My elder brother, Syed Amjad Ali, had established a business relationship with Lever Brothers and planned a joint venture with them for a soap and ghee factory in Bahawalpur State. He asked them whether I could get work experience in the United States, so before going to New York, I spent the month of September with Lever Brothers in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where their American headquarters were located. They put me through the different departments of their organisation and I was able to get a bird's eye view of how this large organisation functioned. After my stay with Levers, I was happy to go to New York to join the Pakistan Delegation.

EDUCATION

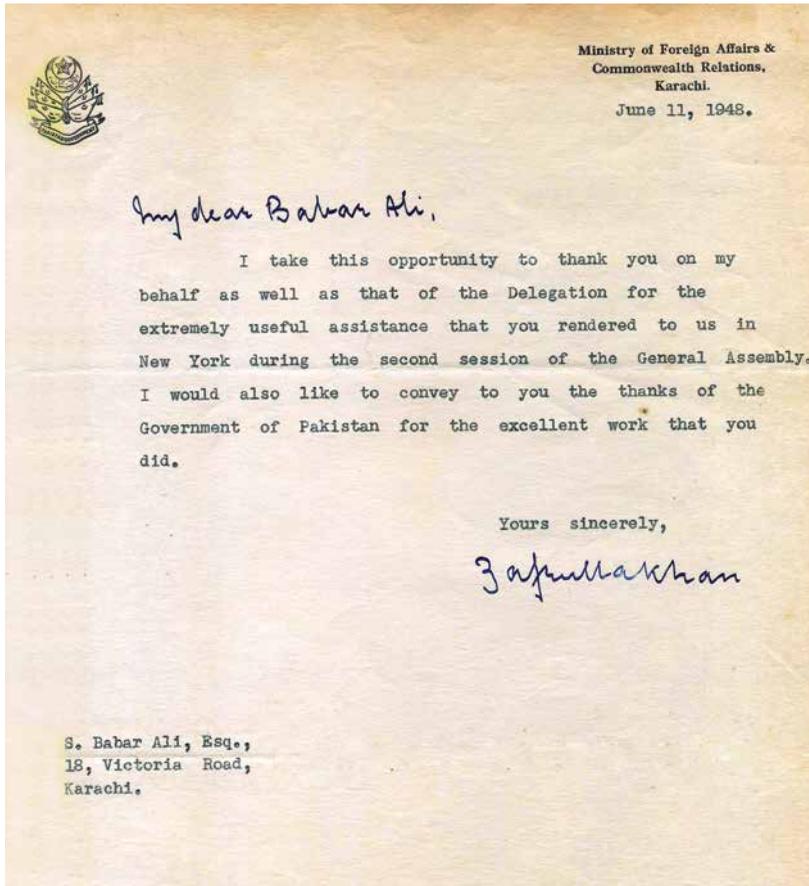
Sir Zafrulla was very gracious and made me feel totally at ease. Other delegates who represented Pakistan were Mir Laiq Ali from Hyderabad Deccan, Mr. M.A.H. Ispahani, Pakistan's first Ambassador to the United States, Mr. Abdul Sattar Pirzada, and Begum Salma Tassaduq Hussain. Mr. M. Ayub, ICS (subsequently CSP), was the Secretary General of the Delegation. The committee meetings of the United Nations were held at Lake Success, an hour's journey from mid-town Manhattan, and the plenary sessions met at Flushing Meadows, half way between Manhattan and Lake Success. It was very exhilarating for me, then only 21, to be walking in the premises of the United Nations not only as the errand boy of the Pakistan Delegation but, on several occasions, as the main representative of my country in committee meetings, as our Delegation was very short of people.

One of the questions debated was whether Israel should be created or not. Chaudhry Zafrulla Sahib was the main defender of the Palestinian cause. He had been chosen by the Muslims, including the Arabs. His knowledge was vast and he used it to trace Palestinian history from early times. I remember him talking about the Shareef of Makkah, and how, after the First World War, the victors carved up the whole of the Turkish Empire, and rewarded two sons of the Shareef: Faisal was made head of Iraq and Abdulla head of Jordan. But before that, during the First World War, when the British and allied forces had defeated the Turks and the British wanted to bring the Americans into the War, their strategy was to offer a Jewish state in Palestine as an inducement, known as the Balfour Declaration. After the Second World War, Chaudhry Sahib outlined this history and said that there was no place for a Jewish state in the region. If you had to compensate the Jews for the holocaust, then their state should be in Europe, not in the Middle East. He fought it out. The Americans, of course, took a strong line from the beginning. The British were playing both sides because of oil and other interests. The Russians' position was unknown; they had yet to show their hand. They had Vyschinsky as their representative, a fantastic speaker who had been the Prosecutor General at the 1936-38 trials in Moscow when Stalin got rid of his competition. It was Vyschinsky who was their hangman; his tongue worked like a sword. He spoke in Russian but there were very good interpreters and simultaneous translation.

I also saw President Dr. Weizmann who was almost blind. He made a speech to the Special Committee and although it was printed so large you could read it from twenty yards he had to use a magnifying glass. I remember Chaudhry Sahib walking up to him to shake him by the hand. Chaudhry Sahib used to carry an autograph book, which had signatures of very special people. He took it out and asked Dr. Weizmann to give him an autograph. As well as witnessing the big drama over Israel, I also saw how the Americans controlled South America. Whenever it came to voting, the South Americans en bloc, right from Argentina to Mexico, looked to see what the Americans did and raised their hands as the American hand went up. To aggravate Russia, the Americans would ask one of the smaller countries of South America, for example Nicaragua, to say something against the Russians. Vyschinsky said 'It reminds me of the old Russian story: there was once an elephant walking through a village and a dog came and started barking at that elephant; you, Nicaragua, are that dog.' He would pull no punches!

I once asked Chaudhry Sahib, 'Why don't you talk to the Turks?' This was the time when there was trouble between Greece and Turkey, and Russia was trying to grab these two countries and bring them into the East European fold, which the Americans were opposing. A civil war was going on in Greece and in Turkey there was also a bit of an upheaval. Chaudhry Sahib said to me in Punjabi, 'The Turks cannot vote against the Americans, even in their dreams!'

EDUCATION



Letter from Chaudhry Zafrulla Khan, Pakistan's first Foreign Minister

Among the other great people that I was able to see from very close quarters were Prince Faisal, later King of Saudi Arabia, Mrs. Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, Mr. Andre Gromyko, Mr. Warren Austin, Mr. Charles Chamoun of Lebanon, and Mr. Carlos Romulo of the Philippines. This baptism at an early age at the United Nations was very helpful to me several years later when I had the occasion to participate in other deliberations there.

After the completion of my assignment, without my asking, Chaudhry Sahib wrote to me on behalf of the Government of Pakistan to thank me for all the work I had done. I was there at my own expense and I took no compensation, even paying for my own food in New York. He was very affectionate and took a genuine interest in what I was learning. I always walked two yards behind him, which was the way we were brought up. One day, he said, 'The Ambassador and I were singing a duet in praise of the way you have conducted yourself.'

EDUCATION

In those days, though air travel had started, people still preferred to travel by sea, so I prepared to return home by sea via England. I was able to get a berth on the Cunard Liner 'Queen Mary' from New York to Southampton. In London I was very happy to meet Dr. R.U. Qureshi who was a family friend and who, whenever he visited Lahore, was a guest at our home. He very kindly put me up as his guest at his apartment in Talbot Square in Paddington. I spent two weeks in London and on 20th November 1947, I was fortunate to witness from the Mall the wedding procession of Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip. This was the first great ceremonial function in England after the War and the British celebrated it with enormous enthusiasm. Dr. Qureshi took me early that morning to the Mall and found me a good spot from where I witnessed the pageantry in its full glory.

From London, I went to Germany to visit the Hoechst factory in Frankfurt. I was supposed to be there for a week but my experience there made me very depressed: when I went to the mess to eat, there was American steak and other good things, but the bearer who was serving us looked starved and the way he looked at the food prevented me from eating. The next day, I went on to Switzerland and spent a week in Zurich. Switzerland was just like America. Food was plentiful and the funniest thing was that I spent nothing because of the exchange rates: at that time you were allowed to take no more than 75 pounds out of England, which was convertible. I went and converted these 75 pounds into travellers cheques denominated in Swiss Francs, spent a week in Switzerland, did my shopping, took the train back to Hoek van Holland and there I converted the remaining currency back to pounds and got 75 pounds for it! These 75 pounds in Swiss currency were not convertible and so valuable that I got a vastly favourable rate of exchange.

I spent eight days in Switzerland and was happy to get back to London to be with Qureshi Sahib once again, around the 15th of December. It was not possible to get a boat back to Karachi so I had no alternative but to take my first long air-trip, from London via Amsterdam to Karachi on KLM. I arrived at Karachi and two days later flew up to Lahore and was very happy to be greeted by my father, mother, and the rest of the family at Lahore Airport. I had been away from home for a year, which seemed like ages, because during these twelve months I had not met a single member of the family. I was truly homesick during my stay abroad, and I was very happy to be back! However, things had changed: Partition had taken place and there had been a massive movement of non-Muslims from Pakistan into India and an influx of Muslim refugees from India. The buildings were there but their residents had changed. The ownership of the shops in the main areas of Lahore which I was familiar with had changed as well. The majority of my friends, that I had known for most of my life, were non-Muslim and I missed them.