

Pakistan Diary Eleven Days in Pakistan

Shah Abdul Halim

It was 29 May 2008 round about 12 noon. I was standing on the northern pavement of the National Press Club Bangladesh. My cell phone rang. It was my elder brother Shah Abdul Hannan. He asked me to open my email account and see that an invitation to participate in an international workshop on 'Politics and Islam' is waiting for me. The two-day workshop that was held in Islamabad, Pakistan was organized by the Henry L. Stimson Center Washington, a U.S. Think Tank, in collaboration with Institute of Policy Studies Islamabad. Khalid Rahman, Director General of the Institute of Policy Studies Islamabad was asking Shah Abdul Hannan over telephone who is this Shah Abdul Halim whom the Henry L. Stimson Center Washington has invited in the workshop. Both Khalid Rahman and Shah Abdul Hannan were known to each other. I was really unknown to Khalid Rahman and the Institute of Policy Studies Islamabad.

That was the beginning. I received the formal invitation to join the workshop from Amit Panday, Director of the Henry L. Stimson Center Washington on 29 May 2008. The workshop was to be held on 9-10 July 2008. Amit Panday sent a request letter dated 11 June 2008 to High Commissioner of Pakistan in Bangladesh to issue visa.

I contacted Muhammad Shahbaz Tabassum, Second Secretary, High Commission of Pakistan in Bangladesh through Dr. Abdul Wahed, Secretary General of Iqbal Academy Bangladesh. Muhammad Shahbaz Tabassum was kind and arranged to issue visa immediately. But in the visa the Pakistan High Commission stamped that I have to report to the Police for registration on arrival in Islamabad which inadvertently I did not notice.

On the morning of 8 July 2008 I left for Islamabad via Abu Dhabi by Etihad Airways. On 7 July 2008 someone from Pakistan High Commission rang me telling me that they have received a letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan asking them to issue visa in my favor so that I can travel to Islamabad. That was too late. My feeling is that had I taken visa after the Pakistan High Commission in Bangladesh received instruction from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan, the Pakistan High Commission in all probability would have exempted the condition of reporting to the Police for registration on arrival in Islamabad.

My impression is that this condition of reporting to the Police was stamped in the visa as in the passport my profession is indicated as freelance journalist. Earlier in April 2007 Pakistan High Commission in Bangladesh dropped my name and that of the eminent journalist Sadeq Khan from the list of journalists proposed by our government that visited Pakistan. That group of journalists was not required to report to Police on arrival in Pakistan and they were warmly received wherever they went in Pakistan. It is not clear to me why this dual dealings by Pakistan with the journalists of Bangladesh.

Anyway I landed in Islamabad on 8 July 2008 at 8.40 p.m. Pakistan Standard Time just after sunset. These days Pakistanis have a long day time. Salatul Fazr at 5-30 a.m. and Salatul Maghreb at 8-30 p.m. Pakistanis served us dinner just after Maghreb prayer and sometimes even before Maghreb prayer. Here it would not be inappropriate to mention that I was stuck dumb on seeing the Muslim air hostages from Central Asia and other places working in Etihad Airways Flight Ey 0253 in naked legs. Regrettably Etihad Airways is the official airline of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), an Arab Muslim country.

As arranged by the Henry L. Stimson Center Washington I was housed along with other participants of the workshop at Islamabad Serena Hotel at Khayaban-e-Suhrawardy, Islamabad. Islamabad Serena Hotel is a five star hotel and I was logged in room number 209. The hotel arranged to pick me up from Islamabad airport.

Here in this article I shall not discuss the deliberations of the workshop for general readers might feel bore in academic matters, except two incidents that are not directly related with the workshop and in the rest of the article I shall narrate my interaction with the cross section with the people of Pakistan.

The two-day workshop began on 9 July 2008 at 9.30 a.m. I entered the workshop room at about 9.15 a.m. There were five-six people. I introduced myself Assalamu Alaikum I am Shah Abdul Halim from Bangladesh. Agha Murtaza Poya, an elderly person and Editor of English Daily Muslim Pakistan sharply reacted saying "we don't recognize Bangladesh. You are from East Pakistan". I was really angry but then again I did not show my anger except saying that I am a proud Bangladeshi and it is immaterial whether he recognizes Bangladesh or not. Asghar Ali Engineer, the Indian scholar who came to Islamabad to participate in the workshop was already in the room. I asked Agha Murtaza Poya whether he will like if Asghar Ali Engineer standing in Islamabad say this is India and not Pakistan and he does not recognize the partition of 1947. I told Agha Murtaza Poya that Pakistan was buried on the night of 25 March 1971 when military junta killed innocent civilians of Dhaka city.

Asghar Ali Engineer was sitting next to me on the second-day of the workshop, 10 July 2008. Before the lunch break he was telling me that he is going to Police to report for registration. Immediately I checked up my visa and the paper the Police handed over to me on my landing Islamabad airport. It then became also clear to me that I have also to report to the Police in Islamabad which inadvertently I did not

notice earlier. I right away drew the attention of the matter to Khalid Rahman, Director General, Institute of Policy Studies Islamabad, co-sponsor of the workshop and he asked Protocol Officer Syed Azhar Ali to do the needful. It was decided that the next day we shall go to the Police for registration. I went to the Police on 11 July 2008 at 10-30 a.m. along with Protocol Officer Syed Azhar Ali and completed all formalities.

Earlier on 9 July 2008 Mian Tahawwar Hussain, Manager, Islamabad Regional Office, Tabani Group of Companies at the instruction of M.Yaqoob Tabani and A. Rouf Tabani met me at Islamabad Serena Hotel and took me for a round of the Islamabad city and a panoramic view of the city from hill top Daman E Koh. During that round of the Islamabad city I found that two Islamabad streets are named after our great leaders A. K. Fazlul Huq and H. S. Suhrawardi. I felt happy that the people of Islamabad, unlike us, still recognize the historic contributions of our leaders. But it came to my mind why they have not named the road as Sher-e-Bangla road in which name A. K. Fazlul Huq is more known. I also visited the wreckage of the building Al Mustapha in Islamabad that was destroyed during earthquake in Kashmir.

I also visited Lal Masjid in dim light. Mian Tahawwar Hussain was explaining the background of the destruction of the dormitory adjacent to the mosque and excess committed by the Ulama of the mosque. He said that no gentleman was allowed to pass through this road unless he wore Pajama above ankle and the ladies could not pass through this road unless in full Nikab. They were fully armed and the Imam of Lal Masjid also established courts to try offenders etc. etc. He was trying to justify the action to demolish the dormitory adjacent to the mosque by dynamite by the army at the instruction of President Pervez Musharraf. The average Pakistanis consider this a heinous act and condemn President Musharraf. I told Mian Tahawwar Hussain what if Lal Masjid was encircled for two or three months. Those inside must have surrendered and the blood bath could have been avoided. I told Mian Tahawwar Hussain that as long as army does not give up the mentality of settling matters by using brute military force, it cannot find a peaceful solution. The Muslim armies kill their innocent civilians, co-citizens and cannot protect their country and countrymen from foreign aggression and destruction. Shame indeed. I told Mian Tahawwar Hussain that the same thing happened in East Pakistan in 1971. Pakistan army cracked down on innocent civilians of Dhaka for which unarmed men, women and children got killed.

During the city round I also visited King Faisal Mosque and offered two Rakah Salah and prayed to Allah to make Pakistan stronger so that it can defend it from U.S. and India. During the visit to the King Faisal Mosque I stopped at the Islamic Book Sale Center there. The Sale Center has wonderful collection of Islamic books in English of eminent writers both past and present. From the Sale Center Mian Tahawwar Hussain purchased and presented me two gift items, a Tupi and Tasbih. I was amazed to see huge number of women visiting King Faisal Mosque offering prayers, unlike Baitul Mukarram Mosque in Dhaka. I also visited the mausoleum of President Ziaul-Huq, offered Fatiha and prayed to Allah for his forgiveness and salvation.

On the morning of 11 July 2008 I moved to New Orchard Guest House arranged by Institute of Policy Studies Islamabad. The air-conditioned room rent was Pakistani Rs.2000.00 per day quite high to my estimation. But the Protocol Officer Syed Azhar Ali said that is the cheapest in Islamabad.

I went to the office of the Institute of Policy Studies Islamabad at 9.30 a.m. in the morning and briefed Khalid Raham, Director General about the activities of Islamic Information Bureau Bangladesh and discussed about the possible cooperation between IPS and different institutions of Bangladesh namely Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS), Bangladesh Institute of Islamic Thought (BIIT), Center of Strategic and Peace Studies (CSPS), Institute of Research and Development (IRD), Islamic Economics Research Bureau (IERB), Center for Policy Studies (CSP) and Bangladesh Islamic Center (BIC). I also requested him to conduct a study as to why Islamic movement did to make the much expected progress. I suggested for engaging for this purpose some friendly academicians from outside the known circle. He took me to have a round of the IPS office and explained me its various activities. IPS occupies two floors of 10,000 square feet. It has a wonderful library of 20,000 books, mostly of western origin. Total number of manpower working in IPS is 45. During 2007 it published seven research books. It was six in 2006.

I also met Prof. Khurshid Ahmad, Chairman of the Institute of Policy Studies Islamabad and sought his blessings and requested him to pray for me so that rest of my life I can write for the progress of Islam. Prof. Khurshid Ahmad replied that he has gone through my writings. He said that all these are in "right direction" and advised me to be more academic.

I talked to him about Moulana Mawdudi's book 'Islamic Law and Constitution' with the request that if he could update the book by giving footnotes. He said that nobody can change the book of Mawdudi. He said that IPS is working on a new book which will be improvement upon Mawdudi's work. I told him that manpower in Bangladesh only reads this book and the consequence you can imagine.

I went to the office of the Council of Islamic Ideology Pakistan at about 11.00 a.m. to meet its Chairman Prof. Dr. Muhammad Khalid Masud. He was a participant in the workshop. He introduced to me all his colleagues in the Council of Islamic Ideology Pakistan. He briefed me about the activities of the organization and its various publications. From the pamphlet of the Council of Islamic Ideology Pakistan dated 2007 it appeared that it had as many as 80 important publications till 2006. I requested him to explore the possibilities of forwarding a few sets of publications of the Council of Islamic Ideology Pakistan to Bangladesh through Pakistan High Commission in Dhaka. I also requested him that if these publications are forwarded to Bangladesh, Pakistan High Commissioner in Dhaka should make some publicity so that academicians and researchers in Bangladesh come to know about it. I also showed my keen interest in the efforts of the Council of Islamic Ideology Pakistan to

Islamize criminal laws. Later on returning Bangladesh I have sent him an email summarizing our discussions with the request to take some actions based on my written request.

Before leaving the Council of Islamic Ideology Pakistan Prof. Dr. Muhammad Khalid Masud asked me what is my wise advice to them. I said he must be older than me and therefore he should advice me, but he insisted. I then said the people of Pakistan should always remain pragmatic and should not anyway put their leg on the American trap. On his request I also forwarded him two of my articles [namely Concept of Sovereignty and Other Issues, and Constitutional Amendment: Points to Ponder available at www.shahfoundationbd.org] discussing mechanism how to ensure that no law repugnant to Islam is enacted in a Muslim state.

I visited APP office at about 5.30 p.m. exchanged views with the senior journalist present. From there I contacted Aftab Ahmed, former Chief of APP who had worked with journalists from Bangladesh in post-1971 period and conveyed Salam of brother Amanullah, former Chief Editor of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (B.S.S.). I tried to meet him but the meeting did not mature as he shifted meeting thrice and the last time I had a scheduled meeting with the Chairman of IPS, followed by lunch.

The next day morning, on 12 July 2008, I phoned Prof. Dr. Anis Ahmad, Vice Chancellor of Riphah International University Islamabad and expressed my desire to meet him and see his University. He was sick and invited me to his residence. I reached his home at about 9.30 a.m. During our discussions I wanted to know from him about the standard of private universities in Pakistan. He replied that Riphah International University Islamabad of which he is the Vice Chancellor maintains good standard. From his answer it appeared to me that like Bangladesh there is mushroom growth of private universities in Pakistan, even those that are established by Islamists are not up to the mark. I discussed with him about the need to conduct research on the status of private Islamic universities established by the Islamists in Pakistan and Bangladesh, about their curriculum, the laboratory facilities these university offer, the standard of the libraries, the space available to accommodate various faculties, standard of the teaching staff etc. etc. and areas where these institutions can collaborate and share experience of one another. He agreed that we need to conduct such research and promised to do whatever is possible on his part. He requested me to send the email address of all the Islamic universities in Bangladesh.

I went to visit the Mazar of Beri Imam Abdul Latif Al Malqab at 10.30 a.m. and offered Fatiha. I came to know from the people of Islamabad that he was great preacher of Islam. But I saw people in prostrate position in this Mazar which is Shirk and forbidden in Islam. People associated with Dawah are complacent with their work, but Shirk and Bidah committed in the Mazar only establishes how little work has been done.

I went to visit the biggest book sales center in Islamabad, 'Saeed Book Bank' at 12.00 noon. Indeed it is something amazing. The book sales center comprises of two floors totaling 18,000 square feet. The sale center is computerized and one can search whether a particular book is available or not, where it is shelved and how much it costs very easily. The entire subject wise book list can be seen in the website www.saeedbookbank.com that also depicts the cover of book. They also sell CDs where one can find the subject wise book list available for sale that also depicts the cover of the book. I purchased a book by Prof. Dr. Abdul Rashid Moten, 'Revolutuon to Revolution: Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan in the Politics of Pakistan'. Prof. Dr. Abdul Rashid Moten is my classmate in the Department of Political Science, Dhaka University and currently working as Professor in the Department of Political Science at the International Islamic University Malaysia. 'Saeed Book Bank' presented me a CD of their book list. I requested the owner of the 'Saeed Book Bank' to explore the possibility of opening a branch of the 'Saeed Book Bank' in Dhaka, if commercially viable. I suggested them, if they decide to open a branch in Dhaka; its book sales center in Dhaka should have Bengali books along with English books. This was the last engagement in Islamabad.

After that I had a quiet lunch with Khalid Rahman, Director General, of the Institute of Policy Studies Islamabad. During the lunch I repeated my earlier request to Khalid Rahaman to engage some friendly academicians from outside the movement for making empirical study to find out the reasons as to why the movement did not make anticipated headway and advancement.

Before leaving Dhaka for Islamabad I sent an email to Dr. Mumtaz Ahmad, Visiting Professor, International Islamic University Islamabad informing him my itinerary in Islamabad. But it later appeared that he did not check his email account and I thought he must be in U.S.A. When I visited Prof. Dr. Anis Ahmad, Vice Chancellor of Riphah International University Islamabad on the morning of 12 July 2008, I came to know from him that Dr. Mumtaz Ahmad is in Islamabad and got his telephone number from him and phoned him. He was sleeping. He phoned me back when I was preparing to leave Islamabad for Lahore. Dr. Mumtaz Ahmad wanted me to delay my departure for one day and stay with him. But it was too late and impossible to reschedule my departure as other brothers will be waiting for me in Lahore. I told him that we shall InshaAllah meet later in Dhaka.

I left Islamabad for Lahore at 5.00 p.m. by bus Sammi Daewoo Express. Protocol Officer Syed Azhar Ali was kind enough to remain with me till the bus left for Lahore. I am greatly indebted to Syed Azhar Ali who was always active to make my stay in Islamabad comfortable.

I reached Lahore at 10.30 p.m. Ameer-ul-Azem, Abdul Gaffar Aziz, Hafez Muhammad Abdullah and others warmly received me at the bus station. I reached the guest house at about 11.00 p.m. and had a quiet dinner. There was electric failure several times at night which is a regular phenomenon in Lahore.

The next day 13 July 2008 I met Ameer-ul-Azeem at about 1.00 p.m. and discussed with him about the present situation in Pakistan. He is of the opinion that U.S. is likely to try the current Bangladesh model in Pakistan. While talking about the media of which he is in charge on behalf of the Islamic movement Ameer-ul-Azeem informed me that they have launched a news agency, Islamabad based South Asia News Agency (SANA) having operational network throughout Pakistan.

I visited important historical sites in Lahore followed by Protocol Officer Hafez Muhammad Abdullah. It took three hours, between 3.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. I visited Badshahi Mosque and offered two Rakah Salah there and offered Fatiha at the Mazar of Allama Iqbal. I visited Minar-e-Pakistan, Shalimar Garden. Shalimar Garden seemed to me less taken care of than it was in 1969 when I visited Lahore as a student of Dhaka University. I also visited the Mazar of Sayyid Abul Ala Mawduui and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul.

Although I am not a admirer of Bangladesh architect Sheikh Mujibur Rahman but even then while in Shalimar Garden it came to mind that unless Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was great this way or other it would not been possible on his part to come to Lahore immediately after the liberation war forgetting the bloodshed and stand in the balcony of the Shalimar Garden along with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. This historic decision of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to come to Lahore to join the meeting of the Muslim heads of states and governments brought Bangladesh closer to the mainstream of the Muslim Ummah with its far reaching effects.

The Muslim nationalists in Bangladesh are not yet ready to accept Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as Bangabandhu or father of Bangladesh nation. But it came to my mind after leaving Shalimar Garden Lahore that Muslims nationalists in Bangladesh do recognize A. K. Fazlul Huq as Sher-e-Bangla and appreciate his contributions in the freedom movement despite the fact that Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq opposed Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on many occasions and also according to some if his scheme would have been successful, there would be no Pakistan. If the Muslim nationalists can recognize the contribution of Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq despite differences, what stops them to recognize Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as Bangabandhu and father of the new born independent and sovereign Bangladesh? Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had been assassinated long before. The question is how long he will bear the burden of killing by the Rakkhi Bahini, when our people will absolve him from the responsibility of the killing by the Rakkhi Bahani.

While visiting the Badshahi Mosque I noticed that beside the mosque there is a Shikh Temple. No body in Pakistan objected having a Shikh Temple next to the historic Badshahi Mosque which is there from the time of the Mughals. It only establishes the tolerant attitude of the Muslim rulers and masses. It also shows how deeply Muslims believes in peaceful coexistence, pluralism and multiculturalism than the fundamentalists Hindu Indians who destroyed historic Babri Mosque.

I visited Association for Academic Quality –AFAQ- at 11.00 a.m. Hassan Suhaib Murad, Rector of the University Management Technology Pakistan is the AFAQ chief.

The previous day I personally talked to him over telephone and fixed our meeting. But he could not attend the meeting because of an important business in the University. Abdul Hamid, Manager Research Operations and his colleagues received me. These people are extremely hospitable. They gave me a briefing on AFAQ activities and the criterions they maintain to preserve the standard of the schools. AFAQ is indeed doing good work and I look forward for increasing collaboration between this organization and its counterpart in Bangladesh doing similar work. What I suggested AFAQ is that it can establish its chapter in Bangladesh (AFAQ has plan establish its offices in several Muslim countries) or take two persons from Bangladesh and train them for two years so that after the training they themselves can establish such a center in Bangladesh.

They showed me a film on the activities of AFAQ. I asked Abdul Hamid if very senior leaders of the Islamic movement have seen the film to which he said yes. I then made some comments on the positive aspect of the film. I also pointed out several technical mistakes of the film. In the film the word Muslim, Islam and Allah were all pronounced like westerners. That was not proper. In the film they also mentioned a Hadith without referring the name of the book, from which they took it. We always fight that Hadith should be quoted with reference but this failure shows that we do forget to follow what we say. I also commented that since the use of music in the film has not been objected by the senior leaders who have seen the film, I presume that the movement has allowed the use of music at least in the side organizations.

A lady is seen in the film in full Nikab teaching other ladies in full Nikab. There was no man. This covering of face by the women in the film was not natural. Women do not cover their face in front of other women.

In the film there is excessive use of veil including Nikab and I explained to them the opinion of the Sheikh Adil Salahi, an eminent Arab Islamic scholar who is the Director of Islamic Foundation U.K. of which Prof. Khurshid Ahmad is the Chairman and author of another 850 page mammoth work 'Muhammad: Man and Prophet'. Commenting on the verse 24 (Sura An Nur): 30-31 wherein both men and women have been asked to lower their look when fall on the opposite sex Sheikh Adil Salahi in his regular weekly column 'Our Dialogue' in Saudi daily Arab News wrote: The instruction of the verses quoted above is that both men and women are required to keep their eye cast down, so that when they meet each other, neither should men stare at women nor women at men. The natural question that arises is why man should lower his gaze if the face of woman is totally covered? From the text of the verses it is clearly evident that the face of the woman is not to be covered and, therefore, man has been advised to lower his look.

I also quoted the opinion of Muslim Brotherhood leader Abdul Halim Abu Shuqqah on the aforementioned verse in which he said that the intent of the Law Giver is that women need not cover face. He said that if the intention of the Law Giver was to cover the face of women than He would not have asked men to lower gaze [Abdul Halim Abu Shuqqah, Rasuler Juge nari Shadhinata (Bengali tr. of Tahrirul Mar'ah Fi

Asrir Risalah), pp 79-80, Vol.IV, Bangladesh Institute of Islamic Thought (BIIT). Dhaka, 2006]. But the people in AFAQ seem to be reluctant to give an ear to anybody's opinion other than Moulana Mawdudi.

Since AFAQ is working in the field of education, I advised them to read the book 'Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Workplan' by Ismail Raji al Faruqi, a publication of International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), U.S.A. I told them that the book is available with Prof. Khurshid Ahmad and the Institute of Policy Studies Islamabad.

Abdul Hamid, Manager Research Operations of AFAQ also gave me a CD on the teaching of Arabic alphabets to the children. After coming to Bangladesh I have seen it. It is really a wonderful production that can be used to attract children to the learning of Arabic. AFAQ has really done an appreciable work.

I visited Iqbal Academy Pakistan at 12.00 noon. The Academy has a magnificent building over 5.5 acre land. It is a huge building of 5000 square feet each floor. It has a wonderful multilingual book library of 5000 titles- Urdu, Persian, Arabic, English and French. Fifty persons are working in the Academy of which seven are researchers. It has 91 books on Iqbal published in English in addition to books in Urdu and other languages and 8 Audio-Video CDs. The Director of the Academy Muhammad Suheyl Umar was not there and I was received by Irshad ul Mujeeb Sheikh, Assistant Director. It was a nice meeting and a pleasant occasion. I am indeed grateful to Irshad ul Mujeeb Sheikh for the way he received me. I found him very warm. He presented me a set of books on Iqbal in Urdu, Persian, English and other languages. He also presented me Journal of the Iqbal Academy in Pakistan, both in Urdu and English. I accepted whatever was in English. I brought with me 'Tulip In The Desert'- a selection of the poetry of Muhammad Iqbal, 'Stray Reflections'- private notebook of Muhammad Iqbal, 'Iqbal' by Mustansir Mir, 'Iqbal: An Illustrated Biography' by Khurram Ali Shafique and 'Iqbal Review' – Journal of the Iqbal Academy Pakistan. Irshad ul Mujeeb Sheikh also presented me a telefilm titled 'Iqbal: An Approach to Pakistan' in addition to three documentaries on the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal – 'The Life and Poetry of Allama Iqbal', 'Allama Iqbal' and 'Iqbal – Poet of the East'.

The meeting in the Iqbal Academy Pakistan was fruitful. We discussed how to strengthen Iqbal Academy Bangladesh and the need to induct Iqbal scholars from the Department of Urdu and Department of Persian, Dhaka University in the Trustee Board of Iqbal Academy Bangladesh. I suggested Irshad ul Mujeeb Sheikh to take translation project for publication of the various works of Iqbal into Bengali. I suggested him to take up such a project with estimated cost of translation and publication. I recommended that while preparing the translation project, they have to mention the qualifications of the translators and editors so that only qualified people are entrusted with the responsibility.

I mentioned that it is Dr. Abdul Wahed who has kept the memory of Iqbal somewhat fresh among a section of the litterateurs and also among general people of Bangladesh and I requested Irshad ul Mujeeb Sheikh to cooperate with Dr. Abdul Wahed in every possible way.

I also requested Irshad ul Mujeeb Sheikh to explore the possibility of establishing a cultural centre in Bangladesh by the Government of Pakistan under the purview of already existing cultural agreement between Bangladesh and Pakistan and make a massive display of the books of Iqbal and papers of Quaid- i- Azam and Muslim League. Irshad ul Mujeeb Sheikh told me that he would prepare a note based on our discussion and place it before Muhammad Suheyl Umar, Director of Iqbal Academy Pakistan and try to do whatever is possible.

I left Lahore for Karachi by Pakistan Railways 16 D.N. Karachi Express on 14 July 2008. The train left Lahore at 7.00 p.m. one hour late then the scheduled time. It was supposed to reach next day, 15 July 2008 at 1 p.m. But it was late by several hours and reached Karachi at 5 p.m.

Since no booking of the first class coach in the Pakistan Railways was available, Protocol Officer Hafez Muhammad Abdullah booked an economy coach. I had no idea that the economy coach is without air-condition. I thought it would be difficult to travel such a long distance, approximately 1200 kilometers, in such hot temperature – 38 degree Celsius. I asked the porter if he could upgrade my ticket. These people normally maintain some secret link with the Railway Guard and I thought the porter might be of help. Anyway Protocol Officer Hafez Muhammad Abdullah and the porter were able to upgrade the ticket and they arrived five-six minutes before the departure of the train with upgraded ticket for which I had to pay additional Pakistani Rs. 500.00 to the porter in addition to what the Pakistan Railways charged. We rushed to the assigned buggy number 13 and found that it was reserved entirely for the women. The Ticket Clerk there was very rude asked us to go the Railway Guard for necessary correction. We had no time for going to the Railway Guard for the train will leave within four-five minutes. I asked him to help me anyway being a Muslim brother from another country and on persuasion he changed the buggy number to 14 and I was somehow been able to enter the train air-condition coach number 14. Due to the worry over getting an upgraded ticket I became tense and thirsty and requested Protocol Officer Hafez Muhammad Abdullah if he could help me and bring a bottle of cool drinking water. He was kind and brought me the needed water. The train by that time had started moving on whistle from the Railway Guard. I said to Protocol Officer Hafez Muhammad Abdullah goodbye and requested him to always remember me in his prayers and embraced each other. I am grateful to Hafez Muhammad Abdullah for everything he had done to make my stay and movement in Lahore comfortable. He was always active to make available whatever I needed. May Allah give him the best rewards.

After Protocol Officer Hafez Muhammad Abdullah left I discovered that I was given a sitting chair in the corridor of the air-condition train and not a sleeping coach. Anyway I managed to put my legs on the suitcase and traveled to Karachi.

Before moving to the train air-conditions coach number 14, I was waiting in the economy section of the train for sometime. There I have seen ladies in full Nikab while the temperature is 38 degree Celsius. I thought that was enough for women observing Hijab. But then extra cloth was used to make the women's area a separate section, a watertight compartment. I remember in my country Bangladesh in fifties women used Burka with full Nikab, covered head to toe and the eye covered with nets like ladies in Afghanistan and they were yet encircled by extra cloth when traveling by rickshaw.

In the train the Railway Ticket Clerk and later the Railway Guard were distributing still vacant sleeping coaches to those in the sitting chairs in the corridor of the train. I requested them twice but failed to draw their attention and sympathy although I am a foreigner from a brotherly Muslim country. This may be for the fact that I don't know the underhand dealings. Protocol Officer Hafez Muhammad Abdullah also did not get the first class air-condition sleeping coach initially for the same reason I believe. The porter who arranged an upgraded ticket seemed to me better conversant with the secret art of underhand negotiations.

I was alone in the sitting coach in the corridor of the air-condition train. In my back at some distance there were two ladies and in the front in the far off there were two or three gentlemen. So there was no way to talk to them, exchange views and learn about the situation in Pakistan. More importantly, I was traveling alone and there was none close by whom I could request to look after my luggage, a suitcase and a briefcase containing passport, air-ticket and other important papers and I found it difficult to go the toilet. I was thirsty and there was no way to collect water or tea. In the middle of the night I asked someone if tea is available in the train. I was talking to myself how to get tea. An old gentleman knowing English was offering Salah in the corridor of the train. He was in the sleeping coach with his family. At the end of the Salah he came forward and offered me tea and cakes. After Salatul Fazr at about 5.30 a.m. 15 July 2008 the train stopped at Rohri Station and the vendors were moving selling tea and other items. I purchased two cups of tea with milk, very good tea, at a cost of Rs. 20.00. The cost seemed to me very high compared to Bangladesh keeping in view that Pakistani Rupee and Bangladesh Taka are equal in value viz a viz U.S. Dollar. I was afraid of purchasing other food items scared of being contaminated by a disease. This was the first time I purchased something to eat or drink during my visit to Pakistan. In the rest of the visit my host always arranged my food.

Sarfaraz Ali from the sleeping coach joined me at 7.30 a.m. He is a banker working in HSBC Bank Middle East Ltd., Lahore. He was traveling to Karachi to attend the marriage of a relative. Now I got a chance to exchange views. My loneliness from now on was over. We discussed about situation in Pakistan He purchased some food

and shared it with me. The young banker was born in 1973. His father worked in PIA in sixties. Sarfaraz Ali himself raised the issue of division of Pakistan in 1971. He said that his father had visited Dhaka once or twice, but did never stay in Dhaka. He said that his father told him that people of East Pakistan now Bangladesh used to "hate" the people of West Pakistan, now Pakistan at that time. Sarfaraz Ali told me that he wants to know the truth of the matter and if I could explain in the real facts since I was in Dhaka at that time.

I raised the issue of Lal Masjid killing in Islamabad and said the innocent people of the Lal Masjid, old, women and children could be saved if they were encircled for a few days. They would have surrendered when the food stocks were exhausted. But that General Parvez Musharraf and Pakistan army could not give up the theory of settling matters by using brute force. Therefore they destroyed whole dormitory by dynamite.

One of the lessons of 1971 debacle, I told young Sarfaraz Ali, is that you will never find a peaceful solution to any problem as long as you keep the military option open. The other lesson is that politicians must act in a responsible manner and must not play with the emotions of the people and the rulers must not exploit regions within a country for the benefit of other and must not deprive people of its legitimate economic and political rights. I asked Sarfaraz Ali to work sincerely to build a strong Pakistan and be sure that they don't fall on the U.S. trap.

I reached Karachi at 5.00 p.m. on 15 July 2008. Earlier from Lahore I sent cell messages to Muhammad Husain Mehanti, my host in Karachi to send Ashraf Ali, my colleague in the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Bangladesh who is now settled in Pakistan to the Karachi Railway Station to receive me. I also talked to Ashraf Ali over telephone from Islamabad and requested him to immediately establish contact with Adam Ali and Aftab who earlier worked with me in the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Bangladesh and now settled in Karachi and from Lahore I sent cell message to Ashraf Ali to receive me at the Karachi Railway Station.

Brother Ashraf Ali, Protocol Officer Brother Muhammad Raziuddin Khaled Mehanti and other brothers received me at the Karachi Railway Station. I found that there is no change in Ashraf Ali except that he has become old and his beard has become longer than it was before.

I decided to stay the first night at the residence of Ashraf Ali. I put my luggage at his residence and rushed to meet Adam Ali. Adam Ali was driver in the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Bangladesh. He is now 80 years or more. His left side is paralyzed and he had several cardiac attacks. Seeing me Adam Ali started weeping and recalled that I employed him in the Saudi Embassy in Dhaka which really I forget. I gave him some money so that he could use it for his treatment.

The purpose of my visit to Karachi was to meet Bihari Khala. In 1958 we used to stay in Bashaboo, Dhaka side by side. Since then our two families developed affinity.

Bihari Khala developed likeness for my mother although much younger than my mother. This family was uprooted from their house in Bashaboo, Dhaka in 1971 where they could not return till they left for Karachi in 1988. I reached the residence of Bihari Khala at about 10.00 p.m. Only after reaching their home I could come to know that Bihari Khala died in 1991 and her eldest son Aftab who worked in the security section of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Bangladesh died of kidney failure only fifty days earlier. He has left behind his young wife and two little daughters. Aslam, the second son of Bihari Khala and Khalu have also not yet returned home from their jobs. I kissed all the children, the grandchildren of Bihari Khala and also kissed Moina, the daughter of Bihari Khala in the forehead. I came to know from Moina that Raushan, the eldest daughter of Bihari Khala who was married in India also had died and they have lost contact with that family. Moina was asking to know the welfare of my brothers and sisters by their nick name. She was asking: How is Hira Bhai, Nihar Apa, Nargis Apa, Nazma Apa, Mukul Bhai, Flowra, Khokon. They also came to know of the death of my mother and two sisters from me.

My mother died on 17 May 2008 and I thought if I could meet Bihari Khala it would like meeting my mother. That was not to be as Allah decided otherwise. It was already 11.30 p.m. Brother Ashraf Ali and the driver were insisting that we must leave. Widows do not normally come in front of others unless waiting period is over. I told Moina to call the wife of Aftab. I am not her brother-in-law but a brother. So the widowed wife of Aftab came. I advised my sister to have patience and Allah will help. I gave some money to the daughters of Aftab which I took for Bihari Khala and handed over a token money to Moina to purchase sweets for the children. I then left with Brother Ashraf Ali although my mind remained with them.

Brother Ashraf Ali with cane in hand now looks older than 20 years before when he was in Dhaka. Only two months back his wife died. His daughters are all married and two sons are also employed, one a school teacher and the other working in an export oriented garment manufacturing industry. Both the sons are married and have children. He has built a moderately good house.

When he was leaving Dhaka, I asked him why you are leaving Dhaka where you are living since the days of your grandfather. Brother Ashraf Ali replied that his family has now got divided into three countries- India, Bangladesh and Pakistan and he wants to see his family settled in one city. The other reasons for which Ashraf Ali decided to leave Dhaka was that he thought he would not be able to get his daughters married to suitable boys being an Urdu speaking Bihari. I realized the depth of his sentiments. Indeed every father wants to see his daughters married to good boys. We therefore arranged to transfer his service from Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Bangladesh to Saudi Consulate Karachi.

In the absence of Bhavi, the daughter-in-law prepared good dishes. I offered Salatul Esha late and in the night Brother Ashraf Ali and I recollected our good old days.

On the morning of 16 July 2008 I moved to the Rest House Qasre Naz in the Garden Area of Karachi. Qasre Naz is the Rest House for Legislators of Pakistan. Others can stay in this Rest House if a request is made by a Legislator and in my case Senator Prof. Khurshid Ahmad did all that was required for my accommodation in Qasre Naz. I stayed in an air-condition room with two beds, big enough.

The first thing I decided to do on the morning of 16 July 2008 is to obtain Exit Permit from Special Branch, Karachi Police. Followed by Protocol Officer Brother Muhammad Raziuddin Khaled Mehanti I went to Special Branch, Karachi Police at 10.00 a.m. The Government Office in Karachi begins at 9.00.a.m. But I had to wait until 11.00 a.m. because the Police officer who signs the Exit Permit did not turn up. Police everywhere is trouble maker. The Islamabad Police for nothing killed my time during registration and now in Karachi they were asking unnecessary questions as to why I did not take the Exit Permit from Islamabad. Anyway after much persuasion by me and later by the Protocol Officer Brother Muhammad Raziuddin Khaled Mehanti I could obtain the Exit Permit to leave Karachi for Dhaka.

I then visited the Office of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA). Along with Protocol Officer Brother Muhammad Raziuddin Khaled Mehanti I reached PIA Office at about 12.00 a.m. for reconfirmation of the air-ticket. The PIA seems to be well organized and in no time they reconfirmed my ticket and now I have to travel to Dhaka on 18 July 2008.

I met Brother Muhammad Husain Mehanti, my host in Karachi, at about 1.00 p.m. and had a brief discussion. Subsequently I had three hours long meeting with him and other brothers in Karachi, 10 p.m. – 1 a.m. followed by dinner. He is in charge of the movement in Karachi.

The people working in the media section, Sarfaraz Ahmed and Saeed Usmani are very friendly and hospitable. I passed with them more than three hours from, from 1.30 p.m. to 4.45 p.m. and in between took lunch and offered Salatul Zahur. I found Saeed Usmani highly informed, analytical, bold enough to express views and a person not ready to give up independence. The people working in the media section are very critical. I sat with brothers of media section several times and we discussed situation in Pakistan and Bangladesh and U.S.-India agenda.

I went to offer Fatiha at the Mazar of Quaid-i-Azam and other leaders at about 5.00 p.m. I also visited the adjacent museum on Quaid-i-Azam. At the Mazar the illiterate and poor man keeping shoes of the visitors of the Mazar against the payment of Pakistani Rs.2.00 asked me whether it was proper to divide the country in 1971. I asked him if he realizes that I love and respect Jinnah and therefore have come offer Fatiha at his Mazar. Then I asked him who has killed innocent people in the Lal Masjid. He said it was President Pervez Musharraf and the army. I told him that this very army killed innocent people of Dhaka on the night of 25 March 1971 and therefore Bangladesh is now an independent country. He said he has now realized the matter.

The monument of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah is indeed a magnificent architectural work. It seems Pakistanis are proud of their leader. I have seen that evening huge number of people, men, women and children, visiting the mausoleum and offering Fatiha. Pakistanis have made a history in modern times by erecting such a huge structure at the Mazar site of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

I reached the Mazar of Abdullah Shah Gazi at Clifton at about 8.20 p.m. just before the Slatul Maghrib. He is considered to be one of the preachers of Islam in this part of the world. I went to the shrine and offered Fatiha. I observed that people are kissing the grave for Baraka- benefits and participating in acts which are considered Shirkh and Biddah in Islam. My reaction on visiting the shrine was that the Islamists must realize how little work they have done and how more yet to be done.

The next day on 17 July 2008 I visited the Quaid-i-Azam Academy at about 11.00 a.m. It is nearby the mausoleum of the Quaid-i-Azam. I had no scheduled meeting and I entered the room of its Director Manzoor Ali Khan, a Joint Secretary of the Government of Pakistan violating all protocols. He was kind enough to receive me. He was warm and hospitable and immediately started speaking Bengali saying he was student of Dhaka Shaheen School and Fauzderhat Cadet College, Chittagong.

Manzoor Ali Khan briefed me on the activities of Quaid-i-Azam Academy and its various publications. One of the issues we discussed is the on going research in Bangladesh by the academicians. I requested Manzoor Ali Khan to explore the possibility of forwarding several sets of Jinnah Papers, in all 15 volumes, edited by Z. H. Zaidi to Bangladesh through Pakistan High Commission in Bangladesh. I also requested Manzoor Ali Khan that incase Jinnah Papers are forwarded to Bangladesh, Pakistan High Commission in Bangladesh should make some publicity so that academicians and researchers in Bangladesh come to know about it. I also pointed out that a minimum of three sets of Jinnah Papers would be required and that should be handed over to Dhaka University, Public Library Dhaka and Asiatic Society Bangladesh by Pakistan High Commission in Bangladesh to which he responded positively.

On coming back to Bangladesh through an email I requested Manzoor Ali Khan to explore the possibility allocating additional three sets of Jinnah Papers for Rajshahi University, Chittagong University and Jahangir Nagar University. During our discussion and later in email communication I requested Manzoor Ali Khan to let me know the cost of Jinnah Papers edited by Z.H. Zaidi [1-15 volumes] in Pakistani currency after deduction of commissions and how much extra Pakistani currency would be required if a set is forwarded to Bangladesh by post or courier. He replied that these 15 volumes would cost Pakistani Rs. 5370.00 and additional Pakistani Rs. 6845.00 for postage. In terms of U.S. Dollars it is 165.00 including postage.

The other thing I mentioned during my discussion with Manzoor Ali Khan was that I was happy to see the Mazar of Quaid-i-Azam and Iqbal Academy Pakistan and

expressed my dismay at the pitiable condition of the Quaid-i-Azam Academy. I told Manzoor Ali Khan that Quaid-i-Azam Academy should be as big as Iqbal Academy Pakistan if not bigger. I told Manzoor Ali Khan that being a Joint Secretary of the Government of Pakistan he must be knowing how to convince government and fetch money for a noble cause and requested him to built up a gigantic infrastructure of the Quaid-i-Azam Academy during his tenure as Director of Quaid-i-Azam Academy which I believe an easy job for a bureaucrat but difficult for an academician. I persuaded him to do his part of the job and academicians will later accomplish their part of the job InshaAllah. Manzoor Ali Khan was very courteous and came down to the car porch to see me off.

Later I purchased a CD, a film on Quaid-i-Azam. The film "Jinnah - Akbar Ahmed Presents. A Dehlawi Films Production for Quaid Project Ltd.". It is a wonderful film and people should see it to refresh their memory.

I went to Islamic Research Academy Karachi at about 11.45 a.m. Prof. Ghafor Ahmad was there and he explained me the activities of the Academy. 12 persons work in the Academy. The Academy has its own two-storied building with floor space of 5400 square meters each floor. The Academy has a book selling center. The library of the Academy did not appear to me to have rich and varied collection of books. One of the drawbacks of the Academy is that it has no research fellow.

I went to meet the great humanitarian activist Abdul Sattar Edhi who has dedicated his whole life for the service of mankind at 12.30 p.m. I visited the Mental Hospital run by A. Sattar Edhi Foundation. The Hospital has a capacity to accommodate 200 indoor patients. A. Sattar Edhi Foundation has also established an air-condition mortuary, I was amazed to see, with the capacity to keep 250 dead bodies. Since Abdul Sattar Edhi was not in the Mental Hospital. I therefore rushed to the Karachi office of the A. Sattar Edhi Foundation. He was not there either and was busy with the journalist in another office of the Foundation. I talked to Muhammad Belal, in charge of the Karachi office of the A. Sattar Edhi Foundation. He wanted to take me to Abdul Sattar Edhi, but as I had a scheduled appointment I could not afford to wait further and requested Muhammad Belal to convey my message to Abdul Sattar Edhi that the people of Bangladesh loves him and need his leadership for philanthropic activities and requested Muhammad Belal to tell Abdul Sattar Edhi to open branch of A. Sattar Edhi Foundation in Bangladesh. People of Bangladesh are ready to extend him all assistances including financial assistance by the resourceful persons. Muhammad Belal presented me the autobiography of Abdul Sattar Edhi - 'A Mirror to the Blind'.

I went to meet Zaigham Mahmood Rizvi, Advisor of the State Bank of Pakistan at 1.30 p.m. It was decided that I shall take only tea at his residence. While on the way to his house he phoned Protocol Officer Brother Muhammad Raziuddin Khaled Mehanti to inform that we have to take lunch at his residence and on arrival he took two of us directly to the dinning table. Respected Bhavi within very short time prepared delicious lunch for us. During the lunch we discussed situation in our

countries. Protocol Officer Brother Muhammad Raziuddin Khaled Mehanti had some problem with House Building Finance Corporation of which Zaigham Mahmood Rizvi is the Chairman. On my request to help Brother Muhammad Raziuddin Khaled Mehanti in every possible way if admissible under rules Zaigham Mahmood Rizvi solved the problem of loan rescheduling of Brother Muhammad Raziuddin Khaled Mehanti to his entire satisfaction.

Zaigham Mahmood Rizvi presented me a splendid book on calligraphy of ninety-nine name of Allah. The title of the book 'To God Belongs The Names Most Beautiful' authored by writer and painter Neyyar Ehsan Rashid and published jointly by Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University Islamabad and Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University Washington DC. The book costs U.S. Dollar 99.00. This is one of the good works our brothers in Pakistan have done. I promised to Brother Zaigham Mahmood Rizvi to make possible use of the book in Bangladesh. I presented him the Journal of the Bangladesh Institute of Islamic Thought.

Then I went to the Karachi Press Club with Saeed Usmani, an eminent journalist of Karachi about whom I have discussed earlier and reached there at 5.00 p.m. and stayed there until 6.30 p.m. There I met several senior journalists. We talked about the training of the junior journalists, the relations between senior and junior journalists, freedom of press, government interference or advice to the press on the publication of news and opinions and restrictions on the distribution of state distributed advertisement on newspapers opposed to the establishment. The senior journalists of Karachi are very much skeptical about taking any help from the government and any industrial group for the fear that they might lose their freedom. These journalists want to keep their head up.

At the end of our discussion Yusuf Khan of the Nawa-i-Waqt Group of Newspapers informed me that the grandchildren of H.S. Suhrawardy who are settled in Karachi and some of them often visit Bangladesh to meet their old acquaintances and after coming back to Pakistan meet the press in Karachi and tell that the people of Bangladesh wants to join Pakistan. He wanted my comments. I said that these people must be crazy. I told Yusuf Khan not to give ear to such bull story. I told him that the people of Bangladesh who faced the atrocity of the Pakistan army are still alive and that memory is still fresh. Our young generation is very proud of Bangladesh and they are fully alive of what happened in 1971. Awami League which spearheaded the liberation war is very much active to keep the memory of 1971 fresh in the mind of our youths. Even geo-political reality does not support the proposition of such union.

Yusuf Khan then said that they have realized that they have committed excess in 1971. 'We want to apologize. What should be the language of apology, can you write down', he asked me. I said to Yusuf Khan that Pakistan should get such a text approved by the Government of Bangladesh through diplomatic channel. I told Yusuf Khan that approving the text by the Government of Bangladesh will be enough

if Awami League is in power at that time in Bangladesh otherwise you should get the text also approved by Awami League and its leader Sheikh Hasian if you really want to burry the past and improve relations between two brotherly Muslim countries. Sheikh Hasina, the proud daughter of Bangladesh architect Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will not agree to anything less then apology acceptable to her and Awami League. I told Yusuf Khan, seeking apology by Pakistan for committing excess in 1971 is important for we must not bear the burden of another generation and this is the international norm. I told that the Parliament of Pakistan should adopt the resolution earlier approved by Bangladesh. But before tabling the resolution in the Parliament, the President of Pakistan should make a solemn statement in the Parliament regretting what happened in 1971 and after passing the resolution the Members of the Parliament should stand up to observe one minute silence to show their respect for the heroes and martyrs of Bangladesh War of Liberation.

The last thing I tried to do before leaving Karachi is to contact by telephone M. Yaqoob Tabani and A. Rouf Tabani, owners of Tabani Group of Companies to call on them and pay my respect to them for the hospitality shown to me by them during my stay in Islamabad. But I could not contact them despite several attempts. On returning to Bangladesh I send them an email expressing my thanks and appreciation through my niece Hasnain Sabih Nayak.

I also made a farewell call on Brother Muhammad Husain Mehanti to pay my regards and thanked him for the wonderful arrangements made to make my stay and movement in Karachi comfortable. He presented me a film on Moulana Mawdudi. Protocol Officer Brother Muhammad Raziuddin Khaled Mehanti presented me 5 kg sweet mango of Pakistan. In the early morning of 18 July I left Karachi for Dhaka by PIA.

In the PIA Flight in the hindsight I was contemplating what is the lesson my visit of Pakistan. One of the realizations of visiting Pakistan and mixing with the Islamists is that they don't give value to time. Although sunrises at 5.30 a.m. and sets at 8.30 p.m. these days, nobody is prepared to utilize the long day time effectively. They start their work mostly at 11.00 a.m. The other thing they have not as yet accustomed is to keep words no matter whether he is junior or senior. This happened many times. Sometimes they will give commitment which might be misleading, can be interpreted this way or the other. The most important think is that they keep people waiting and then do not turn up but never regrets.

The other most important thing is that they are not prepared to listen to facts which are different then their previously held views and happy to find faults of others and not ready to find out their own faults.

It appears from their apparent behavior that they are not prepared to evaluate their past activities, not ready to tolerate criticism of their leaders for adopting certain strategy or their failure in some matters and have totally failed to strike a balance between following leaders (u lil amr) and blind following (taqlid) and to make a

sharp distinction between proud behavior and remaining upright. They have not taken lesson that we may be critical on every matter and can debate on everything except the *dhat* of Allah.

It appeared from my interaction that the Islamists formulate their policy based on negative reaction of individuals or groups but Islamists response should be based on policy planning built on positive elements.

Prepared from notes on 14 August 2008