



MOONGLADE

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[ed.english@hilal.gov.pk](mailto:ed.english@hilal.gov.pk)  
+92 51 9271617

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# Dedicated

To those parents and grandparents who infused in their young ones the spirit of sacrifice, sense of responsibility, call of duty and love of Motherland. The institution in them motivated hundreds and thousands of youth to join the armed forces, many would return *ghazis*, many in flag-wrapped coffins, and many with chests glittering with gallantary medals.



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# Foreword

Freedom is not for free; has a cost and lies in being strong. Only the brave ensure it; the world does recognize that the Pakistanis are a nation of extraordinary courage, resilience and commitment.

We the Pakistanis have passed through enormous challenges from achievement to the defence of our freedom. We are fighting world's toughest war against terrorism, have fought three wars imposed by the enemy, have succeeded in securing the position of robust nuclear weapon state and completed 71 years as an independent state to the utter disbelief of adversaries who were of the view that Pakistan would not last for even half-a-decade. Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa, while unfurling the 400-foot large Pakistan flag at Wagha on August 14 last year, gave a loud and clear message to the world that "Pakistan has come to exist, forever".

Down there are the sacrifices offered by thousands of Pakistanis including men/women in uniform as well as those who are not. The nation owes them due recognition and respect, reverence and remembrance. "Moonglade" in your hands is a compilation of those epoch making stories, of only few of them, which were published, from time to time, in the *Hilal English* magazine of Pakistan Armed Forces. The idea is to gather the epic stories of our heroes and martyrs at one place, though just one compilation cannot suffice. We'll have more in coming years. These stories encompass different shades and phases of our war against terror i.e. the time when there were upheavals in our country, then consequent decision to root out the terrorism and lastly the feelings once the nation prevailed and defeated the terrorism.

This book presents the galaxy of not only men in uniform but also our heroes from citizens, minority communities, intelligence and law enforcement agencies. They laid down their lives, shoulder to shoulder fighting, in the war against terrorism. “We have rendered countless sacrifices – we would never forget our martyrs,” the book partly fulfils the promise made by the Chief of Army Staff. “I want to tell our enemies, whether in the east or west, that your bullets will get short but not our resolve. The blood of martyrs – be they on borders or elsewhere – has paid off...and shall never go waste.”

Now that our resilient and peace loving nation has gained strength and confidence to protect its sovereignty and solidarity, though a lot has to be done, it is time to unite further, shun hatred and counter radicalizing minds in our midst, and by raising our stature in terms of socio-economic prowess and by setting out goals towards acquiring more knowledge and competency. I am sure with this strong base available, thanks to the sacrifices of our *Shuhada* and *Ghazis*, we shall overcome every challenge coming our way.

My special thanks to Angela Shearer, the celebrated author of South Africa, for writing “Preface” of this book. Being in the know of Pakistan contingents’ selfless contributions in the UN peacekeeping missions abroad, her precious contribution is recognition beyond continents. I also acknowledge the efforts of the team in making this book possible.

Long Live Pakistan!

**Major General Asif Ghafoor**  
Director General  
Inter Services Public Relations  
General Headquarters, Rawalpindi  
March 23, 2018

# Preface

I have learned that not being able to understand the language of another does not stop us from understanding the music that emanates from the chords they strike with their actions. To know someone, we need only know what disgusts them and how hard they will fight to right a wrong. To trust someone, we need only know what they are capable of when they hold great power. To respect someone, we need only know that they respect us too.

We are coached by our communities and institutions to be clinical in our thinking, to admire title over guts, position over honor and money over integrity. We say one thing and do another in the name of self-preservation, divided between the two faces that we wear on any given day. We live in fear, imprisoned by moral and social contracts that we loathe and judge, yet we adhere to them even though we know they lack foundation. In every moment that we restrain the free play of our own powers we become more and more removed from our humanity and wisdom.

No matter who we are or where we live in the world, man, woman or child, we all understand love, passion and hope. The flip side is also true. We all know that hatred, pain, shame and fear are not reserved for one gender, one generation, one race or one nation. These are human feelings that belong to all of us in a variety of heights and rhythms.

Through pain we either break or grow, through loss we either cling too hard or we learn the value in letting go and it's through fear that we either rise and fight back or grovel at the feet of our self-appointed lords.

Any child will tell you that they don't need to be able to see the monster to know that it's there. Sometimes, as we get older and become more corrupt in our thinking, the hand that reaches for us at night from under the bed becomes our own.

In a cowardly manner we remain locked in a permanent contradiction between our dreams and the dead bureaucracies and vain façades of our species and it is in the silence of this paradox where we lose all sweetness in life and contact with our deepest, most primal, self. In short, it is here that we lose direction and with it, our true purpose and power. At every turn we suppress and restrain our excitement, passion and glee, losing more and more of ourselves to distraction, cynicism, medication and hostile competition.

Those who come through the halls and citadels of this conflicting hell and piece themselves back together, one shattered shard at a time, are the ones who eventually break free and make a difference. They build their own opinions and define their own principles and values, chasing a purpose, they become the heroes and martyrs who set the rest of us free from our self-imposed restraints.

This book is about those winners; the selfless warriors who make the most impossible sacrifices to resuscitate a sense of joy and promise in everyone else. They remind us that we too can make a difference if we'd just throw down the gauntlet and stand for something.

Heroes and martyrs teach us the difference between giving up and knowing when we've lost. Most times we just give up before we even start. May the stories in this book teach us how to stand in our own sun again, live on our own terms and start to truly think for ourselves.

May it inspire those who hold it. May they speak up against aggression and suppression, withhold praise and honor from those who don't deserve it, and may they fight fiercely with their hearts and minds with a universal clarity that is bigger than any vendetta, religion or political agenda.

May this book fly high and far.

**Angela Shearer**  
Johannesburg



# Prologue

That tall brown-skinned man was sitting on a mountain top. Lost in deep thoughts his eyes were fixed on the city below where millions lived on the bosom-land of their ancestors. An all-time wanderer, that man once began his journey in search of truth, beauty and 'life' itself. He moved from place to place and to distant lands, lived in the 'time' and endured the pain of 'knowing'. For years he lived in silence and isolation – an attribute of wisdom that only a few taste in life. In search of the absolute, he finally found out that: ideals define the living but people embody the life, too. Life which supposedly is governed by the unbending rules is also under continuous evolution, change and uncertainty. This clash, conflict and contradiction between the norm and the new put things mostly in grey than black-and-white. In this chaos lived the power of creation as static was stagnant. The challenge was opportunity, the pain was pleasure and the loss was gain.

*The man has the power to give meaning to all known and unknown phenomena.*

He lived to know that pursuit of passion was to lead to troubled waters, but also found out that blind alleys often lead to hitherto unfound lands, too. Passion and courage combined are the essence of living never matched by mere counting of the days and years. It is beyond human dignity and ego to permanently live in fear. The living being have the option of *free will* to endeavour and conquer the fear; the fear of unknown and the fear of death. *Free will* and courage together shape new realities, construct new worlds, and the faculty of human creation is the essence of divine creation. He also came to know that the courage, bravery and the will to suffer and sacrifice were deep-rooted emotions to expose to the ordinary.

On the surface these can be taught and inculcated, like soldiers doing it for duty and comradeship, but the enduring courage is more an act of 'knowing' and conviction than intrinsic impulses.

*Too powerful are those soldiers who personify the cause and willingly choose death over life!*

The 'knowing' phenomenon leads to the world where 'self' loses the meaning. The 'knowing man' transcends the life, stops fearing the unseen and traverses the valleys of death with absolute willingness. For there is no death to Nature and man becomes the guardian rather than a meek tool of the Nature itself. Such men of integrity and character remain committed to the purpose and the assigned missions. They march on with a head high, face the challenges of life-and-death and nothing deters them; neither the foes' might nor is there scarcity of resources! They move forward amidst voices of disbelief and timidity, and bear the brunt with fortitude. They fight with valour, die smilingly and win gracefully. The foes must know the potential of such a body of men before testing their resolve. For fear the men who have nothing to lose, as loss is more a matter of perception than reality for the men of courage and will!

The wandering man also learnt that justice, merit and equality are the best methods to tread the life of men and societies. The land itself has no value to be counted, but the average happiness of the men living on it with fair opportunities to exploit their true potentials. There is always a need to work for bettering the lives of people. The 'land' bears the character of a mother that always endeavours to feed well, clothe well and shelter with a sense of dignity and belonging. While traversing the city and town dwellings, the wandering man did notice the demagogues who clamour for such dreams. Many have not the will nor have the dedication to achieve such goals for others except raising their own value in the bargain. Few did fan the romanticism for nothing else but to break the will of the people to defend the land of their ancestors. They camouflaged the seeds of anarchy with aspirations of freedom



and liberty; stability and order was criticised for the expression of sham. Notwithstanding the power of idealism in matters of wealth and opportunity, the wandering man also tasted the power of love.

*Love transcends the logic of gain!*

The love of a mother does not depend on the beauty of her child, and a child's love for the mother is not dependent upon the wealth of the latter. Their love is an act of Nature and does not count on cold logic of give-and-take. Love is such an ecstatic intoxication that conquers fear of death and loss. Those who love the land of their ancestors, call it mother-land; are actually the proponents of the love that knows no bounds. This abode called 'motherland' is their identity, pride and ego. Once the motherland is in danger, her sons respond with no care for the foes' size of armies nor their wealth and arrogance of power.

*The men of courage stand firm, die in glory and live with honour.*

To fight and die for the motherland against a foreign aggressor is a perfectly rational and enlightened choice. No justification on any pretext should wink from this esteemed responsibility. As long as the sovereign Motherland exists, there remains the hope to resolve internal discord.

*Once Motherland is lost, all is lost!*

The wandering man on the mountain top suddenly shuddered. He had reached a decision. He descended the top and went down to kinsmen. He spoke to the crowds with absolute humility and sincerity. The poor common folks in the streets responded to his call with cheers, slogans and pledges. These deprived yet uncomplaining men were worth gold who refused the intimidations by the foe. These men of courage were the pride of the land they lived in. They were absolutely rational in their response but the very rationale asked them to stand up, forget the differences, and choose 'death' instead of

humiliation by the foe. They were ready for a long-drawn struggle, hunger and strife! They all marched on together being men of courage and glory. They had made their choice.

*The choice was 'Motherland'.*

**Tahir Mehmood**

# Sacrifices of a Few; and Many

**Lt Gen Masood Aslam (R)**

*And don't call them 'Dead' who die in the cause of Allah, they are Alive only you can't understand.*

(Surah Al Baqarah - 2:154)

It is so painful to relive the period when during my command of approximately three years, we lost close to 1,500 men and officers from the Army, and the Frontier Corps alone. It was therefore very difficult for me to motivate myself to pen down some of those unforgettable memories of the acts of valour and sacrifices of our brave young men in uniform – the stories which remained hidden to a large portion of our nation. Losing even a single soldier in the battle is not easy for a commander but it's the faith in the cause that overtakes the concern for security, and achievement of the objective becomes supreme. Great nations remain indebted to these martyrs ever, and never hesitate in honouring their sacrifices. It is impossible to do justice with all these *Shuhada*, what to talk of those who lost their limbs, or those who returned as *Ghazis*.

The security situation in FATA and KPK in 2007 is difficult to comprehend, especially when one sees such relative peace and security prevailing in the country today. This peace has not been achieved easily. Hundreds of young men in uniform under 25 years of age happily embraced death for the future of the country (not undermining the sacrifices of our civilians as well as senior men in uniform. Pakistan Army is probably the only military where our *Shuhada* include senior officers of the rank of Generals to a Sepoy). I am trying to share memories of some sacrifices, which may be an eye opener for many.

Dera Ismail Khan is a small town on the bank of Indus River in Southern KPK. Its close proximity to South Waziristan makes it a sensitive Divisional Headquarters. Two young boys, namely Atif Qayuum and Zeeshan, grew up studying and playing together in this town. Besides being classfellows and good friends, they were always striving to be better than the other. After intermediate, both decided to join the army and then were commissioned from the same course in Infantry. Atif joined 28 Sindh Regiment, while Zeeshan was commissioned in 41 Baloch Regiment. Atif's unit was the first to move into Swat in July 2007. His unit was tasked to secure the Najia Top height on the night of November 24-25.

This young officer with less than two years of service was the leading platoon commander and despite the most arduous ridgeline led his platoon through pitch dark night to the hill top. The feature is named "*Asmani Sar*" but Fazlullah had named it as Najia Top (it is the highest feature in the west of River Swat dominating the entire valley including *Kabbal*, *Kanju* town and *Saidu* airport). The top was held strongly by the terrorists who had prepared proper weapon positions. Despite stiff resistance Lt Atif ably led his men to the objective. He destroyed three of the terrorists' bunkers and was in the process of clearing the last bunker when got hit by a number of machine gun bursts from the flank. Though he continued with the assault and cleared the last bunker, he fell down and breathed his last. When his troops picked him up, he had received dozens of bullets and his hand was still stuck on the trigger while the barrel of his SMG and hand had also been hit by the hail of bullets. It was the indomitable courage and resolve of Lt Atif *Shaheed* that the whole formation operation succeeded.

Reportedly, when Lt Zeeshan attended his burial, he said, "O' my friend, we have always been in touch for almost two decades and I never accepted losing to you but today you have outshone me in the actual test". However, destiny plays its own games; Zeeshan's unit was moved into North Waziristan within next year. As the army had greater priorities in clearing

Swat and handling the *Mehsud* threat, the environment in North Waziristan was to be managed politically. This was to the dismay of a large number of youngsters and officers like Lt Zeeshan. Once clearance of Swat had been achieved to a great extent, *formation* in *Miranshah* was tasked to clear off the area between *Gharlamai* and *Alwara Mandi* (the area of Hafiz Gul Bahadur, the Taliban commander in NWA). This was the opportunity which Zeeshan had been looking for since long.

He volunteered for the most difficult task of establishing a blocking position to deny any reinforcements from other areas as well as acting as an anvil for the unit to destroy them completely. He accomplished his mission but under repeated attacks by the terrorists to link up with their bottled up colleagues, he also received serious injuries. He stuck on to his position but by the time the unit was able to link up with his position, he could not survive the excessive bleeding and met his Maker. Thus in less than a year and a half of Lt Atif's *shahadat*, Lt Zeeshan lived up to his promise and sacrificed his life to join his bosom friend in *Jannah* creating a unique history of sacrifice by two childhood friends.

I shall now very briefly allude to a few more officers whom I feel need to be mentioned at least. One rarely sees youngsters like Capt Maeraj *Shaheed*, Sword of Honour from PMA, Armoured Corps officer who came on attachment with FC but volunteered to continue and was made commander of the SOG (Special Operation Group). During May-June 2009 while moving as reserve, he heard of his troops being stuck in *Ambeyla Pass* (known as a graveyard of attacking troops) and rushed forward with his small number of available troops. During broad daylight he used an extremely difficult approach to reach the terrorist bunker and destroyed it. In the process he was badly wounded and couldn't survive the injuries. I also recall Maj Zubair of 22 Punjab, while sitting in Mingora in August 2009. The Valley is peaceful and the entire TDPs have returned to their homes. Suddenly a report of some terrorists hiding in the outskirts of the city is received. Maj Zubair, with the available Quick Reaction Force (QRF), rushes towards Nawankilli.

On reaching the site he finds out that some terrorists had taken refuge in a small house. They surround the house and ask the terrorists to surrender but no one comes out. In order to ward off any chances of innocent casualties, Maj Zubair decides to storm the house rather than blowing it up. He decides to lead the charge, and breaks through the front door. He was met by a hail of bullets but kept rushing forward. Seeing this the terrorist blew up his suicidal vest and Zubair took the entire blast. His troops tried to move ahead but the officer had protected his entire team and saved the citizens of Mingora from a suicide bomber. Zubair *Shaheed* was blessed with a son a few months after his *shahadat*. Despite knowing his wife's condition, the officer never hesitated in leading from the front. To him the country and his men came first while his family and self later.

Similarly, there are streams of images flowing in front of my eyes but to wind it up, however, I would very briefly mention the valour and indomitable courage displayed by numerous other individuals. The *Shuhada* have written sagas of insurmountable courage, resolve and valour to sacrifice the last ounce of their blood, yet the *Ghazis* especially those being severely wounded need a mention, too. Today when I see Major General Zahid commanding a *Division* running around with an artificial leg, I am reminded of Lt Col Zahid commanding 63 FF Regiment in Bajaur leading his men through a myriad of obstacles, mines and defence works securing one objective after the other. In one such encounter, he had a mishap of stepping on an IED, blowing off his leg. Nothing deterred them from moving forward and clearing their objectives.

I can go on but unfortunately will still miss many.

To sum up, I would like to highlight that it wasn't the young officers only but a large number of NCOs, JCOs and senior officers who made exemplary contributions. Gen Javed Sultan *Shaheed* didn't have to fly in bad weather and visit a company position soon after the ceasefire in *Operation Tri Star*. Brig Hussain Abbas *Shaheed* decided to lead a platoon deep inside

*Tirah Valley* to rescue the crew of a *Cobra* helicopter as the challenge was too big to be left to a subaltern. Similarly, Maj Karim of 30 FF, the Wing Commander of *Ladha Fort*, and the way he defended a totally cut-off fort deep inside the *Mehsud* territory for more than a month, has been etched into my mind. I really am at a loss on how to bring an end to my sojourn in history but would like to first pay homage to hundreds of thousands of those brave men of army and FC who served under me during the most challenging times of our history in KPK and FATA.

I have no words to offer accolades to each one of the unsung heroes – from the junior most soldiers to General Officers – who displayed exemplary courage, grit, sense of responsibility and patriotism in performance of their duties beyond the call of duty. I would be amiss if I do not recognize the services of KPK Police and Frontier Constabulary in bringing normalcy to the province and the Frontier Regions. Though there were numerous incidents of the policemen even stopping the suicide bomber by embracing sure death, yet one person, IGP Safwat Ghayyur, has to be mentioned in golden letters. This brave policeman came as the CCPO when the terrorists had made life difficult for the citizens of Peshawar. Despite serious handicaps of equipment and training he infused a new life in this force by his personal example. With close coordination of the Corps Headquarters, soon the entire *Ring Road*, *Badaber* and *Karkhana* area were totally secured. On being promoted as IG Frontier Constabulary he worked tirelessly to reorganize and motivate the entire force. He was in the forefront in clearing *Darra Adam Khel* with his FC undertaking joint operations with the Army troops. He was specially targeted by the terrorists with an inside support; he attained martyrdom through a suicidal attack just outside his office.

December is round the corner and it brings with it the pain and reminder of the sacrifices of scores of our innocent youth who also became unwitting victims of these beasts known as terrorists. The incident of Parade Lane Mosque of December 4, 2009 took away from us around 40 military personnel and their wards who had gone to the mosque to offer Friday

prayers. They included 17 children of ages between 7 to 21 years, taking with them not only the hopes and aspirations of their parents but also the hope of the nation. Since it involves a personal loss of my only son Hashim, I would only speak of the loss of Ali, the only son of Col Qaiser or Waleed, son of Brig Mumtaz or sons of Col Shukran, Brig Sadiq, Col Durrani and many others. Five of these youngsters were *Hafiz-e-Quran*.

The silent questions of the mothers and sisters of these *Shuhada* remain unanswered as the nation has forgotten to even make a passing reference of their tragedy. Besides these young boys, even serving individuals and their fathers embraced *shahadat*. I want to specially mention the *shahadat* of Maj Sohaib whose only child was a disabled handicapped daughter, who through her own determination and resolve of her mother has completed her PhD – a fact not known to many. The daughter of the *Shaheed* needs support and recognition to lead an honourable life and support her mother.

This remembrance will be incomplete without mention of the most barbaric and tragic incident of APS Peshawar. Though the incident helped in forging a consensus across the board in the nation, yet the callousness and dastardly act of targeting hundreds of young kids of our nation needs to be condemned widely. The loss of over 130 budding youth can never be recovered. I would like to pay my sincere homage to the *Shuhada* of Parade Lane and APS Peshawar, and offer my heartfelt condolences to the parents and families of those innocent kids. While paying homage to all these *Shuhada* I would like to remember the sacrifices of over 70 thousand of our innocent Pakistanis. It's time to show our resolve that we shall not hesitate from giving any sacrifice to preserve peace and stability of our homeland. At the same time, I shall like to express my gratitude to the families of our heroes for their ultimate sacrifice for the country. May Allah bless their homes with greater peace of mind and heart and grant blessings in abundance to the *Shuhada*. *Ameen*



# Times That Try Our Men

**Ghazi Salahuddin**

Fortunately, we have evidence that the entire nation has come together and the national leadership has braced itself to resolutely confront not only the terrorists but also their sympathizers and apologists. In fact, the stage for this undertaking had already been set by the operation *Zarb-e-Azb*. It has been noted by the observers that the Peshawar APS tragedy is a kind of confirmation of the gains that the army operation in North Waziristan has made. It shows that the terrorists are under great pressure. It was visibly an act of utter desperation.

We have buried our schoolchildren and they have become seeds. Now the challenge for us is to nurture those seeds into a garden of peace. And this task is as sacred as the barbarism of the terrorists was satanic.

Meanwhile, though, we have to come to terms with a trauma that will stand out in the annals of crimes against humanity in the world history. Time, they say, heals the wounds. But in this initial period, every passing day after that ignominious sixteenth of December has deepened our pain and our sorrow. The more you learn about the details of the beastly act, the more incomprehensible it becomes. We are numbed with shock.

It is hard to imagine the loss that the parents, families and friends of more than one hundred and thirty-four students and sixteen members of the staff of the Army Public School and others in Peshawar have suffered. Hundreds of students who were trapped in the premises and who witnessed the killings

have been wounded psychologically and need professional care.

At the same time, this heartrending tragedy has touched us all across the entire country. We have all, in a sense, died a little. We have also seen how the rest of the world has grieved with us. “It’s a dark day for humanity”, said British Prime Minister David Cameron.

That something like this has happened in Pakistan has its own significance. Since it has come in the wake of other gory exploits of the terrorists in recent years, questions would naturally arise as to why this drift had not been effectively checked a long time ago. After all, Pakistan has almost been pushed to the edge of the precipice in a dire security environment that embraces global and regional exigencies. There have been additional specific reasons for the growth of militancy and religious extremism in the country.

Against this backdrop, the Peshawar tragedy has the potential of becoming the catalyst for a paradigm shift in our national security and social development policies. It is a moment that has to be seized by our civilian and military leaderships. We may be reminded of what Shakespeare said about a tide in the affairs of men that “when taken at the flood, leads on to fortune”.

But this also means that the battle against the terrorists has arrived at a point where a decisive and conclusive strategy is required to finally mop up the debris of the past and build a new structure that had been visualized by our founding fathers. In the light of the Quaid’s vision, we have to reinvent Pakistan. The sixteenth of December is a date that has a flaming reference to a catastrophic turn of events in our history largely because of the disconnect between our people and the leadership.

On this date in the year 2014, the dynamics have been different. In a metaphorical sense, this was an attack on the very existence of Pakistan and, for once, the people have no

confusion about who the enemy is. This does not, however, mean that it would be easy to defeat this enemy and to eliminate it completely from within our ranks. We must also understand that it is a war that will also be fought in the minds of people.

So, while we feel assured by the united resolve of the nation to finally eliminate all terrorists and traces of terrorism from Pakistan, an evidence of which was readily available on the part of both the civilian and military leaderships, a lot of soul-searching is essential. We did have an important clarification when the leadership vowed to go after all terrorists without any distinction between the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ Taliban.

But the big question remains: how did we arrive at this diabolical turn of events? This, to be sure, is a very problematic issue. This is not the occasion to go over the history of how we were pushed into this blind alley. What is urgent, however, is to find the strength and an intellectual tenacity to make a new beginning in the light of what we can learn from our experience.

Personally, I feel comforted by some recent indications that the national sense of direction in this regard is being carefully modified, with particular reference to the moves made by the army. In the first place, the launching of *Zarb-e-Azb* in itself indicated a clear and more stringent policy. Its successes became a vindication of the initiative that must have been taken after careful deliberation.

However, I would specifically like to refer to a statement the then Chief of Army Staff, Gen Raheel Sharif, made in Karachi only twelve days before the terrorist attack on Peshawar’s Army Public School. He said that Pakistan’s current “enemy lives within us and looks like us”, and elaborated that “the security does not refer only to external threats but is a concern in terms of politics, human rights, economy, water security, terrorism and insurgency.”

We need to ponder about this formulation in the light of the

latest developments. An obvious inference is that military action is no substitute for political process. This also means that the civil and military institutions must work together and in harmony to pursue the national security that is defined in a wider context. Essentially, the goal is to create a social order that fosters development in all its dimensions and ensure national security in its true spirit.

We are in a state of war but we may still have some moments to reflect on the root causes of terrorism and where it was that we, in a collective sense, made decisions that did not eventually serve our national interest. It should be possible to identify some lapses that have led to disasters. However, now that we are making a new beginning, we need to set our goals that conform to the original promise of Pakistan.

The enemy that lives within us and looks like us cannot be easily defeated. Let me conclude with this Thomas Paine's quotation: *"These are times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shirk from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of men and women."*

# I Shall Fight in Your Name Dear One

An open letter to the Martyrs of Peshawar

Feryal Ali Gauhar

*The sun is soon to rise as bright,  
As if the night had brought no sorrow,  
That grief belonged to me alone,  
The sun shines on a common morrow.*

*You must not shut the night inside you,  
But endlessly in light the dark immerses,  
A tiny lamp has gone out in my tent –  
I bless the flame that warms the universe.*

Frederick Rückbert,  
*Songs on the Death of Children* (1833-34)

**Dear One,**

Many years ago, when I had gotten used to absences, I realized that the numbness of the heart was only the mist passing over the lightless homes of this silent city at night. While I slept, the state of absence had quietly carved a cavernous hole in my heart, a raw wound, much like those that marked your beautiful body when life was taken from you, brutally, mindlessly, without purpose.

Since you left, that wound has grown so much larger that there is no heart any more – in its place there is nothing but your absence, dear one, an absence so powerful that it keeps

me up at night, etched into my eyelids, carved into my memory, bleeding into my resolve to carry on without you. You, my dear one, have taken me with you, and all that remains now is an empty shell, a hollow vessel where only your voice resounds, shaking the fibre of my being when I remember each inflection of your language, each vowel and consonant that formed words of love from your mouth.

What did you do, dear one, to be taken away like this, mercilessly, so much before your time? It was time for us to go, those who failed you, those who failed to see that the enemy was amongst us, those who saw the enemy and did not recognize its insidious intent. It was your time to blossom, to flower, to dream your dreams in your waking hours, becoming the capable person who would make us proud. What did you do, dear one, to suffer this terrible travesty?

What were your last thoughts, dear one, when you confronted the enemy? What went through that beautiful mind of yours when the enemy showered you with a hail of deadly bullets? Did you even have time to understand what was happening? Did you think of calling out, to call us to come, quickly, before it was too late? Was there time for that? Or did it all happen in a flash, a moment which defined the all too indelible difference between life and death? Dear One, speak to me, tell me your last thoughts, tell me that you did not feel the bullet piercing your flesh, that the pain did not invade the unbruised parts of your young body.

It is your eyes that I shall never forget, the bright light of your soul spreading itself like sunshine through the golden orb of your eyes. Tell me, dear one, what did you see, before that moment when that light faded from your golden eyes, that moment when life passed out of your fragile body, your soul wafting upwards to a safe place from where you would watch us mourn for you, grieving inconsolably, angry that this should have happened, that life should have abandoned you just when you were at its threshold.

What did your golden eyes see, dear one? Did you see in

their eyes the hatred that is but a manifestation of fear, burning like live coals in hollow sockets where the life had already been snuffed out by ideologues of odium? Did you see the madness that comes from dangerous manipulation, predicated on perceptions of deprivation? Did you see the glory that your enemy coveted, that perverse dream that has been offered as incentive for the heinous crime that was to be committed, transporting not the victim but the perpetrator to some notion of a heavenly after-life? Did you see death in the deep recess of his chest, a mere hole where a heart should have been? What did you see, dear one?

Tell us of the horror you faced when you peered into the abyss of the enemy's eyes, dear one. Tell us of the distortions which marked his mind like a cancerous skin enveloping all in its diseased folds. Tell us of the curl of his lips, the snarl of his mouth as he spat the order to destroy all that was beautiful, all that was precious, you, dear one, and all the others who shared your ordeal, huddled together for safety, grasping a hand which may pull one towards the light, towards life, hunched over in death, together for one last time.

I search the silence for your voice, your words, and I hear nothing but my own, a dirge, a lament for your young life cut short so brutally. I hear my own thoughts flooding my mind relentlessly, my own fears, my own fragility poised to take away what I have wanted to believe in: the goodness of humans, the triumph of good over evil. I want to scream out at this void created by your absence – I want to tear up the façade of civility, I want to go on a rampage, hurting, harming all that comes in my way. For where is the justice, where is the purpose of so much senseless killing, dear one? Who shall avenge your murder, who shall fight back, who shall banish this monster to that land of frozen hearts where it was given birth, more than three decades ago?

Dear One, here is something I have not shared with many. I tell you this because I know you shall want to know why it is that you and your colleagues in their green woolen blazers were covered in each other's blood on that cold floor of your

school auditorium. Many, many years ago, when I was a little older than the age at which you passed from this life into another world, I saw the bodies alongside the road of a city many miles away from the borders of our homeland.

I saw the tanks rolling down those rutted roads and I shuddered at the thought of what was to come: the unfolding of an agenda which would envelop us in its dangerous design, building on notions of power which were disguised in the garb of religiosity. Today, that agenda has become a part of the fabric of the shroud which covers us all, burying us in its evil intent. Today, that horribly disfigured notion of religiosity has become a part of our landscape where people kill each other with impunity, where brother is pitted against brother, where those who subscribe to another set of beliefs are burnt to death or executed or blown up with bombs.

Dear One, you were the latest in the long list of martyrs who have been felled in the path of this dragon which destroys everything we have known: this is a creature which does not know music, it does not hear the rhythm of the seasons nor listen to bird song, to the laughter of children playing on a dirt floor. This is a creature constructed out of greed and fed on fear, nurtured on a repast of promised riches in an afterlife where all that was not theirs in this world would be theirs to claim in the next. This is a beast which does not even know its master for there are many who feed it, with the intent to destroy all that is good and worthy. This is a creation of minds who hide behind secret veils, clothing themselves in the garb of civilization. This is an enemy who was created to vanquish one and conquer another. And you, dear one, are but one of the thousands who were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

This is a creature which has burned to death, summarily executed, blown up into lifeless pieces of dismembered flesh, thousands of others, young and old, women and men, children and the aged. This is an enemy which knows no mercy, no reason, nor no humanity. It is a beast bereft of sanity, of sensitivity, of the sensibility of all that is sacred: life itself. This monster has been armed with weapons that it brandishes in our faces, threatening all that we hold dear to us. It has been



clothed in the garments of perverse perception dictating its understanding of the faith, denouncing all those who do not follow its path, killing them as one would destroy a plague.

But, Dear One, it is this creature which has brought the plague, it is this monster which needs to be destroyed, and those who try to tell us otherwise need to be shown the face of hate in a mirror. Dear One, let me tell you that those who you have left behind are poised at the edge of a precipice where one false move can throw us over the edge. We, the living, must understand that there is a fine line between life and death – it is the line that you stood at on December 16. It is the line at which we, the living, stand, choosing between a life lived with passion and conviction, or a life that is akin to death, devoid of purpose and intent.

Dear One, I was not there to ensure that you crossed that line towards life, but I am here to ensure I remain firmly rooted in my conviction that in order to defeat this enemy we must replace the idea of destruction with the idea of creation. We must choose life over death, and unless we destroy the idea and the hatred it has engendered, we shall have to get used to many more absences, much as this one, dear one, which gnaws away at my insides, hurting me each time I remember your smile, your gentle touch, your smile, each time I see another young child preparing for another day, another chance at life.

I ask you, dear one, to judge me by the enemies I have made. For in this shall I find the courage to carry on with your absence firmly etched into my soul. In this resolve can we find the solace we long for. In this action can we heal the terrible suffering inflicted upon us. But it is a long journey ahead of us, dear one, one that is beyond the aerial strikes and the warfare. This is going to be a battle of minds more than a war of weapons, for it is the idea which feeds both life and death, and we must ensure that it is life we feed, not hatred nor death. For there are too many shrouds encasing the bodies of young citizens of my bleeding homeland; there are too many graves which mark the landscape of my anguished homeland. It is enough now, dear one: this is a promise I make to you.

# The Making of a Soldier

**Maj Gen Muhammad Khalid**

*'We created man in the best of form'*

(Al Quran)

Indeed, man was created in the best of form. The journey from birth till adult life is an arduous one where various factors mould, break or build the persona and leave an ever-impressionable legacy. Fortunate are those who come across sincere and worthy mentors or teachers. Thus, the epic journey from a clot to a tall and successful man is possible. This journey also unfolds tale of a momentous and deep-rooted affiliation that lasts for a life time. Cadets upon their entry in the Pakistan Military Academy (PMA), a training institute of the commendable repute, are honoured with the sobriquet of *Gentleman Cadet (GC)*.

The word 'Gentleman' is the ultimate honour for hard training, which embeds a certain kind of character in the soul that perseveres through thick and thin. This character eventually produces the finished state-of-the-art product called the 'Commissioned Officer'. During the entire process, a deep-rooted affiliation is developed between the GC and his training staff (Drill staff, Physical Training staff and Weapon Training staff). The journey of association starts with the reception at *Abbottabad Bus Stand, Havelian Railway Station* or the *PMA Gate*. This whirlwind tenure takes the GCs through various stages from initial briefing, kit issuance, holocaust of trendy hairstyles to the hardcore and strenuous military training and culminates with passing out parade at PMA's *Rafi Ullah Drill Square*.

A GC is an asset for the Army who leads a spartan life during his entire stay at PMA, marked by spotless personal appearance, proud participation in parades and ceremonies, high standard of military discipline and exposure to host of challenges. A purposeful, comprehensive and colossal effort is made from different quarters comprising a rare amalgam of diverse specialists to shape him into an officer. The process of transforming civilians into military personnel is a form of conditioning that encourages the GCs to partially submerge their individuality for the good of their unit. This conditioning is essential for military function because combat requires people to endure stress and perform actions that are simply absent in normal life. May that be an academic discipline, a tactical lesson, an athletic skill, some leadership training or a feature of character development, it must be taught, conducted or supervised by highly competent, devoted and inspiring staff.

In this transformation, one critical role is that of the Drill Instructors. Their task is very tricky and challenging as they are required to inculcate military discipline in the GCs who are physically feeble but mentally and academically surpassing the drill staff. Thus, the drill instructors work tenaciously from dawn till dusk with the highest level of motivation, exemplary standards of turnout, discipline and hearty investment of time and expertise. They are picked up from the entire Army by a very methodical and meticulous selection procedure for being not only the best in their respective fields but also a smart lot, endowed with impeccable discipline, fair and firm dealing with the GCs.

Allah Almighty has made man in natural harmony. Our regular gait comprises right hand's pendulous movement with the left foot and vice versa. This natural instinct is polished into a proud and graceful drill motion by the drill staff. They look towards the cadets as newborns into army life, thus, initial few weeks at PMA are dominated by heavy doses of drill to instill a respectable degree of smartness in the movements of GCs. They undoubtedly work very hard to harness the cadets with the new necessities of martial life like salute, drill and discipline.

Like a determined mother, they repeatedly teach each GC these norms till there is need for no more hammering. They achieve optimized results through display of professional excellence, personal involvement and above all by own exemplified conduct. It is always a treat to watch the Drill Staff marching up and down smartly, erect and correct with measured steps, correcting the basics of the drill movements of the cadets on parade.

As the saying goes, “There are three ways of doing a thing: the wrong way, the right way and the army way.” Therefore, at times the Drill Staff have to adopt the army’s doctrine of ‘corrective punishment’ to break in the GCs. These custodians of the GCs’ Office (place of assembly for punishment) are always waiting for the college boys and like a razor’s edge they refine them into glittering gems. Thus, the towering drill staff in their immaculate and starched uniform are always found sporting their burly moustache outside GCs’ Office. These punishments are proportional to the gravity of the offense and range from extra drill periods, reports in *Field Service Marching Order (FSMO)* kit to restrictions.

Then dawns the first hurdle that a GC must pass to prove his mettle and that rite of passage into the army life is known as the 'Saluting Test'. It is a test of the GC's marching and saluting capabilities as it has a lot of strings attached. Passing it opens the gates of PMA for the cadets to avail outpass and leave whenever granted. After grueling military training, such a respite is like an oasis in a desert for the GCs. Thus, this test is usually held before midterm break and is of pivotal importance for both the cadets and the drill instructors. The last stage is the passing out parade. It is the culmination of two years of strenuous training and GCs dream comes true as they march in Slow Time off the drill square, up the stairs into the *Mess Hall* and instantly converted from GCs to Second Lieutenants in the Pakistan Army. Even long after passing out, when an officer of Pakistan Army hears military band playing, the eyes swell up with emotions and tears, the heart begins to beat faster and one is back in thoughts slow marching up the lovely steps of the drill square.

At this stage the cadets are seniors and try to take the liberty of relaxing but drill instructors like Honorary Captain (retd) Muhammad Ashraf Warsi (commonly known as *Shurli Sahab*), drill personified and an institution by himself, never allowed such laxity. He made sure that every cadet's toe was in line, arms aligned and foot stomping up to the standard while marching. The same standards are evident at the momentous occasions like the *Quaid's Day* parade, *Azadi* parade, *Yaum-e-Shuhada* and other such events.

There maybe a paradigm shift in the military training philosophy from time to time due to technological revolution, but the role of drill staff had remained same throughout. History is full of names of such silent but tall and graceful heroes who are vibrant, dedicated and selfless in performing their duties. Their efforts, guidance, personal examples and dedication deserve rich tributes. I salute them; yes, I do as they taught me how to salute.

*‘Those who educate children well are more to be honoured than they who produce them; for these only gave them life, those the art of living well.’*

(Aristotle)

# Among Heroes

**Capt Ali Ahmed Malik**

"You never seem normal," looking at his impassive face, Sara said in an inquiring tone.

"Because I don't fit in your definition of normal," throwing pebbles in the water, gazing at the horizon, with his thoughts at unrest, being at par with the oceanic waves in front, his words disappearing in the sound of splashes, still being the only sound making sense to his fiancée's ears. He continued "Someday I may meet your standards of being normal", as he sat facing her, "Although that is a rare possibility".

"When are you going to return to my life, rather our life?" eyes wide open, focused ears longing to hear the words that were never coming, she gently pushed her hair blowing in her face due to the shore wind.

"When my battle scars would heal," it was very evident from the tone that he wasn't exactly present in the moment.

"Why haven't they healed already?"

"They aren't meant to."

"You scare me often."

"Do I?"

"Don't you see? While I am talking to you I mostly feel that ...."

"That you are talking to the walls."

"Emotionless walls."

"Time, my dear, is the answer."

Gazing at his face with her questioning eyes, she thinks of what she might hear this time as he breaks the silence, "I can't forget May 13, 2013. We were on the move to reach

our *igloo* before sunrise. It was 0200 hours, six of us, tied together with ropes, battling the harshness of weather, at 19000 feet in minus 35 degrees Celsius outside our windbreaker suits with freezing oxygen rupturing our chests, the blowing wind picking up snow and hitting us hard with it making one or two of us fall every now and then. It was perilous but we were hopeful until....” He throws another pebble into water, his face still unreadable, eyes speaking volumes of emotions. She looked at the wave created by the pebble, wondering what would happen next. He wouldn't speak much but when he did, he wouldn't let any other sound make any sense to her; waves showing the unrest of ocean, his eyes showing his...

Afraid of what she might hear, she gathered courage to utter, “What happened there?”

"We walked on the snow mass, 6 to 8 meters apart tied with ropes, that's what we the soldiers do up there but it isn't always firm snow. I saw it. The gust of wind struck the one next to me this one time, and imbalanced he fell. As he hit the ground, the snow wasn't strong enough to sustain the impact. It was a thin layer of ice he was standing upon, which cracked wide open and there he went inside the crevice. Before I could brace myself against the snow, I felt a jerk and followed him through. If it was not for the wits of the ones behind me, I wouldn't be here today.” His tone had just turned more magical, she didn't want him to stop now, although it wasn't the talk she longed for on this particular day. He continued. "They hit the snow with crampons which is normal practice to cater for such eventualities in the glaciers. Bracing themselves against the snow, they pulled the rope. Luckily, I didn't go inside deeper, was on the edge and could climb back. My buddy, however, needed to be pulled out. He was 8 meters deeper than me, hanging with the same rope we all were tied with. I made efforts to move out which were successful. It was the resolve which kept us going. We pulled him out. One of his ribs were broken, which was revealed later. He had struck something harder down there or maybe it was the jerk he received initially due to the tightened rope. We weren't even half way to our

*igloo*. It were us, who had to reach the igloo at night to relieve our comrades who were already present there and ready for the move back the next night having completed their tenure up there."

Ali looked at the horizon, sun going down among clouds. The sea now becoming peaceful but he isn't. "In the middle of a place where there are no signs of life, a fallen comrade besides you suffering with pain, others with a dying morale to see him in that condition, looking at each other to do something that would take away the pain. Hopeless yet hopeful eyes staring at you, I can't tell you how lonely you feel. Imagine the people you never think of living a life without, think of one of them with his head in your lap, groaning, restless and you are helpless. You wait for some miracle to deal with this or wish for being in a dream you would soon wake up from. These moments shape you, whether or not a miracle takes place. When you come out of the situation, you are never the same as you were moments ago."

"What... like... tell me... what happened then," said Sara, failing to utter the right words.

"Some other day perhaps, we should go home now. I have to go meet someone," he said, getting up from the boulders they were sitting on. He always used to say, "Don't stop me when I have to go. I won't."

She wished she could just heal his scars, just bring him back to life and stay with him till eternity, in her world... the world he didn't belong to anymore. He would always tell her, "Soldiers having experienced combat shouldn't be questioned why they are the way they are." They got up, walked on the shore silently towards parking area where vehicles were parked.

Walking on wet sand, hand in hand, gazing at sunset among clouds, contemplating nature, two other worldly souls though together were miles apart. Waves would come every now and then; touching their feet and making them feel the magic of



ocean. The melody of quiet air was breathtaking. They walked slowly, occasionally uttering a word, "Winds up there are not quite friendly," he smiled through the words. She also faked one to hide the pain, she knew he wasn't with her but with his comrades, the ones he always wished more to be with.

"I would be leaving tomorrow," he spoke again.

"I am aware."

"I confess that I am going to miss you."

"Can't... you stay?," she said, well aware of the answer she was going to receive. (After a pause) "I just wish I could!"

"We had promised to be together, no matter what happens."

"I remember and own my promises."

"Stopping you would be selfish, I know. I just wish things were different."

"But they aren't...."

"But, what about me. When would I come to know your depths? Loving a soldier is a terrible mistake they say, I think they are right."

"You think or you want to think like this?" He smiles back.

"Not telling someone who wishes to know every little thing about you, not letting someone heal you as they can't just see you hurt, leaving them to wait for times that may never come. Isn't it unfair," she pauses and looks down, "I shouldn't be saying this," she murmurs.

"You can have my diary, I am somewhere in the entries and blank pages. I will give it to you before leaving. I need not say that I trust you."

A smile rips through her eyes brimming with tears as she says, "You are my favorite mystery; I bet I will crack you one day." Both laugh.

(Two Days Later)

She sat in her room with a diary in her right hand opened across her eyes covered with glasses. She had already opened the entries written in the month of May 2013.

"Naik Ikhtiar Shah has always been one of my bravest soldiers and best companions of this journey to *Siachen* Glacier. His sense of humor, encouraging words to his fellows and his juniors and his dedication towards his military service is something I shall always remember. When I go back from here, I believe I will always cherish my memories of these lifeless glaciers capping *Himalayas*. Naik Shah was a tall man, measuring more than 6 feet in height. Whenever there was snowfall, I would always see him with a shovel in his hand, removing snow from the door of our igloo at a mid-camp where I stayed with him for about a week or so before I could finally move further up. This snow if not removed in time can turn out to be a death trap. If a part of body gets exposed to the same snow, it can result in frostbite which can ultimately result in imputation. Life up here calls for iron nerves."

"He was lying with his head in my lap. Above 19000 feet, in the vast mysterious glaciers offering no mercy to anyone, temperature nearing  $-50$  degrees, cold winds gusting past us, a few among us reciting verses from *Holy Quran*, wishing for a miracle to rescue us as I could see him fading away in my arms. I have never had such a situation in my life before. Military life can really challenge you in ways you can never expect. A few were rubbing his chest, putting pressure on his chest to make sure he kept breathing. We had no doctors to help him recover. All we had with us were lifesaving injections and an unparalleled faith in Almighty. We injected him with the hope of keeping his blood circulation active."

"How is he feeling now Ali?", called Capt. Irfan, the sub-sector commander, on wireless.

"Sir! He will make it Insha Allah," I replied.

"Be aware of the deteriorating weather, a snow storm is expected soon, you have to make up to your post before first light. All the best."

"Roger sir."

Half-an-hour passed by, feeling like a century. He opened his eyes gently. It was as if life was returning to all of us. I still wonder what would have happened if he hadn't survived.

"Shah, wake up buddy, let's do it again," his mate, Naik Irfan spoke with a determination.

Shah looked at our faces, most of which were grim by now, however, smiling at their buddy with whom they had already lived so many stories of valor and devotion. I waited for him to show some movement. He lifted himself up with difficulty as I helped, and he hugged me as he got up, "Thank you sir for not giving up on me."

"I am so proud of you Shah! Now brace yourself, you have to reach back to your camp before weather gets worse," I could not utter one more word.

He looked at me, the expression was priceless. It was his turn to speak, "Irfan, I will lead on the way back." "You stubborn idiot, obviously you will," Irfan replied smilingly. "We lifted our packs, the journey of our guides from mid-camp ended here. We were to meet guides coming from our next destination who had to escort us there. While we were helping Shah recover, the guides from our next post had already reached our location having heard our conversations on wireless. We hugged our buddies, said our goodbyes, waved and moved on."

"Ikhtiar Shah and his comrades made to their camp successfully while we also reached our destination before the first light. I was informed on wireless that he was taken to CMH Skardu the following morning on a helicopter where he was treated for a fractured rib and many bruises. However, his life was out of danger. While I write these lines, I am accompanied by a section of soldiers, hailing from different regions of Pakistan, who are up here at Siachen with the sole purpose of serving Pakistan against all odds."

And the mystery started to unfold onto her as she continued to read through the pages. The reason why he was so different started to become clear. His experiences were not that of an ordinary man and so wasn't his courage. Every word she read made her more proud of the man; the soldier of this country, the guardian of this motherland!

# Missing You *Baba*

In memory of Lt Col Humayun Khanzada Shaheed

Roshan Taj

There is no greater sacrifice than giving one's life for the country. I am sharing my thoughts in loving memory of my respected and beloved father, Lt Col Humayun Khanzada *Shaheed*. I was four years old when he embraced *shahadat* on August 30, 1990 at the Line of Control (Kel Sector). Father is an important figure in child's life as he gives great feeling of strength and support. I was lucky enough to be able to spend few years with him though I have a faded memory of the time spent with him. I still remember him bringing chocolates at my 4<sup>th</sup> birthday when he held me in his hands and asked, "When will you grow up my little princess?" Today when I have completed my M.Phil, I miss your company, *Baba*, and wait for your call each moment to pat me for my achievements.

My father was commissioned in the Army Services Corps (ASC) with 43 PMA Long Course and was Commanding Officer of 7 Animal Transport (AT) Regiment at the time of his *shahadat*. Born in a respectable and educated *Khattak* family on December 1, 1950 in the *Lachi* village of Kohat district, my father joined ASC following his father, Major (retd) Amir Nasrullah, who was also from ASC.

Recalling his memories, my grandmother tells us, "He was the best son, a mother could ever have." My mother tells me that my father was very happy at my birth being his second daughter. "I want her to succeed in life and become my pride," he shared with my mother after my birth. My family shares that he used to call me with the name of *Guriya*, though I don't

remember much of that. Baba, it gives me a feeling of warmth inside to hear these things about you and inspires me to be the kind of daughter you'd be proud of. I wish I could have spent more time with you.

Today, when all of us sit as a family, we get to look at the photographs saved in a separate album by his name. My mother tells that he was very fond of outings and every Thursday night (being the weekend), he would take us out for food or to watch movies. He was also a very good sportsman and we used to watch him while playing football. He taught me how to ride a bicycle and encouraged me to keep trying even after falling down and getting hurt occasionally.

Being a family member whenever he got time, he took us out for picnics and enjoyed firing up the grill and cooking up steaks, chicken or fish. I remember my father lying on his bed in his bedroom narrating me stories which I never had the chance to listen again. He used to help me with my homework and his valuable wisdom left a lasting imprint in my mind to this day.

On special days like his birthday or *Fathers' Day*, I buy a card, write him a letter, tie it to a balloon and let it go; it takes my love up to him. Baba, I do get to make *dua* for you and feel proud when people (to this very day) still talk that what a fantastic man you were! How you always helped whoever you could, with whatever you could. Your generosity and selflessness were inspiring and unmatched. I have created a *Facebook* group in your honour as you were everything I ever needed in a perfect daddy. When I dream about you, I feel happy and sad at the same time. Happy that you were in my dreams and sad that it ended too soon.

In his last conversation with my mother before his *shahadat* on Thursday late night, he enquired about me as I wasn't feeling well and advised her to take care of herself and the children. She told him that everything was going to be fine and he shouldn't worry much. He replied by saying, "the night which is meant to be in the grave cannot come at home. May

Allah Almighty bless you all.”

Lastly, I know you are beside me to this day and looking after me always from above. You are my inspiration; you are my role model. It's my constant desire to be like you – courageous, optimistic and very positive. I love and miss you dearly. May Allah grant you *Jannah*, (*Ameen*).

# My Brother, My Hero

**A tribute to Capt Bilal Sunawar Shaheed, TBt**

**Lubna Sunawar**

History of Pakistan is replete with the sacrifices made by the soldiers in defence of this motherland. The world has witnessed how our soldiers have risen to their towering heights in defence of their borders, their land and their nation against an enemy aggression. Our heroes have always kept our flag high by successfully stopping the internal and external enemies from completing their nefarious designs.

Captain Muhammad Bilal Sunawar was one such officer who sacrificed his life for this country and made all of us proud. Commissioned in Pakistan Army with 108 PMA Long Course in 2003, a fourth-generation officer, Capt Bilal was part of Operation *Rah-e-Nijaat* that was successfully undertaken in 2009 by the Pakistan Army. He was part of an operation that shall be remembered in golden words in the history of not only Pakistan, but all great armies of the world. Tables were turned and with minimum civil casualties, the Taliban were evicted from that region. Peace and smiles returned to the locals. But the price was heavy. Deep behind the smiles of the people, red blood of our soldiers glitters.

My pen trembles as I begin to write about my brother, Bilal. My eyes get wet when I recall his shining face. But I always smile with pride because he rose to the highest level of grace and laid his life. Whenever I'm asked to pen something for my brave brother, I don't know how to even begin to move on. How can I? He deserves more. As a sister, I know that my valiant brother was a very dedicated person prepared to take any risk and face any challenge. A proud father, Col

Muhammad Sunawar (retd) who has lost his brave son, feels proud for Bilal's supreme sacrifice for the motherland. Bilal's beloved mother is not alive as she passed away just a year before his *shahadat*, but she must have been proud to be known as a Martyr's mother today and that she instilled the highest virtues of bravery, passion and sacrifice in her son.

When I look back at our childhood period, we laughed together and cried together. My brother was the only person who could finish my sentences and knew what I thought when I was silent. Bilal was an amazing person – intelligent, thoughtful, loving, caring, giving, and understanding. He was my shoulder to cry on. My brother instilled some of the greatest lessons in life in me especially after *Ammi's* (my mother) sad and sudden demise. I love him and miss him with all of my being and with all that I am. Losing a wonderful relationship of a mother and a sibling is the hardest thing I have ever had to deal with in my life. It is something I never thought would happen.

While performing his duties at the time of his *shahadat*, he was busy in a fierce battle with the Taliban at *Pash Ziarat* (Waziristan). He kept his cool, encircled the militants and boldly charged towards them with his troops while leading from the front. The terrorists were completely taken aback by the bold counter-attack by Capt Bilal and his troops. 2/Lt Kaleem, who accompanied him during the operation, narrates, "Capt Bilal was leading his troops from the front whilst trying to protect his men and showed extraordinary courage to close on a coward enemy." His professionalism under pressure and ability to remain calm in what was a chaotic situation, is testament to his character. During the conduct of the same operation, he was hit by Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) in his chest which resulted in his *shahadat*. The troops narrate Capt Bilal *Shaheed's* performance as "selfless, brave, courageous...." Words like these do not come close to what Capt Bilal demonstrated that day. He will be missed by all as a commander, but most of all a good mate. A real self-starter, he excelled in everything that he undertook.

Bilal was my closest sibling and a best friend, a real



gentleman with a kind heart. It's so painful to know that he has gone and I keep thinking about all those things we did together as a family. If I could be granted one wish, it would be to kiss and hug him for the last time. Capt Bilal and his troops did a remarkable job. They have risen to defend Pakistan from the aggression of the enemy. They have sent a clear message to the terrorists that they would never ever accomplish their designs. They sacrificed their lives to defend the homeland against the evil designs of militants. Our heroes of the defence forces are battling with the extremists and not allowing them an inch of the country to be occupied. The nation is proud of the sons like Bilal, and it truly recognizes their sacrifices and respects them for their bravery.

Bilal is still my best friend and my inspiration. He still gives me the strength to go on when I feel I cannot. He still gives me encouragement, advice, and strength though it maybe in his own little way – in a dream, in a song I hear, through the perfect sunset or blowing wind, he is still with me. We as a family miss him each and every day. There is not a minute that goes without him when he is not in our thoughts. And with all of the wonderful things you taught me, you still live through me. In everything that I do, you will always stand by my side! I call my brother Bilal – “my true angel” who has always shown me the way in the darkness around.

As a foreign research scholar, I'm working on “the US War on Terror and its implications for Pakistan”. This has been my foremost effort to highlight the sacrifices of Pakistan Army in front of the diplomats, researchers and think-tanks, and have always tried to prove the fact that our army has acted like an iron curtain against the internal and external enemies. Capt Muhammad Bilal Sunawar *Shaheed* was awarded *Tamgha-i-Basalat* (TBt) posthumously for his sustained display of conspicuous bravery and leadership. Bilal, you will be remembered as a gentleman, as a good leader, a loving and caring son and, the best brother in the world. The whole nation is indebted to you.

May you live in the eternal Peace and Happiness always,  
*Ameen!*

# Eye of the Star Shall Not Be Robbed Away

**Brig Syed Wajid Raza (R)**

It was a pleasure to see young Jamal in Sialkot who had recently joined 5 Battalion of the Azad Kashmir Regiment, a composed and confident Balochi officer from the remote region of Balochistan. With every passing day, he grew humble with obvious signs indicative of brave gestures and postures. He smiled in trouble, showed strength under duress and grew brave by reflection.

Jamal had married in the early winters of 2016. Since their marriage Jamal and his wife had not lived together, due to his participation in war against terrorism. With the passage of time, I noticed that he had grown stouter and broader, so it was difficult to recognize the robust, smart yet slim Jamal of earlier days.

His features had become more defined and had a calm, soft, and serene expression. All that struck the eye was a strong, handsome, and confident young officer. All who had known Jamal before joining army noticed the change in his thoughts and posture as something extraordinary.

In July 2017, Major Jamal met *shahadat* in a suicide attack in Peshawar. A motorcycle-borne suicide bomber hit a Frontier Corps Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (FC KPK) vehicle, targeting Maj Jamal Sheran. While serving in the Special Operations Group, Jamal had conducted daring operations and he knew that things were scary, difficult and dangerous around him, but he had the conviction that winning the fight is worth the chance of losing life for Pakistan.

On the fateful day, the newly wedded wife of Maj Jamal had hardly finished her packing as she was to join her husband to live in Peshawar, perhaps for the first time after her marriage that took place seven months earlier. Sheran Sanghoor, father of Jamal, reluctantly stopped his daughter-in-law from packing, as he had been informed about his son's *shahadat*. Her hopes turned into fears, while the fears of the nation were turning into hopes.

Sheran Sanghoor, father of Jamal, was so proud that he dressed up in his best attire to receive the coffin of his son who had made him so proud. As the coffin of Jamal reached his home, a sea of people gathered to pay homage to the son of soil, who had laid his life for his beloved nation.

When the spokesman of TTP was taking the responsibility of Jamal's *shahadat*, he forgot that he would be buried wrapped in Pakistan's flag and a similar flag shall flutter over his grave, denouncing the enemies of Pakistan that its sons are not tired of sacrifices.

Ideas don't come with imagination, rather realization. Maj Jamal had thought of joining Pakistan Army right from the early days in the Ketch Grammar School of Turbat, a remote region that saw violence perpetrated by the foreign stooges and enemies of Pakistan. Belonging to a traditional Baloch family of Mir Sheran Baloch, his father had served in the Omani Army. Jamal, after completing his higher school degree from Balochistan Residential College Turbat, joined the Pakistan Military Academy with 117 Long Course in Kakul, Abbottabad, in May 2006.

His military career had been a challenging one. During the Pakistan-India escalation in 2008 on the borders, he remained at the forefront, and later his unit saw his daring actions during Operation Al Mizan in the Bajaur Agency of FATA. On joining the Frontier Corps KPK, he was picked as Commander Special Operations Group, Frontier Corps. He led a number of sting operations against the terrorists and enemies of the

State, making him the real target of TTP and other terrorist groups.

When young Jamal, on joining the Pakistan Army, moved out in streets of his village, he was often stopped by his people, and they would ask him, “When would you grow higher in ranks and construct a hospital in the village?” This was one thing that Jamal’s father requested in a TV interview, too.

It is difficult to conclude about a hero who was driven by destiny. In army, every officer, and soldier has a place to fill in and it is important in some respect whether he chooses to be or not to be. I know destiny is not a matter of chance but of choice, which changes with our thoughts and ideals. I have seen many unsung heroes during my service who have high aims and believe in controlling their destiny before someone else does.

Jamal’s *shahadat* is not an ordinary one, in any manner; he defeated the narrative of the enemy that is bent upon conspiring in the Balochistan province of Pakistan, and his *shahadat* is the last nail in the coffin of the conspirators. He fought with the enemies of Pakistan with his boots on and while wearing the uniform, and he continues to fight while shrouded in the Pakistani flag, inspiring hundreds of young Baloch people to come forward, defend every inch of the motherland and sacrifice for Pakistan.

I have been in uniform for more than three decades and I know that heroism doesn’t come from taking orders, but rather it is born from the act of great Pakistani officers and soldiers who through their own will power and courage are willing to sacrifice their lives for Pakistan.

Perhaps we can never repay the debt of our proud nation to those who have laid down their lives for Pakistan and best we can do is to honour their memory so that their sacrifices do not go in vain. Jamal’s mausoleum, a hospital and a cadet college around it, if constructed, can become a beacon of hope and inspiration for hundreds and thousands who had gathered to

pay him homage. These institutions will defeat all ill-intended narratives of the anti-Pakistan elements using the rhetoric of narrow Baloch nationalism. The actual Baloch nationalism is not separate from that of the Pakistani nationalism and, Maj Jamal's martyrdom for the motherland is a living shining example of patriotism.

In retrospect, like nations, men also have destiny. Many conflictual states couldn't hold against bloody attacks of terrorism and collapsed in less than a year's time. This is only Pakistan that is faced with the combined threats of hybrid wars and fourth generational warfare for the last 16 years, and is sustaining and winning. These great achievements of Pakistan amidst the 'turmoil' are indeed borne of great sacrifices of its sons... of their selflessness, courage and resilience.

Listening to the proud father of the Baloch son and other members of Jamal's family, I felt that Pakistan has won and defeated its enemies.

*Glorious we stood to the siege of bread,  
And for long we were mounted on the back of patience.  
The winds of Autumn shall not efface,  
With unquenchable sighs of love, we implored.  
As secretly he whispers to me, as loudly he whispers to  
me...  
The eye of the star shall not be robbed away.*

(Omar Saleem, a Libyan poet)

# What I Wish I Could Tell You Now

**The daughter of martyred officer writes to her father**

**Sidra Babar Khan**

***Baba!***

The mere four years, nine months and 23 days of my life I spent in your presence are something I shall always cherish. My earliest memories are of you wearing your uniform, for no particular event but just you as a strong man in his soldier's uniform. I have no idea how old I was at the time nor any perspective of what we were doing – just an image of you looking at me from above with a loving smile.

I have very vague memories of you, *Baba*, but I get very proud when people (to this very day) talk about what a fantastic man you were, how you made them laugh, and lent them an ear. You were always there for people when they needed help. Your generosity and selflessness were inspiring and unmatched. You've left people with a lot of good memories of you. It gives me a feeling of warmth to hear these things about you, and it inspires me to be the kind of daughter you'd be proud of.

Even though you left this world so early I wouldn't want anyone else to be my father, I wouldn't trade you for the world. I am so thankful to Allah that he made me your daughter and it makes me really happy when someone tells me I resemble you in some way. I am so thankful to you that even when you weren't around, you made sure we had a steady source of income. I still remember how proud I felt when I used to see

my mother's pension book knowing you were still caring for our needs. Similarly, whenever I fell sick and had to visit the CMH, I felt so thankful to you every single time and even though you weren't around all those doctors in uniform made me feel at home. I am also very thankful for the army family you gave me, the other day we got to attend 78 PMA Long Course's get-to-gather and all your classmates welcomed us with an open heart. I saw a glimpse of you in them and they treated me with as much love as you would. It was really heartwarming to see them acknowledge us even after 20 years of your martyrdom.

I am also thankful for the amazing brother I have, though younger to me he protects me as an elder and has been very responsible. You must be happy that Saif has almost completed his Engineering in Telecom; he takes pride in attributing himself to you as son of a *Shaheed*. I'm sure you are proud of him, too.

Above all, thank you for finding the strongest woman I've ever known to be your spouse, and our mother. She turned out to be more than you could have ever wanted. She is an embodiment of strength, courage, and a light of patriotism. For years, I have watched her grow with me. At that time, I didn't know it, but now I see that she has struggled a lot. She wanted only the best for me and my brother, and has done an amazing job trying to fill in for you. She did whatever she could so that we would have it all. My mother played both roles of a mother and father and I couldn't be more proud of her; I am sure you too would be very proud.

I count how long you've been gone in the milestones, be it moving apartments, special occasions, birthdays, getting admissions or graduating; you have always been with me in my heart, being my guardian angel. You are and always have been with me at each step of my life's journey, my dear Dad!

I have heard that you were ecstatic when I first joined pre-school, you made sure I was having a good time and you even kept my first notebook with you. I really wanted to make you proud, and because of my love, respect and the strongest urge

to be a source of pride for you, I not only graduated with a Gold Medal in my Bachelors but also completed my Masters with the honour *Magna Cum Laude* and will soon receive a Silver Medal. My efforts are a tribute to your love and dedication to the country and I hope I can play my role for the betterment of my country as well. I hope I can be as strong, courageous, brave and as selfless as you were. Your love, honour and integrity live within me.

A very major event of my life is coming up, Baba, I am getting married. I've found myself saying, "What would my Baba do?" with any wedding dilemmas. I wasn't ready for the questions from vendors: "Will your father be joining us? What is his vision for this? Will you want to schedule another meeting so your father can join?". I've found myself yearning more than ever for you. There have been so many times during this process I've looked at *Maa*, and thought, "How is she going to survive this wedding without you?"

Even after going through many life events without you, it still doesn't get any easier. None of that pain feels the same as the pain not having you there on such a life-changing day and as my wedding draws closer, the reality sinks in just a little further. It is a very emotional time for me, and I find myself breaking down in tears more often than ever. My heart aches as I write this and I know going through my wedding day without my father will be the hardest thing I've ever done.

So many people, our friends and family have come forward to be the part of wedding planning and I am grateful to them beyond words. Our family has showered me with so much love, your unit, your coursemates, they have all gathered as if they were invited by you. And even though nothing can ever fill your void, I have found you along my side on every step, it is true when they say a *Shaheed* never dies because I have felt your blessing all along. You will be there with me and with all of us. I know how elated, proud, and excited you are that I am about to take this next step in life. The truth is, I've felt you during this whole process and I know you are here with me and will continue to go through life with me, just in a more special way. I have found comfort in knowing that you are still



and will always be there for us in every step of the way.

Your death has made us a stronger family, Baba. I now realize that my mother, I and my brother faced all the hardships with the courage that comes by being a part of Army soldier's family. Everyone who belongs to an army family would agree that even though it's a source of immense pride, it also involves sacrifices like relocations and absences. I am proud to be the daughter of a soldier.

With love,

Your daughter  
Sidra

# In Love of Pakistan

**Epic story of Capt Akash Rabbani Shaheed**

**Maj Farooq Feroze**

The sudden beautiful drizzling marked with mystic fragrance brought a pleasant change in weather in the spacious ground of Frontier Force (FF) Centre Abbottabad, where the mortal remains of Captain Akash Aftab Rabbani (*Shaheed*) were placed for *Namaz-e-Janaza*. The day will be remembered for many years as everyone in the city wanted to attend the funeral of the *Shaheed*, which led to a massive traffic jam; the funeral turned out to be a bigger gathering.

A smartly turned-out contingent presented the last salute, and the burial was performed in a local graveyard with full military honours and traditional fervour.

It was my fifth day in Miranshah, North Waziristan; I was trying to acquaint myself with the new environment before the launching of Operation *Zarb-e-Azb*. After having brief round of the area, I entered my office, where later on I had to spend most of the time during my stay there. In the office, I saw a young, fair-looking SSG officer, who was busy with his laptop, and at the same time was getting information from another officer sitting across the table. I greeted in a loud voice and the young SSG Captain warmly returned my greetings with a smile and firm hand grip. His broad and curious eyes were looking quite attractive on his face. I sat beside him on the sofa and saw his name tag “Rabbani” on his commando uniform.

The other officer left the office for a while and we started informal talk. “Rabbani is your name,” I asked referring to his

name tag on his chest. “No sir, this is my surname; my name is Akash,” replied the Captain. “Where are you from”, I asked not knowing the reason of my curiosity and taking unusual interest in his personality. “Sir, I am from Abbottabad, I passed out with 123 PMA Long Course,” he replied. We kept discussing various aspects of the upcoming operation over a military-style tea break until the other officer returned. Capt Rabbani stood up and told him about the marking of all important locations on the maps and offered his further help if needed.

As he left, a stream of thoughts took me to the probable outcomes of the operation, which also included martyrdom to anyone of those young soldiers and officers, who were determined to crush the ugly head of terrorism. Pakistan Army was all set to start the operation in North Waziristan Agency (NWA), which had been turned into the epicentre of terrorism and hub of dreaded criminals, for the last one decade or so.

Capt Akash Rabbani, along with his Commando Battalion, had reached Miranshah three days before we met for the first time. This short and memorable meeting established my strong relationship with the Captain. We would meet almost everyday as the operational activities were getting momentum. After the air strikes in various areas of North Waziristan, ground offensive was launched on 30 June to clear the area in Miranshah. Butt Marka was the last place known as the most notorious hideout of the terrorists in the city and Rabbani's Battalion was given responsibility to clear that area. It was July 8 and I reached there to embed my camera team with the troops so that live operational activity can be recorded. I saw Capt Rabbani, who was leading troops from the front. He warmly hugged me with a smile on his face after the operation was completed.

In the next phase of the operation, on July 15, in Mirali, Capt Rabbani was assigned, again, a mission to clear off the area from the terrorists. Towards completion of the assigned task, he led his men from the front and in the due course of time, embraced the elevated *shahadat* while fighting fearlessly against the terrorists. He undoubtedly wrote a glorious chapter

of *Zarb-e-Azb* with his blood and left a lasting impression for others to follow.

I was listening to Dr Aftab Rabbani, father of Capt Akash Rabbani, who was throwing light on various aspects of Akash's life in a very composed and dignified manner. Akash was born on October 20, 1990. He was very witty, sharp and intelligent right from his childhood. His elder brother, Dr Danish is doing *house job* at Ayub Medical College, whereas his younger sister is a student of 2<sup>nd</sup> Year in the same college. Dr Aftab told that his father was greatly inspired by Allama Iqbal. Therefore, when Akash was born, he was given this name keeping in view the depth and universality coupled with a sweet sense of romance.

Following the footprints of his family, *Kashi* (nick name of Akash) also scored high marks in his Matriculation and F.Sc. exams; he had a chance of clinching a seat in medical college to become a doctor. But, the destiny had evolved him to bring laurels for his parents as well as for the country, in a unique way. The profession of arms turned his ultimate passion into his destiny. His performance was remarkable during the training period at the PMA. He was commissioned on April 19, 2011 in 47 Field Artillery, which was stationed at Kharian at that time. During the basic courses, his performance remained outstanding, but his motivation took him to the Special Services Group (SSG) in order to pursue his career. He joined SSG in 2013. After carrying out successful training, he joined the 4 Commando at Tarbela. His unit was tasked to spearhead Operation *Zarb-e-Azb* in the North Waziristan Agency.

Recalling his memories, the grandfather of Capt Akash *Shaheed*, Dr Aftab Rabbani, who happens to be a professor of medicines in Ayub Medical College, Abbottabad, said, “Kashi was a loving son, a caring brother and a sincere friend. He held a large social circle of friends, that now feels his absence and shares his cherished memories.” Expressing his feelings Dr Aftab said, “at the start it was very difficult for us to reconcile with the reality that Akash was no more amongst us, but soon the respect and privilege we got because of his supreme

sacrifice from the people of the area, and especially from his fellows and colleagues in the Army, the great sense of pride and honour replaced the sense of his absence. We all, Akash's mother, and other family members feel proud of him. He has become our introduction and identity."

While concluding, he uttered with grief and sorrow that he felt pity for those who confuse the nation regarding our fight against terrorism, "which obviously aims to undermine the sacrifices of the sons of soil." He urged the nation to stand united and come at the back of the armed forces so that a lasting peace can be secured for a prosperous and progressive Pakistan.

# The Pride I Witnessed

**Sadia Sattar**

*Resilience,  
Bravery,  
Fearlessness,  
Is the forte of Pakistan Armed Forces,  
Courage,  
Valour,  
And  
Precision,  
Are their traits,  
When it comes to any evil eye,  
Towards the defence of the Motherland!*

On a beautiful morning of 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2017, I uttered these words expressing my heart and soul. It was not a part of TV commentary I was doing, but these were like articles of faith for me.

Never did the thought cross my mind while doing anchoring in front of the mirror since I was a toddler that I would ever be a TV host of the 23<sup>rd</sup> March Pakistan Day Parade. It was a position far more elevated than what I ever dreamt of in my whole career. All the childhood memories were alive as soon as I got a call to be one of the commentators for this very special event. I remember the days when the Pakistan Day Parade was done near the Presidency. The sensational national tracks, enthusiastic commentary and marching steps of Pakistan Army always gave me goosebumps.

Year 2015 was the first time that the military parade was conducted after a gap of seven years and so was historical for

the very same reason. Being part of that memorable event is one of the most cherished memories of my career till date.

2017's is the second one. Sitting in the commentary cabin from rehearsals to the final day was a unique and incomparable experience that could never be elaborated in words. Right in front were the portraits of Quaid-i-Azam and Allama Iqbal with green flag in the middle, fluttering high in the sky.

There was the march past of the flag bearers with their immaculate steps and I could feel the resolve depicted in every step, while holding the green flag with utmost respect and love; I felt that their feelings were very relatable to mine feeling the same for the "*parcham*"... a feeling of doing everything possible and impossible to keep the green flag sky high till the last drop of blood.

Each contingent one after the other marching with same zeal and enthusiasm shook me deep within, making me wish I was a part of them, right there in the parade ground. The moment SSG (Special Services Group) troops marched in, I had to hold my breath literally... their *Allah Hu* slogans gave shivers and touched the core of the heart.

All the valiant soldiers and officers who sacrificed their lives in Operations – *Zarb-e-Azb*, *Rah-e-Rast*, *Rah-e-Nijat* and others – in the most treacherous and difficult terrain of FATA, those guarding the snow clad high peaks in Siachen, along Kashmir border, those who fought and defended Pakistan in all wars with India, all those families and mothers I interviewed to date were flashing back throughout the march past. I could feel that this spirit is unstoppable and more resilient with every passing day to make Pakistan a secure, peaceful and prosperous country for those who would be living their lives in this beautiful land. Pakistan has defenders who are matchless; their resolve and their will to defend the motherland is undiminishing and unconquerable.

At the end of the parade we met Maj Gen Tahir Bhutta,

GOC SSG, who led the tri-services SSG free fall paratroopers' team carrying the green flag in high skies. Amazing when it came to the skill and precision! These are angels – defenders of my country who descend as a wrath from above on the enemies of my motherland. When we went to meet him, the way he greeted us is unexplainable, with the love and fatherly affection, the way he appreciated us for our minor efforts in the commentary cabin was extremely encouraging and memorable. We, too, felt as if we were part of these defenders of Pakistan.

I asked him that he got injured a day before and still managed to do the free fall jump on the final day, his response was that when his men were doing it, he was supposed to lead from the front and he did that. Leadership is nothing but leading from the front especially for the officer corps of Pakistan Armed Forces.

I felt in the deepest core of my heart that Pakistan is in the safest hands as I saw the leadership at its best.

Incontrovertibly no power on earth can undo Pakistan.



# Pride Resides in the Bosom of Anguish

A soldier had died ‘In the line of duty’

**Tahir Mehmood**

The little boy with the schoolbag on a shoulder was trying to catch the man moving ahead of him. The man was moving with a normal pace; a father that was to lead his son. But the son was too eager to match the pace that was little more for his tiny steps. The father used to carry the schoolbag but not for many days as the son wanted to lower his burden. The father dreamed for the days once his son would relieve him from much worries of life... The father had gone old, and son turned into an exuberant youth. Life was filled with hope; but the hope was to die soon. The day came, and the young soldier's casket was wrapped in the national flag. He had died '*in the line of duty*'.

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He fought bravely but death was the final bid for honour. The father was too old to cry aloud, but his worn-out heart was struck too deeply. He wept bitterly – but in sighs with rolling tears of silence. He had dreamed for his son to lead him in life, but his casket was leading the procession to the burial ground. He was proud to have a son like him – the pride will live with him till his remaining days, but the son's beautiful smile had been lost forever.

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A year ago, she was giggling, chatting, laughing and living

with pride. It did not take her long after finishing her studies to marry a soldier. The soldier was a handsome lad; an enthusiast in fun and mischief, but stone-faced '*in the line of duty*'. It was customary for him to present flowers to his bride. The garlands of red and white roses made life a joy never to end. But, fairy tales always have 'the end'. The soldier's grave was laden with flowers; red and white roses. He had died '*in the line of duty*' and even not bothered to look back for a while; not even for his bride that had become so fond of him. So deceptive are the smiles and tears that bear the burdens of soldiering.

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The soldiers are trained to die; they die willingly but their loved-ones become living-dead due to their sudden departure. The soldiers enter into the heart with a bang but leave quietly on unknown journeys never to fall back. The girl now visits the grave daily, and places garland of roses on the grave that the man once had gifted her. Her life has become an empty page of the book, nothing written on it to be read by life anymore. The soldier was her pride; both in life and in death. But the tears were unstoppable forever! He had died "*in the line of duty*".

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The two old women were sitting side by side; not far away from a fresh grave. One had just lost the valued jewel of her life. A soldier had died '*in the line of duty*'. The old lady cried, wept, laughed and fainted time and again. Her sequence of anguish was changing every time but not the anguish itself. The son had died in defending the motherland. The soldier had died to keep the honour and glory of the mother and sisters. The pride was overwhelming and so was the gloom! One loves not to depart but to live together forever; but not in the case of soldiers. Their love is intense and so is the pain.

The second lady was weeping too, but trying hard to allay the anguish of her friend through self-assuring whispers. She wanted to utter few words but her talk was empty. Her heart was sinking as her soldier-son was too on the battlefield. It did

not take long for the ‘news’ to reach. Her son had died ‘*in the line of duty*’, too. The two women now drag the wounded souls. The motherland is proud of the sons who sprinkled their blood to save her pride and honour. *Pride resides in the bosom of the anguish!*

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They were all continuously on move while chatting and laughing. They were young comrades-in-arms – the soldiers. They all looked towards the commander’s face, which was grim and determined. He nodded his head silently and the soldiers moved with quick steps to cross the ridge line that brought them face-to-face with the enemy. This time they were silent but not stopping at all. Probably they could sense the fate but it was not ‘them’ to shy away from approaching death. Sooner the ‘lead’ was flying all across making many to kiss the ground forever. They fought valiantly amidst death and falling bodies of the comrades-in-arms. They silently looked at each other’s face with fainted smiles, but eyes beaming with pride; of dying for the cause much bigger than the mortal life itself. ‘*In the line of duty*’, they died with a pride to live in the memory of their brothers and sisters forever!

The nation remembers the fallen soldiers, but with diminishing pride and anguish each year. The remembrance days are gradually celebrated with much fanfare but lack soul of the cause, pride and anguish that once defined their pristine sacrifice. The fallen soldiers are a memory that once lived on the face of the earth that today personifies life and peace; all that came not through embellished talk but blood offered silently ‘*in the line of duty*’.

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The soldiers would always go the battle zones. Life will go on; and so would the pride and anguish. The soldiers deserve a silent prayer, a rolling tear, and a solemn remembrance by those who live on the beautiful land that was once marred by blood, sweat and toil!

# Wedding Bells Rhymed by Call of Duty

Ayesha Farooq

“Seven years have gone by, upheavals have been endured, damage has been caused to vicious extremities, the nation’s morale is touching the lower apex while there is still a lot to bear; rejuvenation is needed. Pakistan will witness the National Day Parade once again!”, decided the armed forces.

For sure, Pakistan witnessed the breathtaking showcase of its military might on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2015, revamping the spirits altogether. What happens behind the curtains is often kept in the shadows, the fact that the ones decorated in their shining armours are also humans is time and again overlooked; they are exceptional and yet ordinary is typically a neglected reality. At time however, few individuals work out their ordinary affairs in such an incomparable fashion that leaves no choice but to accede the distinctiveness.

One fine morning, a young lady officer in *khaki* uniform, with plans to start off with her ‘wedding leave’ found out that the contingent of the lady officers, for the first time in Pakistan Army’s history, will march past for the National Day Parade. Her former Commanding Officer told her, “As soon as I saw the orders, I imagined you to lead.” She took a quick walk down the memory lane remembering her maternal grandfather and an uncle leading the 23<sup>rd</sup> March parade in her childhood; the journey back to present was filled with perplexity. The more she discussed it with people, the more disheartened she felt. A week had gone by but the disarray laid steady.

‘The Parade is happening after seven years, but you get your wedding day once in a lifetime too. The Parade is where you can proceed to maintain the family tradition of leading it, the wedding is when you will start a new family’, the rapid-fire question-answer session in her mind kept going until she decided to call the one woman she brought all of her motivation to do the best from, her inspiration, her devotion, her beloved mom. Her mother reminded her who she was; enthusiastic Capt Sana Nasri – the first female officer in the EME Aviation, passing out as Course Senior Under Officer, one of the best debators, and was part of the first batch of female paratroopers of Pakistan Army, quite clearly someone who aptly fits in the category of a steeled, sturdy and robust lady.

The reassurance did the trick. The girl had found her silver lining; who gets the parade and the wedding together? Managing both seemed almost impossible. Never did anyone that she had known of till date, had done it, but that’s what Sana bagged was always what seldom did.

By the time she reached the parade ground for rehearsals after a week of bewildered thoughts, preparations were on the full swing and files had already been set. With a sinking heart, she got herself placed at the very last. Having always spent her time being on the lead, knowing she did the finest drill, the pill of staying at the back being the best was hard to swallow. Sana recalls it as a divine intervention that the eyes of the officer, who was monitoring the parade, caught her. He recognized her dedication for call of duty observing that hers was the uniform adorned with a number of laurels in the contingent thereby placing her forward as one of the guides. She performed the drill after seven years of her service. Her heart was now at peace, partially, for somewhere she was still uncertain whether she would be able to get the chant of wedding bells and melodies of parade ground, composed in a rhythm or an objectionable beginning of her wedding life awaited her. The former happened.

She flew all the way to Karachi on the night of March 12 for

her very own wedding that was scheduled for March 14, 2015. Soon as it ended, she boarded the first plane with her husband back to Islamabad to join the rehearsals of Pakistan Day Parade, leaving her parents, siblings, nieces and nephews behind and joined the tough schedule again. Full dress rehearsal was scheduled on March 21, which was not an ordinary day. It was the one when everyone expected her to be absent, for in the evening of the very same day was the last function of the wedding; the *valima*. But how would it be Sana Nasri, if the suite that she is going to follow, is the one that is anticipated. She had reached the parade ground by 5 a.m. with *mehndi* on her hands, leaving everyone well astonished. She stood under the sun for hours just like her fellows baffling over the commitment she had. She did the march past just as superbly as a female soldier would. Upon getting enquired what she was doing in the parade ground while she should be getting ready for the *valima*, her response was simple, 'No wonder *valima* is important, but duty is a duty, much more important in fact, and putting service before herself has always been her way.' By evening, this young lady was all set to walk the aisle with her husband. She was contented; she had done it all; gracefully enough, maintaining the tradition of being the third generation joining the 23<sup>rd</sup> March parade and raising her mother's head high.

This incident leaves a question mark for those who believe that weddings cannot be conducted without creating the frenzy; from the time shopping spree begins to the event day. Have we, by ourselves set up a fence around us? Does wedding really mean everything else has to stop or is it just another one of our own whims? Latter certainly. As fortunate it is to have a history 1400-year old manifesting the beauty in sobriety, we are just equally or perhaps more inclined to not only being extravagant but also losing sight of rather vital matters associated with the event. The emphasis to prepare for the wedding is more than it is on the marriage while what has to last for the years to come once the knot is tied is not the event day. Not only does the society need to set its priorities right, but also young individuals who plan to marry, have to realize that they must not let their conscience be moulded by trivial

standards. Moderation will lead to triumph, here and in the Hereafter.

Lastly, Capt Sana leaves a message for all the girls, ‘Balance what you have at hand, keeping your faith in the Almighty, believe in yourselves. He helps those who have their intentions right. You must follow your passion rightly and religiously, pay no heed to what deters your morale but only to take it as a challenge. Know it, sky is not the limit.’

“First, they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.” And keep winning...

*If there is a way, I shall find one...*

*If there is none, I shall make one...*

# Keep on Fighting Our War

**A brave woman's letter to her soldier husband**

**Maryam Imran**

**Dear Husband!**

Ever since I wedded you, I have never seen your spirits to falter; it would be very naïve to ask you traditionally about your spirits, but I hope you are in the best of your health. I and our baby are also doing great, looking forward to see you soon.

I thank Allah Almighty for granting me the pride to be your wife, a soldier's girl; a soldier who is doing his part for our motherland. The pride of being part of your life and your sweet memories is enough for me to bear this time without you. The strength I hold in the darkest of hours is your echo. Though you are away but every now and then I close my eyes to remember your ever-smiling face. I always hold my head high and suppress my tears when I think of you. The day you left, I saw you mounting your jeep and driving away while waving at me; that is a memory embedded into my mind permanently. I know one day I will see you driving that jeep back to us.

We are doing well and you don't need to worry about us. Little Amna has now become very active and sometimes stands in the balcony to salute all men wearing uniform. She looks so adorable while doing so. She believes her father is the bravest of all and she keeps singing patriotic songs. She has made great plans for this Independence Day, she wanted you to be here, but I told her that you are protecting our National Flag from an evil witch, she somewhat believed. She has decorated the complete balcony with little national flags and persuaded me to buy her a green and white dress. She is such a doll.



I hope you might be having better plans for the Independence Day. What better can one offer his or her country and nation than to get rid of the nemesis that has encroached into the veins of our motherland? Don't you worry about us, do what is to be done. It melts my heart when I see innocent people suffer daily at the hands of these terrorists. If God has given you a chance to extend His Justice, then brave up and ensure this chance is not lost and return victorious. We are proud of you and so is our nation.

Back here, all families of our regiment have developed a unique spirit of friendship. We visit each other very often and it feels of being related by blood. We find comfort by sharing with one another, our joy and sorrows. I have told all the lady wives that looking after our children at home while our husband fights for an esteemed cause and staying strong is our *Jihad*. We all pray for your well-being and men fighting beside you. Hopefully our prayers will bear fruit and you and your comrades will be back here safe and sound.

I have bought a suit from my favourite designer. I have kept it in the closet till the day you will return. I will wear it and will take you to your favourite place to dine. Now you have the extra motivation, I suppose things will find a better pace. We are waiting for your safe return.

I want you to always remember that you are the source of happiness in my life. You make me so complete; it is beyond words. I love your wit, your charm, your ability to make me laugh even when tears flow heavily from my weary eyes. You are my best friend, my strength and my breath.

I have big plans for the future, so many places to see and shops to attack. Come home soon, and write back sooner. I know times are hard but as Allah says, after every hardship there is ease. Stand tall and soon it will be over. We will be looking forward from your side. Take care of yourself and your men, may Allah Almighty guide you to victory.

Your Ever Loving Wife  
Maryam

# A Tale of Two Martyr Brothers

Naila Inayat

Lieutenant Colonel Amer Baig Mirza and Major Umar Baig Mirza embraced *shahadat* in years 2005 and 2009, respectively. Their families, today, carry the spirit of martyrdom and the resolve to sacrifice even more for Pakistan.

These days it has really become difficult to keep up with the mass media debates on defining a ‘traitor’ – the practice of labelling one as a traitor as opposed to a loyalist has become the norm of the day. Sometimes the mere use of terms like: ‘martyr’, ‘patriot’, ‘nationalist’ etc., blurs their actual meaning, and as a nation we’re experts at doing that. For instance, ironically though, the most-quoted figure of at least 51,000 people, including over 3,500 security personnel, killed in terror acts in Pakistan since 9/11 attacks remains a lifeless figure for many. Of course, yet it is a worrisome moment for all of us as a nation.

In our villages, towns and cities, we come across many families who have lost their dear ones, for no other cause but while defending the motherland. These families make us proud due to their unflinching faith in the country, and in the cause for which their loved ones chose to die happily. These families are always seen determined to carry on with the mission of defending the country and it values the way their loved ones who sacrificed happily while serving the country.

One such family is that of Maj Umar Baig Mirza and Lt Col Amer Baig Mirza, brothers of the Commandant ‘Command

and Staff College' Quetta, Major General Shahid Baig Mirza. All the three brothers were commissioned in 11 Punjab Regiment – a Battalion that their proud father, Lt Col Abdul Haq (retd), was also part of. “Both of my martyred sons and my eldest son Shahid were passionate about joining the army and wanted to follow their father. He was one amongst the prisoners of 1971 War and young Amer used to say that he would join the army to take his father's revenge from Indira Gandhi,” tells the proud mother, Zaib-un-Nisa.

“I remember Amer got his arm injured in the earthquake of October 8, 2005, but he kept working for the rescue operation without taking rest. Amer and Umar were both much passionate for *shahadat* and that they loved Pakistan more than anything,” she added. Zaib-un-Nisa shared the grief of losing her sons, “it is unexplainable to lose your children but then I feel proud of being the mother of courageous sons who sacrificed their lives while serving for the country. Even their wives are to be commended for putting up such a brave face in the difficult times and bringing up the children in such a nice way. I am proud of them,” she said. “Though Umar was younger to Amer Bhai but both were very close to each other,” tells Asma, wife of Umar Baig (*Shaheed*). Recalling the earthquake of 2005, Asma tells that they were stationed at Bagh, where Lt Col Amer and Maj Umar were serving in the same unit, 11 Punjab. “The families of all the officers were pulled out immediately and a week later, on October 15, I was in Rawalpindi when Umar's helicopter crashed,” her voice begins to tremble.

The helicopter was on a relief mission and Maj Umar Baig Mirza was guiding the pilots to reach to the affectees. It wasn't the first mission for young Umar who had done several relief operations since the October 8 earthquake. Although Umar wasn't asked to go but he volunteered to accompany on the pilot's request for a difficult mission in an uncertain weather. Lt Col Roghani, Capt Alamdar and others who embraced martyrdom in the crash shall never be forgotten because of their devotion to duty. “Initially it was very difficult to come to terms with the entire situation, my children were too young

and one is never ready for untimely death. But I got strength with the passage of time and by realising that my husband died for a cause – he saved many lives in the relief efforts – his country was his only passion,” she says.

Lt Col Amer had always romanticised *shahadat* and ever since the death of Umar he became very expressive about his thoughts on martyrdom. “When I got married to Amer, within a few days he had started talking about his desire of *shahadat*. When he joined the military, he not only spent time at Siachen, but also volunteered for the Kargil War in 1999, but he didn't get a go-ahead then,” says Anika, wife of Amer Baig (*Shaheed*). And then on May 27, 2009, an explosives laden vehicle rammed into the gate of ISI office in Lahore that resulted in the death of at least 26 people and injuring many. Lt Col Amer Baig Mirza was one of the two ISI officers who embraced *shahadat* in the incident. “If there is anything that has kept me strong in tough times is the way Amer carried himself after Umar Bhai's *shahadat*. He was very calm and composed and kept the entire family together. For Umar's family, we moved to Lahore so that we could be around the children. I had seen him cry for his brother all alone but in front of his mother and rest of his family, he put up a strong demeanour – and that has exactly been my inspiration ever since Amer left us,” she says.

Both Asma and Anika (both are first cousins) tell that their sons, 10-year-old Ahmed Umar and 17-year-old Adnan Amer are passionate to join the army and someday will wear the uniform. As mothers, where it is definitely a proud moment, but then the lives of officers are so tough that their families often find themselves in difficult situations.

“It has been a tough journey as a wife of an army officer and I can't begin to imagine how it would be as a mother, if at all Adnan decides to follow his father and his uncles. But I will always support him and there is no doubt about that,” says determined Anika. “For Ahmed the image of army is still something that he can relate to, the only memory of his father because he was only one-and-a-half-year-old when Umar died and today all he has are the memories and the great work that

his father and uncles have done for Pakistan,” says Asma. Owing a debt of gratitude to such valiant sons of Pakistan, April 30, also known as *Yaum-e-Shuhada* (or Martyrs’ Day), the nation commemorates to pay tributes to such unsung heroes who died for a cause – a cause to defend Pakistan at all costs.

# My Martyred Brother

Ali Shahzad

It was 1315 hours on September 24, 2016, an unusually sunny Saturday in Beijing.

I had just returned to my dormitory after attending an exhibition held by the different clubs in my university. Had I not been exhausted from the guitar I played alongside my crew, I would have loved to spend the whole day over there. It was a jolly good day filled with memories I had made through my interaction with the Chinese students, expanding my social circle. Unusual to my routine on a weekend, I decided to take a mid-day siesta. My last thoughts, as I would remember, comprised of how thankful I was to my God for giving me all the success and happiness a person of my position could possibly desire.

And then the clock struck 1718 hours. As per norm, I swiped my finger across my mobile to check the time. Incidentally, I also decided to share some of the pictures of the exhibition on social websites. And then I saw a message sent by an old colleague from Pakistan.

“I have just come to know that your brother has ejected from his aircraft. I hope he is safe”. “You’re damn right he is safe”, I thought to myself. I had suddenly realized that I had no remaining balance in my mobile phone, hence there was no way to contact my father in case of an emergency, unless he had a live internet connection in Pakistan. The sun was setting, and I remember everyone rushing to the makeshift prayer rooms we had set up in our dormitory. I rushed to a friend’s room, grabbed his mobile phone and returned to my room for

making the call.

And then the hammer dropped. As my father would describe in a melancholic tone, my only brother (Flight Lieutenant Umer Shahzad) had embraced martyrdom in an F-7 air crash during a routine exercise in Peshawar.

There was no one else in my room, since everyone was either busy with *maghrib* prayers or fixing up a meal in the dormitory kitchen.

The first thing I could think of was to muster up the courage to offer my prayers in my room, including the longest bows I have ever made to the Almighty. All my spoken and unspoken prayers must have shaken the clouds. And then, after 30 minutes of fully absorbing the news and coming out of shock, I realized that I should call my room-mate and get help.

“Talha, please come to the room. I need some help,” I called my room-mate.

“Coming in a minute,” he replied. And then he was the first one I broke the news to.

“Talha, I am not in a position to book my air tickets. I can’t think clearly. Help me, please.”

There is a problem with the flights from China to Pakistan; only 3 flights in a week and all of them on weekdays. How was my air ticket booked? Who called the taxi to the airport? How did I keep my composure (with no one else)? And how on earth was I able to attend my brother’s funeral and burial service in Lahore in the next 24 hours? Only Allah would have the answers to these questions. The truth of the matter is that I had to find a connecting flight to Lahore from Beijing, with a 6-hour transit time in Abu Dhabi.

As a student striving to open my eyes to the world, I have always struggled in finding inspirational personalities to learn from. Alas! Who knew that I had the biggest example right

beside me? I had to face the most difficult flight plan ahead, so I kept my mind calmly occupied with the thoughts of my brother's personality, and what I had just lost.

I had lost my best friend.

Flt Lt Umer Shahzad was born in Lahore on July 19, 1990. He was 26 when he embraced martyrdom. He was the eldest of the two sons of Air Commodore Asif Shahzad. He was intelligent, well-disciplined and a friendly person, always acquainted with most of the people around the block. And there's a possible explanation to this too; Umer was talented on nearly all levels, so he appealed to large number of people from different backgrounds, with different tastes. No matter what kind of lens is used to gauge the personality of Umer, he would always stand out from the crowd.

He had an academic strength about him. He always stood in the top 3 positions in his class. He broke all records in his college with his A's in the GCSE O' Level. And honestly speaking, he was one of the best teachers I have had the pleasure to learn from. As a younger brother, I would inherit all of his important 'notes' in the school, and he would always be ready to give me a crash course whenever I needed one.

Umer also had a liking for performing arts. His acts and plays were still remembered among the senior faculty of his schools and residents of the Air Force bases. One of his feats of acting, called the '*Little Man*', also went viral on social media websites. He was a self-taught guitarist, and similar to many things, I also learned this art from him. I remember Umer alone, having enough confidence to participate in all of the local gigs with his own musical band called the UKS.

Umer was also an honourable sportsman and a fair competitor, too. During our two years stay in England (from 2003 to 2005 due to my father's postgraduate education), I clearly remember my brother winning all sorts of trophies, while playing cricket in Cranfield University. His coach was very much impressed by his performance, to the point that he



even decided to approach my father one day, seeking permission to recommend Umer for the *county cricket*. Football, basketball, volleyball or any other sport, Umer was not only a participant in such activities, he would also prove himself to be a true captain leading by example.

I will never forget his tears of joy, as soon as he received his call letter to join Pakistan Air Force. It was one of those moments (as described by most of the successful people in literature) where a person receives his calling towards what is destined for him. Now that I think of it, Allah definitely had much better plans for him. Indeed, there's a lesson to be learnt here for the youth.

He exhibited peak performances after his induction in the Air Force. At PAF Academy Risalpur, the senior cadets would always describe Umer as a true specimen of a 'Gentleman Cadet'. His strength in the academics, physical fitness, discipline (and all the qualities that are required for a good officer) combined with his management and leadership skills, earned him the award of the AUO (Academy Under Officer, the most prestigious appointment for a cadet in the academy). On completion of his training as a Pilot Officer from the PAF Academy, Umer also won the General Service Training (GST) Trophy as well as the Sword of Honour, due to his exceptional performance as a young cadet. For anyone not familiar with the jargon, these are the most prized awards in the PAF Academy, a dream of every cadet enrolled. But Umer was destined for a place much higher, indeed.

Even during his service as a Flying Officer and Flight Lieutenant, Umer's senior officers were always satisfied with his learning curve and adaptability to the profession. He was a true leader, a humble man to work alongside, as described by his course mates in the Air Force. Come what may, no one ever doubted in his ability to lead. On a personal note, I always thought that at his time, he would make a great Chief of the Air Staff, and I always motivated him to do his best in the line of duty, and become the best!

In September, his squadron arrived at PAF Base Peshawar for an exercise and Umer visited our home in Peshawar. Perhaps it was the fate that brought him to see our parents for the last time before leaving. The last wash received by Umer's green flight suit was given by my mother herself.

After the crash, his body was brought to the CMH Peshawar. It was a closed-casket funeral service, which was attended by the highest-ranking officials of our armed forces including the three services chiefs. Former Chief of Army Staff Gen Raheel Sharif expressed his feelings to my father saying, "Asif, you know that I have become the Chief of Army Staff, yet my mother still remembers my *Shaheed* elder brother, Shabbir Sharif all the time. You have suffered a great personal loss, but you have also been honoured by the Almighty to be the father of a Martyr. Never lose sight of this lasting pride."

The funeral prayers were offered multiple times in various cities including Peshawar, Lahore and Quetta, the home base of his squadron. His body was taken to be buried in Lahore with a service procession to our uncle's house. It was the same house in which we had celebrated Umer's engagement to our uncle's daughter. Plans were in hand for his wedding next year. Alas! Carrying my brother's coffin from the same house where we had plans to celebrate his wedding was devastatingly painful. I pray no one suffers this way; it is too tragic for human souls to bear.

Umer's funeral was the only event that I was able to attend 2 hours later after landing in Pakistan. I had to say goodbye to my brother before I could say anything to anyone else in Pakistan. It is not a coincidence that he has been buried very close to the airport (a place echoing with the thunderous sound of the turbo engines every now and then) alongside some of the greatest martyrs of our country. Many brave soldiers have laid down their lives for our great nation, Pakistan.

The frequent postings of our parents in the armed forces do not allow us to settle in a particular place for a very long time. Therefore, I would like to imagine that most of the people like

me do not get the opportunity to have solidified friendships outside of our homes a lot. Therefore, on a personal level, I have not only lost my only sibling, but also my best friend!

But interestingly, I still feel Umer's presence around myself, reassuring my faith in a verse about the martyrs in my religion *"And do not say about those who are killed in the way of Allah, they are dead. Rather, they are alive, but you perceive [it] not"* (Baqarah, 2:154). For the last 6 years, we have never lived in the same place anyway. Although he is now away from my sight, I still feel that my brother is just a call away.

*'If a man can bridge the gap between life and death, if he can live on after he's dead, then maybe he was a great man.'*

(James Dean)

# Martyred in Captivity

**Mrs Maj Hussain**

Enter Summer 1972 – a son of this soil anxiously paces in his room, engrossed in his thoughts when he is startled by a knock. Before he has time to think, the door opens. On seeing a familiar face, he heaves a sigh of relief. “You have a package,” murmurs the delivery boy as he drops it and runs. He does not know but this is the highlight of the soldier’s month. Overcome by excitement he leaps towards the box, opening it ever so slightly. Joyous yet cautious, completely aware of how precarious the situation is. One misstep and it could be the end for him.

With his back to the door, he pulls out the contents – a book, a fresh pair of clothes and some sweets. Tears well up in his eyes, it all smells of home. He holds the book to his chest as he rummages through the clothes. There has to be something, he thinks, not ready to let go. He sticks his hand in the pockets, and they meet something. With trembling hands, he unfolds the picture he had just pulled out. A defiant tear escapes his eyes as he stares at the picture of his newborn. In this moment he feels like captive; captivated by the beauty of his daughter’s face.

The jubilation in his heart knows no bounds, for expressions such as these keep his hope unscathed. This is the story of many of our country’s daring men who have sacrificed their lives for their motherland. Below is the account of one such son of the soil.

Let me acknowledge the efforts of Pakistan Army, which has recognized the sacrifices of its men to the optimum. Though

due recognition to earlier *Shuhada* had always been there, yet the motivation and ownership in the present era is above par. My husband PA-6776, Major Muhammad Hussain of the Ordnance Corps, succumbed to the torture by the callous enemy and eventually laid his life during the captivity after the 1971 War in Meerut, India.

This unsung hero gave his life for the nation in the most perilous situation. This story began on March 4, 1942 when Maj Muhammad Hussain was born in a military family of village Buchal Kalan, District Chakwal. After receiving early education in Chakwal and Karachi, he joined the Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) Kakul with 27 PMA Long Course in November 1960. Upon graduation from PMA he joined the Ordnance Corps in April 1963. His first posting was to Quetta followed by stays at various places in Pakistan. On October 30, 1970 while serving as a Major, he was deputed as an ATO in 9 Division HQ, Kharian. Soon after taking over the post, the Division moved to East Pakistan.

As the 1971 War ended, the officers and troops were sent to various camps in India. One such camp was Number 40 in Meerut where Maj Hussain was imprisoned. At home, Maj Hussain was assumed missing until his name was published in the POWs' list.

Although a detailed account of the day-to-day occurrences is not available, yet many of Maj Hussain's colleagues elaborated on his general routine at the camp. Coupled with the few letters received from the officer it can be inferred that the general behaviour of the Indian army towards POWs was cruel. In captivity, the officer was often taken to unknown places. However, what he endured there was neither shared by him nor the perpetrators. According to fellow captives who narrated on return, Maj Hussain would often complain of headaches and stay quiet for hours. This was in stark contrast to how his friends and family knew him – as a jovial and lively individual.

All captives at the camp were fed substandard foods,

despite having received clear quality standards and instructions from World Health Organization (WHO). The food they were fed was mixed with grinded pieces of glass due to which many officers developed serious health conditions.

As a result of the torture inflicted on the officer, he developed some health issues. According to the letter received, meningitis took him over. However, according to his fellow POWs, it was not a natural disease but was inflicted upon him through various tortures and other medical means. Maj Hussain was admitted in CMH Meerut on May 15, 1973. He was unable to identify faces at first; on May 17 or 18, he went into coma, and on May 21, 1973 he passed away. He sacrificed his life but chose not to succumb to the demands of his enemy.

Maj Muhammad Hussain left behind a wife and a three-year old daughter. He embraced *shahadat* and became a source of motivation and strength for the Army and his family.

His funeral was held in the Muslim graveyard at Meerut after which he was buried there as '*Amanat*'. At that time, it was declared that the body would be returned to the family later on. In accordance with the promise, efforts were made by his family to get the body buried in Pakistan but the request was denied by the Indian government. Today, I, his wife and my daughter, find not his grave to meet him but know well that his soul must be around in his beloved Pakistan. The Indians were cruel then to kill a helpless POW, and cruel still to deny a grave to the family of a Martyr!

# Behind the Enemy Lines

**Maj Abdul Wahid Danish, an ISI officer, embraced Shahadat while valiantly fighting against terrorists**

**Lt Col Fahd Bin Sultan**

On a pleasant afternoon of October 1997 at Jhelum, a tonga entered from the main gate of 46 Supply and Transport (S&T) Battalion and stopped in front of the unit office area. A tall handsome young man with thick moustaches dismounted with a typical black military trunk. Most awaited, second parental officer of the unit, Second Lieutenant Abdul Wahid Danish, had arrived. All the officers of the unit including myself received him. It was the beginning of a journey that culminated at his *shahadat* on February 7, 2014. He was an upright, straight forward and clear-headed officer with an abundant courtesy. His conduct and approach towards professionalism was quoted as an example for the young officers.

With a sober sense of humour, his light jokes would always make us laugh. The battalion was desperately waiting for Major Danish to take over the responsibilities as next Commanding Officer being parental officer, as he was being considered in the Promotion Board-2014. We both spoke to each other on February 7, 2014 at 1445 hours to know about his willingness to assume the command of the unit. Calm and contented as he was, he said, "Sir, as Allah wills". I tried to convince him to give preference to his parent unit. He promised to call me at night or the next morning. I was not knowing that that morning would never come. Next afternoon I received a phone call, not from Danish but about Danish. I could not believe; he was fighting for his life in the Intensive

Care Unit (ICU) of the Combined Military Hospital (CMH), in Lahore.

To my luck, I was in Rawalpindi and went to see him with all the hopes and prayers. All his memories flashed back while crossing the river Jhelum; my lips moving faster, praying to Allah for his life. As I reached the hospital in Lahore, I saw Maj Danish lying straight, unconscious. The flowers outside his room, the people visiting him and all well-wishers were praying for his long life. Seeing the pain in the eyes of his mother, brothers and family, I recalled his association with his family.

Maj Danish was a responsible son, supportive brother, affectionate father and a caring husband. His day would start in a routine with light mood, his daughter Ayesha normally patting his back and giggling. Overflowed with love, Danish would tell his wife, “My day has begun.” There were days in routine when his family found lunch awaiting them, ordered by Danish. When asked by his wife, the caring reply would be, “I thought you should relax today.”

On the fateful day of his *shahadat*, his wife asked him about his wellbeing as a routine at about 1745 hours, and his reply was, “All OK. Pray for my success. Allah Hafiz.” It was last conversation between the husband and wife. Allah had decided a higher pedestal for him and a test of endurance for the family. Danish had carried out many successful operations during his two-year tenure while being in the ISI and had given serious blows to the anti-state elements and saved many lives. Few days before his *shahadat*, he was working on a few elements closely linked with the terrorists. In order to nab them and their masters, he encircled the terrorists in the surroundings of Khanewal on February 7, 2014.

While he was trying to arrest them, he was hit by a bullet in the head from a point-blank range. Maj Danish fell on ground and the terrorist tried to run away. The cover force deployed by Maj Danish followed the terrorist, who ultimately blew himself up before being arrested. During the encounter, one extremist



was killed while the third one was apprehended. Maj Danish was given first aid treatment in District Headquarters Hospital Vihari and was evacuated in a helicopter to the CMH, Lahore. He was in a state of coma and was operated upon immediately, however the doctors declared next 48 hours crucial for him. After two days, he gave few positive signs, and breathed for 50 seconds without ventilator.

Next day he moved his head and foot when a wet cloth was put on his eyes. In the similar struggle to recover, his health kept deteriorating while doctors declared his brain clinically dead. All were waiting and praying for a miracle to happen but Allah had planned an eternal life for him in Heavens. He left us at 2055 hours on February 16, 2014 for the highest award.

Maj Danish had saved Punjab from yet another tragic incident by laying down his life. He was different and unique. He lived like an example to be quoted and gave his life for Pakistan. He is the hero of entire nation. May Allah be with his family and his son Awaiz and daughter Ayesha. In recognition of his services for the country, the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan conferred him '*Tamgha-i-Basalat*' posthumously on March 23, 2014.

# Too Young to Die!

**Advocate Fizza Malik Shaheed became victim of terrorism while defending the law**

**Capt Kanwal Kiani**

The sunrise of March 3, 2014 was usual for everyone but not for the few families of Islamabad whose dear ones had left homes for routine work but were destined to leave this world forever. Tariq Nasrullah Malik and his family were one of them. The family could not even think of receiving the shocking news about the sudden death of their daughter, Advocate Fizza Malik, who had left home for the court to carry out her routine law practice. When she had woken up on March 3, she was an aspiring junior lawyer and in a couple of hours, she became the “breaking news” all over the world. “We were praying for her safety after hearing the news of the blast but it was hard to accept that my angel who said goodbye a few minutes before with the promise to come back soon, had left forever,” shared Mrs Tariq who lost her only daughter Fizza Malik when the terrorists attacked the District Courts in Islamabad, killing 12 innocent citizens and injuring over 30.

“She was the asset of my life and much of my dreams and hopes were associated with her. After losing her, I have questions to ask from these terrorists and religious extremists. She never harmed anyone and did not deserve such kind of death,” added Mrs Tariq with tears running down her face. Fizza Tariq Malik, 23, was the youngest and the only sister of Saad and Ali. A law graduate (LL.B) from UK, she wanted to pursue her career in Pakistan. She had an option to start her practice in Dubai but she was devoted to work in Pakistan and was often heard saying, “the quality of leadership skills and

cultural diversity I have learnt and experienced through my degree has provided me a platform to become an agent of optimism for change in my society.” “It's high time that we need to put an end to the barbaric acts of the terrorists. For how long will people keep losing their loved ones? What future do girls have who get foreign education and wish to serve their country? Will they ever be provided adequate security in a society where terrorists roam around with licence to kill anyone at any time? If these questions are not answered now, time will never forgive us,” said Saad, Fizza *Shaheed's* elder brother.

Fizza's elder brother, Ali, was equally sad. He also expressed his sentiments, “Being Muslims we believe that martyrs are alive, so I want to tell Fizza that we love you and we miss you so much. We feel like a part of our heart and soul is lost.” Her family recalls her excitement and at the same time nervousness, at the time of the interview for obtaining practice licence as a lawyer. She wanted to be a criminal lawyer, not knowing that before stepping into her field of choice, she will become its prey one day.

Fizza was the first one who received bullets; one in neck and the other on chest. This visibly proves her valour that even in the time of mayhem, she was daringly facing it. President Islamabad High Court Bar Association Mohsin Kayani while recollecting his memories about Fizza tells that she was full of energy and wisdom; she lost her life in an attack by the malicious elements working against Pakistan. I wish I could go back in the past and take Fizza along to the High Court that day, Kayani sighed with whom she worked since November 2013.

Madiha, another victim of the attack who saw Fizza alive for the last time told, “I will never forget the very first day of my professional life, that started with great fervour and ended dreadfully, the day when I found and lost forever, a friend, a colleague to be, with whom I had just started to move around in the court.”

Fizza was ready to go to obtain the degree of LL.M from UK. While applying for the programme, she wrote about herself: “My struggle became my strength to strive for success. I wanted to diversify and practise law to be able to implement changes. But challenges came my way yet made me tough and I fought through my medical problem of Retrobulbar Optic Neuritis. I wasn't one of those who are born with a golden spoon but I was definitely one with the outlook to achieve one. I continue to learn to the best of my abilities and pursue for higher education to attain my goals, high quality of education, diverse culture and skills that will make a difference.”

“My daughter was very gentle, loving and caring...have always been very supportive to everyone. I can't say anything about the people who snatched our pleasure from us, they are also children of someone,” said Mr Malik in a low bemoaning voice. I ask the government and concerned authorities to take action against her assassins and bring them to justice. She was the youngest in the company with a lot of positivity, energy and ambitions evident through her sparkling eyes, one of her former colleagues told, with whom Fizza worked in a UK based customer service firm.

The Malik family broke down in tears several times while sharing their daughter's memories and it was really very difficult for us to console them with mere words of condolence. To glorify the sacrifice rendered by their daughter, the family has decided to form “Fizza Trust” with the theme, “Every Life Counts”, aiming to help educate Pakistani women in the field of law.

Pakistan is passing through challenging times. Hundreds of Fizza(s), Aitazaz(s), and Talib Hussain(s) have become victim of terrorism and religious extremism. I don't know how much more bloodsheds we have to see, but if we stand together against these terrorists and start calling spade a spade, we may see our motherland free of the radical elements and extremism.

# Gul Zada: The Citizen

**Lt Col Mehar Omar Khan**

This is not an obituary. Obituaries are for the dead and hasn't God said, those who fall for His cause and the cause of humanity never die? This is not a tribute either, for no words have the glow befitting the glory that is selfless service to one's nation. This is but a soldier's humble salute to an extraordinary citizen; an outstanding son of the hills where I now serve. This is a song written to the soul of a hero who didn't want any medallions for the sport that would ultimately claim his life. And it is hoped that as the song is sung, its beats will be heard by all who, without wearing any military fatigues or ribbons, desperately fought and honourably died for the idea that is the Quaid's Pakistan.

Pedantic treatises on counter-insurgency suggest that armies can't win such wars without support of the people. Gul Zada's work in life, and his glory in death, proves that people are actually the army. It is more so in our case. For over a decade now, we have been locked in a seminal struggle against forces that aim for the very jugular of our collective ideals and aspirations. Our enemies are brutal in their tactics and insidious in their narrative. They prey on the minds and bodies with equal ferocity. These bands of what some call "the fourth-generation warfare" (4GW) know no morality and respect no law. They use society's networks to pulverize the nation from within. They operate amongst the people and exploit divisions and fault-lines within the communities only to ultimately take the same societies apart and rule over the ruined homes and broken hearts.

The only sure way to decisively defeat such enemies is for

the people to offer no chinks, no exploitable wedges. It does not need a lot of thinking. It only needs a will, on the part of every man and every woman, to vigorously protect their freedom, to lead their lives without coercion and fear. It needs Gul Zada's spirit; his unschooled but mighty heart. It is only when the citizens' spirit combines with the soldiers' skill that a nation comes out victorious against the menace we have been facing.

It's all easier said than done because patriotism is a surreal emotion that is invariably and entirely one-sided. The object of this love is a nebulous, immaterial idea called varyingly as one's land, one's country or one's nation. The lover goes on loving without expecting, with any clarity, a return of the feeling. Hundreds of thousands of brave men and women live and die in the name of that boundless, bottomless, endless love. Gul Zada gave life for Pakistan. To men like our Gul Zada, patriotism often means love of one's faith and family, blood and belief, honour and esteem.

It's about one's ownership of that small home on a big hill; those lush forests and green terraces; healthy cattle and noisy children; and a bright moon over shimmering snow. It's about all those little things that, when threatened, acquire an untradeable place in one's heart. It's about being master of one's own destiny; about being the captain of one's own soul. It is when those seemingly vague, individual feelings of many are collected into one pot, that a brave, proud and undefeatable nation is born. And hence perhaps, a brave nation needs the incorruptible soul of many like Gul Zada.

Gul Zada never claimed to fully understand the scope and scale of the challenge facing our nation. He didn't care much about the academic intricacies of the term "patriotism." But he was always rock solid in defending his ancient right to have his way on his hill. He was unwilling to submit to the ruffians and rascals masquerading as "custodians" of his faith and his tradition. Around the fall of 2011, Pakistan Army's pursuit of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Swat (TTS) thugs arrived at the farthest edge of our sovereign territory in Upper Dir. The terrorists

couldn't find a lasting toe-hold in the entire Dir region mainly because the local populace was unwilling in the face of all threats to let their homes become bunkers for the bandits. Gul Zada was amongst the bands of hundreds of local patriots willing to fight and die for what was considered as their prized tradition of unwavering resistance against the threats to their freedoms. Just a couple of kilometres inside Pakistan, Gul Zada's home sat atop a wooded hill in a small village called Sunai. The lore says that the village had been named in the memory of a Hindu lady, Sunai Bai, whose high quality *lassi* (yogurt drink) was a riot in the area.

The village thinned out into a ravine which gradually narrowed and climbed into a pass before rolling into Afghanistan. He thus lived right inside the mouth of danger. The treacherous and wooded pass offered an easy entry and exit route to his enemies just across the border. Our enemies in this area included more than half a dozen proclaimed offenders from Gul Zada's own village. These felons went on to become the disciples of the mad mullah notorious for dealing once in radios and now in roadside bombs. The criminal law-breakers now claimed to be fighting for the banner of that greatest of all law-givers, our Prophet (PBUH). Any one of them could, on his day, attempt on Gul Zada's life. This, however, never deterred him from doing what he thought was the right thing.

He worked hand in hand with the Army. He patrolled his area, organized his kinsmen and dominated the passes used by the terrorists for infiltration into Pakistan. His watchful eyes pried for any unfamiliar faces in his area and his prompt reporting led to countless successful responses against the terrorists. Over time, Gul Zada became a one-man army in support of our deployment. And this was enough to make him a rather high-value target for the terrorists.

On October 12, 2012, Gul Zada came to the nearby military post to have a cup of *qehwa* with the Army Officer he called his brother. In the evening, just as the sun set on a million trees across Dir changing colours before dropping their crumbling

leaves, he left for his home. He wanted to say his evening prayers with his son, a sixteen years old boy who, Gul Zada would often proudly say, was taller than him. On the way, a coward lay in ambush to take the life of this brave-heart. In a dark, thickly forested corner of the trail, he was hit. Incessant bursts of AK-47 rained into his chest and ripped him apart. The enemy quickly crawled back into the safety of what is the “sovereign” state of Afghanistan. Gul Zada, the lion-heart, lay dead in a pool of blood. The village of Sunai Bai had lost its bravest son. Early next morning, he was buried next to his father’s grave.

Exactly a year after his death, in the face of approaching winters, Pakistan Army has established itself on the heights that have choked the murderers’ routes forever. Hundreds of the village folks worked with the Army day in and day out. A police check post now operates from within Gul Zada’s village. Dozens of schoolchildren chant national anthem every single morning, literally from within the hearing distance of where their hero was martyred. To the chagrin of the maniacs, this anthem is the one written by Iqbal for the nation of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. As the vermin who killed our citizen sulks across the border – homeless and condemned forever – Sunai Bai’s village has moved on.

Gul Zada’s son, now even taller, regularly meets with the Army Post Commander his father called a brother. He travels back to his home unarmed. Never again will anyone, at any dark, wooded corner of the trail, dare to cast an evil eye at our people. While the counter-insurgency treatises may say what they will, a nation’s enemies are routed only when people become the army. And like it happens in an army at war, Gul Zada’s son has taken over the emblem from exactly where his father left. The results of the duel between Gul Zada and his enemies are unmistakable. Like all fights between the right and the wrong, the right endures. Gul Zada’s son is the owner of his home, his hearth, his hill, his pride and his destiny. A grateful nation celebrates his sacrifice. The killers of Gul Zada continue to lead the faceless lives of thieves in others’ country, on others’ lands and in others’ homes.



# Christians Who Laid Down Life for Pakistan

**Azam Mairaj**

Since the creation of Pakistan, the Christian sons of soil never hesitated to sacrifice their lives for the defence of motherland. They always stood shoulder to shoulder with their Muslim brethren to shed their blood for the noble cause of defending Pakistan. The pioneer of this caravan is Younus, son of Qaisar, who hoisted the green flag at Pando Hills during the Kashmir war in 1948.

The Christian defenders have always given a firm shoulder to their Muslim countrymen whether it was Kashmir War of 1948, Pakistan-India wars of 1965 and 1971, Kargil War of 1999, or the ongoing War on Terror. They always fought on the front foot whenever the beloved homeland called them for the duty. According to the 'Shuhada Cell' of the GHQ, so far 52 Christians have sacrificed their lives for Pakistan, from Pakistan Army alone excluding PAF and Pakistan Navy. It is also encouraging to know that out of 70 *Sitara-i-Jurat* of PAF, seven are Christians and, out of seven, two embraced martyrdom. Younus, son of Qaisar, from 16 Punjab Regiment showered his blood at Pando Hills; Pilot Officer Novan Theodore Fazal Ellahi embraced martyrdom at Attock; and Flight Lieutenant Edwin gave his life on duty while flying the F-6 aircraft at Quetta. Out of 140 martyrs of Gayari (Siachen Sector), four were Christians namely Asif Masih, Amoon Gill, Adil Masih and Naveed Masih.

Squadron Leader Peter Christy was among the pilots who retaliated with full force during the 1965 War. As a Flight

Lieutenant, he was navigator of B-57 Canberra aircraft and remained part of many successful operational missions. To honour his bravery and professionalism, the Government of Pakistan awarded him '*Tamgha-i-Jurat*' and promoted him as Squadron Leader. As the 1971 War started, he was on deputation with the PIA and was called back to his parent department, PAF. There were reports of air attacks on Karachi and this important city had to be defended at all costs. A Do-or-Die (DoD) mission was planned, the Christian Base Commander of Mauripur Base, Air Commodore Nazir Latif, gave a detailed briefing and two men volunteered for the mission – Squadron Leader Khusro, who had earlier retired from the Air Force but was called back, and Squadron Leader Peter Christy.

On the morning of December 6, 1971, both headed for the mission in B-57 bomber aircraft. While returning from the mission, a surface-to-air missile hit their aircraft and both embraced martyrdom. The Indian Air Force did not verify this incident and they were declared "Missing in Action" and later 'Martyred'.

Wing Commander Marvin Lesley was commissioned in 1954. During the 1965 War, then young Flt Lt Marvin Lesley Middle Coat (known as Commander Lesley) was deployed at Masroor Base Karachi. When the enemy attacked Karachi, he was among those flying the F-86 aircraft. He destroyed two aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) and was known as "Defender of Karachi" for his bravery and professionalism. At Lahore Air Base, he was given the charge of 9 Squadron where he held the spirit of his troops high by leading from the front. He flew 17 sorties and three photo reconnaissance missions. The government awarded him '*Sitara-i-Jurat*'. It is noteworthy that he left his attractive deputation at Jordan and voluntarily rushed back to Pakistan as the 1971 War started.

On December 12, 1971, together with his colleagues when he completed his mission, an Indian MiG 47 Squadron attacked them. He took a lower flight and saved his aircraft from two missiles but when he reached near Gulf of Kutchh, another

missile hit his aircraft. According to IAF, Flt Lt Bharat Bhoshan Soni, who hit his aircraft, saw him ejecting from the aircraft and falling in the deep sea and asked the headquarters to send a rescue team. When the rescue team reached, Commander Lesley was found nowhere. He was declared "Missing in Action" and was again awarded '*Sitara-i-Jurat*'.

On the same day, on December 12, 1971, another young man aged 19 was writing the story of valour with his blood. 2/Lt Daniel Utarid volunteered for the most difficult task when he passed out from PMA, Kakul, and went to a deployed unit in Sylhet, East Pakistan. On the morning of December 13, 1971, his Company returned from a night-long difficult mission. As he was having breakfast, he received the news of the enemy attack on a platoon of 31 Punjab that bore heavy losses. He got his soldiers ready and immediately reached the front. He was severely injured during an encounter; three bullets were removed from his chest during the surgery. He requested the surgeon to give those bullets to his mother as a souvenir. He was recommended for '*Sitara-i-Jurat*'. Capt Michael Wilson fought the enemy at Chamb Sector in 1971 War and got injured in a tank accident on November 21, 1972 and later embraced martyrdom.

Since the beginning of War on Terror, the Christian soldiers have participated shoulder to shoulder with other Pakistani soldiers. The Martyr of Nawazkot, Major Sarmas Rauf, *Tamgha-i-Basalat*, is one of them, who sacrificed his life for the motherland. He got commission in 1987 in 44 FF and out of 20 years of his service; he spent 17 years in the border areas of Sialkot, Kashmir, Siachen and Waziristan. He never preferred his personal comfort over the defence of country. Maj Sarmas Rauf was serving at the Line of Control during the Kargil War 1999. He was posted from 44 FF to FC NWFP (later FC KPK) on January 3, 2006.

Ever since the start of Operation *Al Mizan*, 3 Wing Bajaur Scout had taken part in it and destroyed many important hideouts of the extremists. When his wing took the responsibility of Nawazkot, Maj Sarmas Rauf proved a strong

leader against the miscreants. Four days before his martyrdom, an important terrorist commander, his son and several accomplices were killed in an operation. To take the revenge, the terrorists laid siege of Nawazkot post and blocked the routes of supply. Under his command, the soldiers put up great resistance and caused major losses to the enemy. During the same operation, he was hit by an RPG 7 round. He initially got injured and due to excessive bleeding, passed away later. The martyr was awarded *Tamgha-i-Basalat*.

While documenting these sacrifices by Christian Martyrs and achievements by Christian *Ghazis*, I have full faith and conviction that the Christian sons of this soil have proved their worth whenever they are needed by the motherland. Out of the many Christian soldiers, 60 have laid their lives for Pakistan in total, whereas, seven are *Sitara-i-Jurat*, three are *Tamgha-i-Jurat* and four are *Tamgha-i-Basalat*. It was a pleasant surprise for me when I found out that Pakistan Army also looks after the families of Christian Martyrs with equal great care and responsibility and never forgets them. Mrs. Delsea Christie (widow of Peter Christie), Mrs. Rubina Sarmas Rauf (widow of Sarmus Rauf), Miss Lesley Middle Coat (daughter of Middle Coat) were all full of praise for the armed forces for taking care of the families and not forgetting them.

# To Light a Candle in the Darkness

Feryal Ali Gauher

The lane to his house is narrow, bordered on both sides by high walls, a drain running alongside the homes of the several families living in this ancient *qasbah* (town) of Zaidah, district Swabi. A stone wall looms to the right of the vehicle, constructed in the fashion of the ancient buildings of Gandhara, a land where centuries ago, the landscape was dotted with places of Buddhist worship idles and stupas, monasteries perched on hilltops preaching peace and harmony.

There is a stillness in the air, as if life itself had stopped as walls continued to grow higher, containing fear while keeping out freedom.

Mashal Khan's father steps towards us. I recognize him from the coverage given by the media to this family's profound loss, the coverage that held up a mirror to our ravaged and brutalized souls, to the hatred and bestiality that festers within. I recognize him, his daughters, his wife from the countless interviews we watched; helpless, outraged, eyes and mind unbelieving as we viewed soul-numbing footage of an enraged mob lynching a young man, hitting and kicking his inert body as it lay in the middle of a university campus where violence, not reasoning, seemed to have had been bred.

That young man, Mashal Khan, the second son of Iqbal Khan, had questioned the very ethos of how his university was being governed. He had dared to point a finger at what he

believed was a corrupt administration, a veritable mafia of men of letters who were devouring public funds meant to educate the young men and women of our country. He had spoken out clearly; he had not flinched in the face of the terrible threats that eventually became a reality this nation should never forget. Mashal Khan was, indeed, the light in a state of darkness, and his ruthless, unforgivable murder must not be allowed to pass into obscurity if we are to retrieve all that we have lost with his death, with the deaths of all those who have dared to speak out against obscurantism and obfuscation of all kinds.

I am ushered into a room where two young women clad in black *abayas* are seated on the sofa alongside the mantelpiece. Upon this mantelpiece are the many awards, trophies, and plaques received by Mashal Khan during his short but incredibly significant life. Mashal was a top student from school onwards, and he placed a high premium on education, encouraging his sisters to study and obtain the highest possible qualifications. Many women from Swabi have received professional degrees and have set the precedent for others to follow. In Mashal's family, he carried the beacon that led the way for his sisters to maximize their potential as capable human beings, empowered with education and enlightened with progressive views.

I speak with Stooria, the elder of Mashal's two sisters, seated on my left. She reiterates her resolve to continue with her education at the local university. She wants to become a pharmacist; she wants to help people heal. Her name is the Pushto word for "star", and she wants to shine in the firmament which shelters their home from the wrath of a mob gone mad with desperation, fed on fear, fed on countless years of injustice, ignorance, and neglect. She wants to heal all these people, she says, for they did not know what they were doing when they destroyed one of their own, a classmate, a friend just yesterday, a despised and reviled enemy today.

She talked about Mashal's love for books, about his curiosity regarding the social and political histories of different

nations and about his obsession with justice. Stooria insisted that it was these things which cost her beloved brother his young life, for in environments where questions were not to be asked, where injustices were not to be questioned, where the corrupt were allowed to roam free and the powerless were fettered, it was a crime to speak out, to question, to demand justice. She spoke patiently but within her I could feel the resentment, the outrage of a darkening sky closing in on the narrow shaft of light that had shown through her moist eyes as she mourned for Mashal.

The room where I sat could have been anywhere in our beloved country. There was a courtyard preceding it, with several string cots placed in the shade of the verandah. Older women sat here while men stayed outside in the lane, silently supporting this grieving family. I embraced each one of these women, and felt their hearts beating against mine, throbbing with the anguish of having buried a young man who was never given a chance to speak in his own defence before being hounded, shot in the head and chest, stripped bare, dragged along the corridors of his hostel and into the street, beaten, punched, kicked, pummeled, and battered with rods. Many of these young men who participated in the orgy of violence unleashed on April 13, 2017 were his classmates. The student who shot Mashal Khan was also his classmate. Those who pounded their fists against his chest and head, already bleeding, those who kicked him in his ribs and spine, were his fellow students, gathered at a brutal lynching on an ordinary day at a university named after a man who spoke for tolerance and justice, and for the rights of the Pakhtun nation.

Mashal Khan was wrongfully accused and wrongfully, brutally, murdered by an enraged, misguided, and merciless mob. This has been established by an omnipresent media. The charges leveled against him were declared misleading and untrue. This has been declared by the highest authorities in the land that the alleged corruption of an entire administration running the affairs of the university now in the spotlight is something that should not be allowed to pass into oblivion, like the countless other instances where people have died

seeking justice. In an environment where the trust deficit is growing every day, it is paramount that the accusations made by Mashal Khan against those who were siphoning off university funds, or those who were holding several posts simultaneously, being paid several salaries in contravention of university rules, or those who were overcharging tuition fees from young men struggling to be educated, be investigated by the most competent authorities. That vigilante justice was allowed to take the life of a young man in a place of higher learning at a time when justice itself was under siege. It is something that should shake up the entire nation and force us to look at ourselves in the mirror this tragedy has held up to us.

It has been established by sociologists, psychologists, and criminologists that the type of crowds that turn violent are fed on the fire of frustration and fueled by a set of grievances resulting from longstanding and unresolved problems and issues. During the 1930s, Adolf Hitler manipulated and then exploited human passions and resentments to mobilize a society against Jews, Poles, Hungarians, Russians – anyone who was not “German”. Hitler used growing antipathy towards the “other”, the “outsider”, and fomented the insecurity of a large segment of the German population after World War-I to whip up hatred against a perceived enemy, anyone who was different, anyone who represented a different set of values, who looked different, who subscribed to a different set of beliefs. Hitler fueled the xenophobia of a nation perceiving itself to be isolated and led it towards one of the biggest genocides of contemporary history.

Similar was the case when the students of Abdul Wali Khan University at Mardan dragged Mashal’s already lifeless body into the open and brutalized it again and again, endlessly, every punch, each kick, each screaming invective, each accusation lightening the burden of the gathered crowd. For that crowd, those hundreds of students, young men who signify the future of this nation, were burdened with much: they had been gifted the burden of ignorance by an educational system that denies the spirit of enquiry, which crushes the



spirit of debate. They had been fed on the obscurantism of a clergy that has glorified murder in the name of religion. They had been deprived of the tools of reason by a faculty that teaches by rote instead of by reading and understanding and discussing texts so that all views are considered, dissected, deconstructed and debated. These are the young men who become the frontline in a war of darkness against light, young men drowning in a deep well of ignorance and frustration, unable to see the light, unwilling to stand behind the one man who held up the torch beneath which all was obscurity and shadow.

What happens when such a mob gathers to bay for blood? Who is to stop the lynching? Where was the security apparatus? What do the university authorities have to say for themselves after such a heinous crime has scarred their institution forever? What do the followers of Bacha Khan have to say about a university named after his son, supposedly created to uphold the values of the tall and imposing figure also known as the Frontier Gandhi, a man who preached harmony and non-violence? How do we understand that those who profess to be enlightened and progressive are the very people who stopped the adoption of a resolution in the KPK provincial assembly condemning this brutal act in the name of religion?

If we study the footage of the gathering on that fateful day within the premises of the AWK University, we can see the fury being whipped up by the instigators of this crime. We can feel the quickening pulse of the crowd as it prepares itself for the hunt. We can smell the blood and can see it slipping over their eyes, blinding them to reason. We have seen it before, in the killing of the two young men in Sialkot, many years ago, a case still unresolved. We have seen the bodies of a man and his pregnant wife burnt to death inside a kiln where they fashioned clay into baked bricks, murdered on an allegation of blasphemy. We have seen crowds rip apart and burn the bodies of alleged petty criminals, caught in the act, condemned and sentenced by a mob which is judge, jury, and executioner all at the same time. We have seen a young girl thrown to

ferocious dogs as part of punishment pronounced by the long-outlawed *panchayat* system of rural Pakistan, we have known of peasants being beaten to death by their feudal master over the accusation of a petty theft. We have searched for the graves of women buried alive, and we have heard parliamentarians justifying such murders as being part of sacrosanct tradition. We have searched for the bodies of young women killed over the innocent and joyous act of clapping while a song is sung to celebrate a brother's wedding. Over the past several years, we have watched with horror as acts of terror have taken over 70,000 lives. And few have become numb; turn their faces away and look at the distance, as if this was not happening, as if nothing was out of place, as if it was just an ordinary day, an ordinary crowd of young men intent on killing their colleague.

It was not an ordinary day when I walked through the narrow lane leaving Mashal Khan's house, my heart heavy with the burden of impotence. There was nothing ordinary about his father, a poet who struggled hard to educate his children, selling biscuits in places far from Zaidah, small towns in Gilgit Baltistan, many miles from his home in this village in district Swabi. Iqbal Khan told me about the biscuits he would sell in the tiny district headquarters of Gahkuch where I had spent part of a summer living in the village of Hamardas, trying to understand why so many young women were taking their own lives, despite being educated, or perhaps, as I discovered, because they were educated but were forced to marry young men who had tended livestock or irrigated fields and knew nothing of the wealth of knowledge that could be gained through education.

There was nothing ordinary about Mashal Khan's mother who lamented that she could not kiss her son's hands before burying him as every bone she held was broken. There was nothing ordinary about the anger in Aimal Khan's voice as he spoke about the injustice and unjustified frenzy that took his brother's life, his eyes brimming with tears as he described the insensitive filming of the horrific lynching by fellow students using phone cameras. And there was nothing ordinary about the fact that a string cot lies alongside Mashal Khan's grave,

laid there for the police constable who keeps watch over the grave, protecting it from those who had stopped every car leaving the university campus that day, searching for Mashal Khan's body, swearing to set to fire the broken remains of this brilliant young man who stood first in every class, who had so much to offer us, who perhaps did not belong to prevailing mediocrity and hypocrisy but stood for excellence and integrity.

The young men accused of Mashal Khan's murder represent the dehumanization of a society where a war rages within us; planted, nurtured, and harvested by those who wish to see us slide into chaos and anarchy, allowing for the bigoted to lead the ignorant, these men are soldiers in an army of terror. Such armies are bred wherever discontent flourishes. Such armies are strengthened by the failure of governance and the mockery of accountability. Such armies cannot be stopped by a lone policeman guarding a freshly dug grave. Only the light that Mashal held up can show us the path out of this darkness. Only the will to cleanse our souls of bigotry and narrow fundamentalism can heal the wounds inflicted upon the soul of this nation.

As I stood beside Mashal's grave, the two young women in the black *abayas* came to join me. We stood silently in that peaceful plot of land planted with *poplar* trees by Iqbal Khan when he bought this tiny property for his sons to build their homes upon. Now his younger son lies buried beneath the soil of the ground that was to be his future home. It is here, next to the wheat fields and beneath the *poplars* that Mashal would come to study. And it was here that I stood with the two girls, unknown to Mashal's family, having traveled all the way from Rawalpindi to offer their prayers at the grave of a young man they had never met, but whose death they lamented as if he was one of their own.

As we raised our hands in supplication, I said a silent prayer for the two young women, brave and courageous, caring and compassionate, everything that we needed to become human again, to be led out of the darkness that has fallen upon us.

# Alert and Firm

## **An eyewitness account of the terrorist attack at Khalid Aviation Base Quetta and PAF Base Samungli**

**Lt Col Sohail Akbar Bajwa**

It was an evening as usual in Quetta as I was retiring at my residence and was enjoying the programmes of Independence Day on TV. It was around 2135 hours that I received a call from the Headquarters Southern Command (HQ SC) that I was needed to report immediately at Khalid Aviation Base (KAB), Quetta, due to a terrorist activity.

Being a Commanding Officer (CO) of Light Commando Battalion, I immediately passed instructions to my men and moved to the location of the incident. Meanwhile, I was informed that some intrusion by the terrorists had taken place both at the PAF Base Samungli and KAB. The CO of 16 Punjab, Lt Col Ahmed was also passed similar instructions, who also immediately moved to KAB.

Upon reaching KAB and taking control of my area of responsibility, I came to know that the terrorists were spotted by few civilians while they were attempting to cut the outer fence of the base and making their way in. The locals residing nearby KAB, displayed responsibility and immediately passed this information to the authorities concerned. The information was conforming to earlier threats to KAB and Samungli base, thus the entire security apparatus in the Cantonment as well as Samungli base came to red alert.

I was told to cordon off the base from south, checking suspicious movement and stop any spillover of the terrorists

towards the Cantonment. Meanwhile the General Officer Commanding (GOC) Major General Aftab, Brigadier Rohail and Base Commander Brigadier Aziz ul Hassan Usmani had been carrying the reconnaissance of the entire base periphery. At the same time, the QRF of my unit was put on 15 minutes notice possibly for PAF Base Samungli.

Meanwhile, 48 FF was also assigned to carry out search from the intrusion site. As soon the troops led by Lieutenant Colonel Waseem Iqbal and Captain Yasir approached the middle part of the fence, they were fired upon fiercely. The fire was so intense that it had hit Brig Usmani's vehicle, bursting its tyre, and a bullet also passed through the jeep of Maj Gen Aftab. It is important to mention about the valour of the Base Commander's driver who changed the burst tyre in a minimum time amidst heavy exchange of fire; he successfully brought the commander back to the base.

This fire caused multiple bullet injuries to the troops of 48 FF including Capt Yasir. However, the terrorists were fired back by the soldiers of 16 Punjab. The enemy was in near vicinity and fire exchange was taking place from as close as 70 metres. The valiant sons of 16 Punjab led by its brave officers proved true to their salt. In this dual of extreme nerves, they proved their professional mettle and hit the terrorists back with extreme courage and bravery.

Meanwhile, 16 Punjab on inner cordon of the base was reinforced by the troops of Punjab Light Commando Battalion led by Major Hassan in heavy volleys of fire. Moving forward, I contacted the CO of 16 Punjab and coordinated the employment of my men with him. The best part was that no intrusion had been made by the terrorists into KAB. The firefight continued till 0145 hours when the last of the big blasts was heard near inner fence. It was expected that all terrorists had been killed by that time. It was the same time that I received a call from the COS SC Major General Majid Ehsan who appreciated all the troops, took a stock of situation on ground and asked me for any further help in discharging of duties.

The situation and events at the PAF Base Samungli were no different from KAB. The provost and intelligence tentacles provided the information of a suspicious vehicle with about 8 individuals parked within the short vicinity of outer boundary of the base wall near Kili Khezi. The FC deployed outside the wall was assigned to check the vehicle. When the FC troops reached near the vehicle, the terrorists, of whom the two were wearing FC uniforms, started firing at them.

In the heavy exchange of fire, the terrorists spread out and started firing rockets, small arms and various other firearms. They fired about 5-6 rockets into the airbase, which landed near the main tarmac. Allah had been so kind that no harm was done and that few of those rockets didn't even explode. Three terrorists were killed during this encounter with the FC. This was followed by a fierce firefight between the terrorists and our own security guards on the outer fence, which resulted in multiple bullet and shrapnel injuries to the troops of 16 Punjab and Defence Services Guard (DSG).

During this exchange of fire, Wing Commander Mehr Gul, Commanding Officer of the under attack PAF squadron, rushed to the base's main tarmac. Simultaneously, Base Commander Air Commodore Salman Bukhari moved the troops of 16 Punjab and the PAF ground combaters to the boundary wall to tackle the expected intrusion. The terrorists had also made holes in the outer boundary wall and were making efforts to enter the base. In the same situation, the terrorists got inside the boundary wall and were hiding near one of the washrooms of DSG living area.

At about 0130 hours, Wing Commander Mehr Gul and Wing Commander Ameer Ullah (Chief Security Coordinator) requested the Base Commander for employment of Punjab Light Commando troops at the airbase since any further intrusion into the base could be disastrous. On the request of the Base Commander, an armed helicopter (heli) was sent to Samungli from KAB. The heli spotted a few individuals hiding along the boundary wall and fired upon them. The QRF of

Punjab Light Commando Battalion comprising 40 individuals was moved to the airbase at about 0245 hours. Snipers were deployed along the inner perimeter covering the fighter aircraft while Capt Fakhar along with Wing Commander Mehr Gul climbed upon the ADA pen (a high-rise structure) for observing and locating the hiding terrorists. They successfully located the hiding terrorists through specialized NVGs and same information was shared with Maj Atif and Capt Bugti of 16 Punjab and the PAF troops. These two brave officers were quick to respond, and killed the terrorists.

By 0615 hours the situation had calmed down at both the bases. The assets had remained safe *Al Hamd o Lillah*, and there weren't any fatal casualties to own troops except 14 wounded. In all, 12 terrorists had been killed including 6 who were wearing suicide jackets. The terrorists had left behind a huge cache of ammunition and explosives. The national threat had been subdued with great courage and conviction and above all, with the united response of all our security forces.

Lieutenant General Nasser Janjua, Commander Southern Command, was continuously monitoring the situation at both the places and was issuing orders for implementation at the ground level. The follow-up visits of General Raheel Sharif, Chief of Army Staff, Air Chief Marshal Tahir Rafique Butt, Chief of Air Staff, Chief Minister Balochistan Abdul Malik along with his ministers, IG Police, and IG FC Balochistan to the wounded officers and soldiers raised the morale of the troops.

The success of the operation was a Divine blessing indeed. The public grew more confidence in the forces and are certain that the security of Pakistan lies in safer hands. Timely help in shape of information sharing by the local population was indeed the most valuable asset in this operation.

We all bow our heads to Allah Almighty in gratitude of the Divine help in the thickest hour.

# Chasing Down Terror

**From a veteran's pen who shares account of his  
valiant martyred son**

**Lt Col Malik Noor Mohammad (R)**

On January 18, 1983 in the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Multan, amidst people waiting to be examined or to visit their relatives, I was waiting patiently for my son. At 0545 hours I finally got the news of his birth. No one knew the future of this baby; only Allah Almighty knew as He Himself had written his fate.

As he grew up, his determination to join Pakistan Army also became intense. He applied for 107 PMA Long Course and after clearing the preliminary tests he proceeded for the final test at the Inter Services Selection Board (ISSB), Malir Cantonment. He had to stay there for four days as per the scheduled tests. On the third day he got seriously injured while participating in a 'group task' test in the field; he received injury on his leg and his shin bone was affected badly. The administrative staff of ISSB decided to send him back as he would not have been able to do well in the leftover tests where complete physical fitness was required.

This decision was communicated to Jahanzeb but he refused to go back and pleaded that he wanted to appear in all the tests. On his insistence he was produced before the President of ISSB Malir Cantonment, Brig Shafqat. Before the President he said, "I would prefer to die in the ISSB rather than going back home as an unsuccessful candidate". He further said, "I would only go back if I am called back by my father". Considering his high morale, strong motivation and



enormous enthusiasm, the President allowed him to continue the remaining tests at his own risk. He had a bandage wrapped around his injured leg firmly and started taking his remaining tests. He was selected for the army, completed his training and joined 3 Frontier Force Regiment.

Much later, Maj Jahanzeb Adnan joined his parent unit as Delta Company Commander in the Frontier Region (FR) Peshawar to take part in the war against terrorism. The 3 Frontier Force (FF) Regiment was given the responsibility to clear the terrorists from the area starting from Bara extending upto Dara Adam Khel. Maj Jahanzeb Adnan initially conducted operations as Company Commander and later on he was appointed Second-in-Command of his Battalion. Besides his administrative duties, he volunteered to participate in field operations. He was an exceptionally brave, highly consummate, professionally trustworthy and extremely determined officer. The spirit of sacrifice, devotion and commitment to the motherland and professional excellence displayed by him in different operations against the terrorists had always been admired by his superior commanders. While discharging his duties he participated in various operations and led his troops from the front.

In the last operation he conducted, he led his troops and moved to Bazargai village, a continuation of Hasan Khel village near *Khikanaboo* Hills. Because of increased terrorist activities in the Frontier Region Peshawar, Operation Bazargai was planned as that village was being used as an operational and administrative base by the miscreants. On February 16, 2014, I received a message from my son with a request to pray for his success as he was on the move for an important operation.

Maj Jahanzeb Adnan took 50 soldiers along with another field officer, Maj Siraj-un-Nabi. They carried out a classic march and reached near Bazargai village on February 17 at 0800 hours. As per source information the terrorists were to come out on February 18. So, he moved to Azakhel Dam. He was on the move throughout the day and reached Azakhel Dam at night where he carried out search operations and managed

to clear the Azakhel village. Without taking rest, early in the morning he moved back to Bazargai village. On reaching Bazargai, Maj Jahanzeb confirmed the presence of terrorists and regrouped his troops. One party under Maj Siraj-un-Nabi was sent by him to cordon off the village. Maj Jahanzeb Adnan took along a few soldiers and decided to smash the terrorists himself.

When he was establishing his positions, he suddenly saw a few terrorists headed by their leader, Tariq (alias Hazrat Ali), the most notorious miscreant who had been involved in many terrorist activities (including slitting throats of Pakistan Army soldiers and FC troops) entering the street of Bazargai village. Maj Jahanzeb recognized him and ran towards him in order to not miss the opportunity of killing that high value target. While attacking the terrorist, he yelled, shouted and challenged him to surrender. In the process, Maj Jahanzeb fired at him and the terrorist received bullet on left arm, ran for cover like the coward he was and managed to get into a shop to save his skin. During the scuffle the other terrorists fired at Maj Jahanzeb who was alone at that time as his other comrades got pinned down due to intense fire. He got severe injuries but he returned fire on the other terrorists. Subsequently he managed to kill all of them.

After elimination of those terrorists, Maj Jahanzeb followed the terrorist leader and entered the shop. During this encounter Maj Jahanzeb also got a burst of fire by few other terrorists seeking hideout inside the same shop. He received seven bullets, one in the head and six on the body and succumbed to his injuries, embracing *shahadat* on the spot. He did not fall down but stood firmly on his feet with his back touching the wall. Out of 50 soldiers only he embraced *shahadat* and nobody else was injured. His last fight was a supreme act of valour and I am proud of my son who laid down his life in the defence of Pakistan.

# Stalking Dir with Eagle Eye

**Tale of a gallant hero – Martyr of IBO who started as a Cavalry Charger and ended as a Spymaster**

**Maj Muzaffar Ahmed**

*“It is not always easy. Your successes are unheralded – your failures are trumpeted.”*

(John F. Kennedy, CIA Headquarters, November 28, 1961)

Times of chaos and disarray will not remain forever; sons of the soil are offering the best – their lives in guarding the country.

Ali called, “I am committed – rushing towards Army Public School Warsak Road as we speak”. There was a distinct note of agony in his voice as he said, “Terrorists have attacked the Army Public School Peshawar. They are brutally killing innocent children. Saman you should go to school yourself and fetch Shahwaiz back home”. Saman hurriedly turned on the television and saw the horrific tickers being displayed. She was stunned and motionless for a while. After she regained her senses, however with anguish and fear, she dragged herself towards the Army Public School Cantonment Junior Branch and brought Shahwaiz back. Aah! It was all terrible.

The 30-year-old Ali had witnessed the bloodshed of the parents’ loving lads with impoverished eyes. Saman narrates that she could sense Ali grief-stricken for many days after the dreadful event. Though the grief and moaning of this national tragedy had started settling, yet the cold-blooded massacre

had shaken Ali's personality, too. He started seeing Shahwaiz in every innocent martyr and injured of Army Public School, which ultimately guided him to seize the perspective of every passing moment and give it a shape, value and substance for contributing towards prosperity in the country. His self-commitment still echoes in Saman's ears that every cloud has a silver lining and it is now the turn of terrorists' bastions to stand the blow of wrath even in their most remote and safest hidings.

Hailing from Lahore, Ali was curious from teenage to maintain his ancestral legacy of soldiering. The medium-built, amiable Ali, always used to attract everyone's attention due to a distinct smile on his face. Ali Salman's childhood best friend Ali Sohail recollects their nostalgic bond, "We met each other in the Army Public School Peshawar Cantonment in Class V and with the passage of time became close friends of each other. Our fathers were serving in the same city in their respective Army Ordnance setups. To my dismay after one year Ali's father (Lt Col Nasir Mahmood) was transferred to Lahore Cantonment. But coincidentally we were reunited again in the Garrison Academy for Boys Lahore Cantonment once my father was also transferred to Lahore.

My friend was a shining, lively and jolly figure of our class not only for excelling academically but also because of fervent love for nature and laughter. At his home, he was mostly found busy in exploring ways to behaviorally nurture, serve and manage his caged parrots, rabbits, lambs and plants. Keeping his mother's evenings busy by asking for *french fries* was visible from his appearance that's why he also got fame as Dambry (cartoon character) among colleagues. Due to visiting each other's homes almost daily, I could make out that he was very compassionate, loving and fun seeking brother of his two sisters. The bond of our friendship grew stronger with each passing day. I cannot forget his joyous company, especially partnering in cricket, kicking football and visiting the Lahore Zoo for many hours. As adulthood approached and we got into intermediate level education, I could observe in him behavioral inquisitiveness transcending into seriousness and aspiration to

attain something in life i.e., from aimlessness to knowing what he wanted. The iconic image of his father and uncles served his motivation to be a flag bearer and join the Pakistan Army. Though his parents neither forced and nor stopped him from pursuing the goal of joining Army, yet being an only and obedient son, he eloquently convinced his mother about his decision. Ali's motivational lectures and ethical jolts did not spare me even. His giggles, fun filled routine and narration of challenges at the Pakistan Military Academy inspired me as well to join the Pakistan Army. I often miss him dearly!"

Ali's colleagues from 112 PMA Long Course also cannot forgo cherishing memories of his perseverance and jovialness even during the times of rigorous and taxing training activities. On completion of the training at Pakistan Military Academy in 2005, he joined 13 Lancers, a glorious and decorated Armored Corps unit located in Quetta.

Enthusiastically responding to the unit's grooming modules, Ali turned out to be a responsible and professional Cavalry Charger in very less time in line with the expectations of his seniors and subordinates. His unit officer, Lt Col Aaitizaz Asbuq Waheed remembered him as an opponent in squash court and a close comrade, "We used to hang out in the evenings, playing squash together. Ali's aggression, gaming strategies and spirit to win the contests of squash and will to fight back for any game lost, were all admiring." Youngsters Hammad, Waqas and Noman used to pose immense confidence in his guidelines, mentoring sessions and timely elderly directions.

Moreover, his love for good music was also a talk of the unit. Due to day and night earnest endeavours and buckling down, the under-command troops started loving him as he remained their Adjutant – custodian of discipline, the Quartermaster – responsible for feeding, health and hygiene and the Squadron Commander in thick and thin. Besides 13 Lancers, while he was posted to serve with another unit 25 Cavalry at Razmak in Operation *Al Mizan* in year 2010, the CO (Commanding Officer) of the unit found him at the front lines

as Squadron Commander and expressed high words about him.

During the course of professional building up, Ali remained an instructor in an Armour Division Battle School at Gujranwala. Thereafter, he started realizing and discussing with seniors in the unit that his inclination and mental faculties are probably more suited for intelligence tasks. Thus year-2014 proved to be a turning point in Ali's life which parted him from 13 Lancers for a new venture but his association, interaction and contacts with the unit were never broken.

“Yay! Saman, I have been selected for service in the Corps of Military Intelligence and need to undertake the intelligence course in the School of Military Intelligence in Murree. I am happy to join Pakistan Army's highly professional frontline force – the spymasters. I will use my potentials to the best of the service interests.” To prove himself the best suited for the upcoming assignments, he strived extra hard. His fellow course-mates said that he proficiently grasped the art of being invisible and an extraordinary intelligence operator and could disguise, surveil, detect and solve with near-perfect masteries. His skills are reflected through his securing the first position in the Officers Military Intelligence Mid-Career Course.

At the end of year 2014, Ali was posted to Peshawar for intelligence field works. Having witnessed the Army Public School massacre, he frequently started motivating his team individuals through his spyglass. “The spirit to avenge the blood of innocent victims of terrorism in the country remains fresh in my heart. Pakistan and the scenic valley of District Dir, its loving people and Panjkora River don't deserve bloodshed and can't be deprived of peace and prosperity.”

To offset the game plans of enemy, he acquired reasonable grip over local Pushto dialect, demography, behaviour, culture and traditions of people of the area in a very short span of time. Then discretely started unearthing, fixing and destroying the active and passive networks (sleeping cells) of the

terrorists of Tehrik-i-Taliban Swat and other splinter groups operating in District Dir as well as adjacent areas. Covert efforts of his team succeeded in averting numerous bomb blasts and led towards recovery of huge caches of ammunition and explosives.

A testimony of his achievements is the letter of appreciation from the Commander Peshawar Corps, Lt Gen Nazir Ahmed Butt. As an influential humane intelligence operator, local notables of the area and Village Defence Committees applauded cordial relations of his team with the masses. His comrades were also admirers of his leadership qualities and affection for subordinates as stated by his driver Nobel Masih.

After completing three years' eventful stay at District Dir, he received orders to pack up for next duty as an instructor at the School of Military Intelligence, Murree. While saying goodbye to the affiliates, the District Police Officer and the District Coordination Officer of Dir spoke high of him and felt downhearted on his departure.

On August 5, 2017, with renewed spirits and happy feelings of posting to new location, Ali and his family reached Peshawar for their farewell Dining Out. After the ceremony Ali told me, "Today's words of appreciation and good wishes by the Commander and my colleagues have supplemented and strengthened my job satisfaction." On August 7, amidst fine memories of service in Peshawar and District Dir, Ali left for Dir for his final pack-up. Then came Sunday – August 8, 2017, a usual sunny day with unusual loud chirping of birds around the residence; an eternal day of test of Ali and his teammates. His eagle eye estimated through grapevine about the presence of four high value terrorists of Tehrik-i-Taliban Swat in Sherotkai village of Sultankhel, Upper Dir, who were actually on his watch-list for quite some time.

These terrorists were planning to sabotage our *Yaum-e-Azadi* celebrations by attacking at a mass gathering of innocent people thus turning the day into a national level tragedy for the country. Though Ali was over with his

responsibilities in the area and was ready to move for the new assignment in Murree, yet his pneuma conscience forced him to handle these terrorists. He discussed the situation with his senior Commanders and planned an IBO (Intelligence Based Operation). Under the shadows of parents' prayers and wife's hope of success, he left his base in the evening with the team – Havildar Akhtar, Havildar Ghulam Nazir and Levies Sepoy Kareem Khan along with Sher Dil Task Force, part of Army's SWAT Division, led by Lt Zeeshan. The vehicle driver noticed and asked Ali, "Sir, you seem very excited today and the glow is visible on your face", to which he responded, "Dear! yes, I am happy because Almighty Allah has confidence in me that's why He has again afforded me an opportunity to contribute, and Allah be willing our team will succeed."

Once it was dark, Ali briefed the Sher Dil Task Force Commander about the target, which was a house where the terrorists were hiding. On reaching the site at around midnight, Sher Dil Task Force established a cordon around the hideout of terrorists. After 10-15 odd minutes, upon not detecting an imminent danger, Maj Ali Salman made an attempt to trace out and feed Sher Dil Task Force Commander the exact location of terrorists in the rooms. While he was approaching the terrorists with his team, one of the terrorists got alerted but he was overpowered by fire. Then in a span of few seconds, in an attempt to apprehend the terrorists alive, Ali and his teammates briskly jumped over three terrorists and firmly gripped them.

After overpowering the terrorists once clearing the terrorists for the weapons and explosives was in process, one of the terrorists blew himself up. Destiny came into play. This resulted in raising of the nation's four brave sons (Maj Ali Salman, Havildar Akhtar, Havildar Ghulam Nazir and Sepoy Kareem Khan) to the highest pedestal of martyrdom (*shahadat*) and averted a national tragedy planned by the terrorists. Then a fire exchange started between Sher Dil Task Force and the remaining terrorist, who was shot down in a little while. There ended the chapter of Ali's life with fulfilled commitment with the Army Public School Peshawar by foiling



another big terrorist plot and saving the innocent human lives.

Back at home, at around 01:45 a.m. midnight, his younger sister received a call, however; tremblingly handed over the mobile phone to the father with the fear that Ali's request to sisters for praying for his *shahadat* had probably come true. His father could also sense the reason, thanked Allah and stated, "Ali has won over me by giving sacrifice for the country." The courage, fortitude and patience of such fathers are really praiseworthy.

Later, with wet eyes, his mother recalled that Ali used to take care of her, loved her cooking especially *daal maash* but now there is a vacuum as he will not be there to appreciate her cooked food.

His wife Saman, 29, standing as a rock of conviction said that Allah had selected Ali and his comrades because He wanted to correct those who had gone astray. She painfully expressed that Ali had the intuition of his *shahadat* before commencing his final journey for the high-level operation. A day prior he briefed me, "If I am not with you one day, don't worry, then whatever decision you take for our kids, Shahwaiz (6 years) and Abdullah (2 years), it will have hundred percent support of mine". This courageous lady has to pass through the marathon of life without her husband but her determination is matchless as she intends offering Ali's sons Shahwaiz and Abdullah to Pakistan Army as protectors of the country.

Ali's love for his sons is irreplaceable. He fulfilled all the wishes of his sons. Mentioning two long awaited wishes is heart wrenching. Shahwaiz wanted to take rides of a tank and a helicopter. His son's wish of the tank ride was fulfilled by him once he took Shahwaiz to his unit to the utter pleasure of little lad. The other wish was also fulfilled but that was after Ali's departure from the world once the family was flown on a helicopter for funeral ceremonies.

After Ali's sacrifice, other brave spymasters immediately filled the place and resumed the missions with full zeal and

zest to block the nefarious acts and designs of external and internal enemies of Pakistan. Ali, his teammates and many others are those heroes who were confided by the destiny for glorification, however; there are numerous other unsung spymasters who silently keep working for the honour and love of the Green Flag and contribute towards bringing peace. These spymasters are the real asset of our nation who strike terror into the hearts of the enemies by their invisible presence everywhere thus making it difficult for the actors of chaos and terror to operate easily.

# Waziristan at Peace

**Jennifer McKay**

A new kind of normalcy is taking root in North Waziristan. After years of being at the mercy of terrorist groups, the local people are finally free to build a new and better life. The rapid change in this once ‘no-go’ area is impressive.

What’s happening in North Waziristan is too extensive to do justice to. Driving from Bannu through Mir Ali into Miranshah on new roads, through valleys scattered with date palms, and surrounded by the extraordinary rugged beauty of the hills and mountains, is exhilarating. Arrival in Miranshah and touring around brings many surprises about this spectacular and intriguing region.

North Waziristan was the last of the seven tribal agencies, along with Swat, to be cleared. Operation *Zarb-e-Azb* has been successful with the Army, Frontier Corps and Air Force, carrying out courageous and intensive operations. Along the way, there have been many sacrifices. Several hundred soldiers were martyred during operations. Their families will always grieve their loss but all should always remember their sacrifice in making the country safer.

Several thousand terrorists were killed. Others were captured or surrendered. Many were not Pakistanis. Uzbeks, Chechens, and other nationalities joined forces and based themselves with local terrorists amongst the local population in North Waziristan. The level of capability of the terrorist groups is far removed from the common perception. Their operations were quite sophisticated. But that does not flatter their intelligence, merely highlights the level of their capacity

and monstrosity. Networks of tunnels under houses and markets, barbaric slaughter rooms, ingenious camouflage of air circulation for the tunnels and underground war rooms were discovered during the operations. A sophisticated media centre with multiple screens, communications' equipment, and a medical centre were hidden under a mosque.

A walk-through of a reconstruction of a terrorist '*markaz*' with General Officer Commanding, North Waziristan, Maj Gen Hassan Hayat, showed just what the Army was facing. A relatively innocent-looking building – similar to many – could ingeniously disguise a maze of tunnels and huge caches of weapons. A display of just a fraction of the weapons, communication equipment, explosives, suicide vests, gas cylinders and other deadly equipment for vehicle-borne-explosives and improvised explosive devices, gives rise to the thought of what would have happened if just a fraction of the massive cache had made its way into the cities and villages of Pakistan. Terrorists were buying explosives as they would buy spices from the market.

Under the *markaz* were rooms where young suicide bombers spent their time preparing for what they were told would be paradise. Viewing a room decorated with photos of pretty girls, beautiful scenery, carpets and cushions, one could only wonder about the state of a child's mind as he prepared to meet a ghastly end. The boys were kept intoxicated to keep them under the power of their handlers. The barbarism and sheer cowardice of sending children to their death, taking their innocence with them, is beyond the comprehension of any normal human being.

One thing that I found almost comical amongst the paraphernalia captured by the Pakistan Army, were wigs – long, black, curly wigs. This does conjure up some interesting visions of the purpose of such glamour-enhancing objects. Perhaps even terrorists fall victim to the perils of vanity or perhaps they just wanted to look scary in their videos. No other cosmetic enhancements were sighted.

Miranshah is just few kilometres away from the Afghanistan border. With what was then a porous border, terrorists who managed to flee the Army would cross into Afghanistan when the chase got too hot. What I have never quite understood, is why with all the criticism of Pakistan "not doing enough", and at a time when there were massive numbers of U.S. and international forces in Afghanistan, as well as the Afghan Army, so little was done to stop them when they fled across the border or those from the Afghan side attempted to infiltrate into Pakistan. One can only speculate.

The border is now secured. New forts have been built on mountains and ridges. The crossing points are closed and a 'smart' fence is being constructed on the Pakistan side of the border. The terrain is a challenge for the erection of such a barrier. Mountains, valleys and crevices form a chain that stretches the entire length of the border. The new Border Management arrangements will do much to reduce the movement of terrorists from Afghanistan into Pakistan and for local felons to flee.

Miranshah today would be unrecognizable to those who served there in earlier times. The market is bustling and a new shopping centre is under construction by a private investor. A modern bus terminal that will be a comfortable starting place for journeys to other cities like Lahore is also about to begin construction.

In the cantonment, trees, including many varieties of fruit trees, and flowers have been planted, the streets are immaculate, and in the midst of all this, stands a small Christian Church. It is hard to imagine that only a short time ago, this whole area was under attack from rockets, and that the tanks I saw parked near beautiful flowering trees were in live action.

While there is little doubt that some profited from the presence of the terrorist groups, others who had no option but to stay through the dreadful times of terror, abuse and intimidation, were courageous. Through courage and

determination, they managed to adapt to their circumstances and survive to see the onset of peace.

Millions of people were displaced from their homes for their own protection as military operations were launched to defeat the terrorists. There was no other option to ensure civilian safety. When the Army moved the population out to launch the military operations, many lost their homes, their livestock, crops, and livelihoods. Some were fortunate that in displacement they could stay with host families or even rent a house elsewhere. But for others, it was the indignity of a camp for displaced persons. Try to imagine a Pakistani summer or winter in a tent with your whole family. It would be very unpleasant indeed.

The process to return home takes time, as families cannot return until a village is de-notified and basic facilities are reconstructed by the Army and government to facilitate resettlement. On arrival at the checkpoint for North Waziristan, all family members undergo biometric checking and clearance to ensure they receive their proper entitlements and can move about. The process is efficient and when I visited, there were only very small queues. No weapons are allowed and vehicles are inspected for compliance with the rules. The biometric checking process is mandatory every time any person enters or leaves the area to ensure that security is maintained.

The majority of families have returned home and more will follow soon including those who moved across the border to stay with families in Afghanistan. Life is returning to normal. Families and communities are busy rebuilding, restocking their animals, and planting crops. Freedom has come at a price but there is a determination to live in peace and become a prosperous and educated region.

Women often suffer most in conflict and complex emergencies. Not being used to living in camps where there is little privacy is particularly difficult. I spoke with many women and girls about the tough times and how they see their future.

A number of well-equipped Women's Vocational Training Centres have been established for women and girls to learn dressmaking, knitting, cookery, and techniques for hair and beauty treatments. Each centre has a bright and cheerful nursery for babies and small children to be cared for and entertained while their mothers are in class. The kitchens in the women's centres would be the envy of any chef in a major city.

Away from the men, the women are talkative, warm, and engaging. There were emotional moments as they shared their stories. An elderly lady in a village that had been in a terrorist stronghold and the scene of significant operations, told me, "I only have Allah now. My family is all dead." Hugging me tightly, she went on to whisper, "But I have peace, too". Surrounded by the women and the children of the village, it was clear that she also would be nurtured and cared for by her community.

Another woman told me of the terrible times she faced when the terrorists kidnapped her husband. In between tears remembering what it was like, she managed to smile when she said, "but look now, we have peace at last and we thank the Army for making us safe. Our girls are going to school and learning so much. They will have a better life than me".

Fathers waited patiently at the school gate for their daughters. One man told the GOC how happy he was that his daughter was going to school and asked if the Army would build yet another girls' school in his nearby village. It is not possible to have a school in every village but the villages are close together so it is never too far to travel. It is heartening to see that education is a top priority for parents for both their boys and their girls and the Army has a campaign to get all children to school. There is even a Montessori school opening in the area. A beautiful place surrounded by trees and fields, close to a stream, it will be a wonderful place for children to learn.

Health and education are paramount. In the *Boya* and

*Degan* area, malaria and leishmaniasis – a painful and debilitating illness caused by sandflies – are problematic. A new small hospital, staffed by Army medical officers, locals and lady health workers, is addressing these issues. The hospital also has cardiac and other equipment including blood-testing facilities not previously available in the area. The presence of these facilities will make a great difference to the health of the local people.

In Miranshah, an impressive hospital is now operational with numerous facilities never previously available. A women's wing is also under construction. Mir Ali too has a new hospital. Nutrition is a problem not only in FATA but also across the country. A nutrition clinic, operated by an NGO has opened at the Miranshah Hospital. This is a great step forward to improve the nutritional aspects of child health. This is particularly important when 43 percent of children in Pakistan are feeling the effects of stunting due to poor nutrition. More assistance will be needed in the future for the health of the people of Waziristan. Telemedicine is helping fill some of the gaps but more doctors, including gynaecologists and other specialists, nurses, medicines and facilities will make a significant difference.

The crucial question many ask is: "Is this sustainable peace?" I believe so. Peace does not happen overnight. Suspicions and old family feuds are likely to still be present but are now managed. Peace building is a long process but the enthusiastic work done so far by the Army to rebuild and rehabilitate North Waziristan is some of the best I've seen. In a short span of time, great roads, schools for boys and girls, hospitals and clinics, model villages, 149 solar water-pumping stations, a Post Office, and a PTCL Centre are now all operational. Four schools have been designated as Golden Arrow Army Public Schools and these will be replicated elsewhere in FATA.

The Younus Khan Sports Complex with its beautiful cricket stadium, jogging track, children's park, and sports courts is impressive and beautifully laid out. On Pakistan Day 2017,



8,000 people gathered in the stadium for the festivities. Astounding really, when you think that not so long ago, this was a place too dangerous to move. The locals' love of sports is apparent everywhere. Smaller sports stadiums have been built in a number of areas and wherever you drive, children and adults are out in the fields or any available space, playing cricket.

As much as some would find this surprising, the potential for tourism is substantial. The beautiful historic hill station of Razmak, at an altitude similar to Murree, is thriving again and surprisingly, even has a very modern coffee shop that would not look out of place in Islamabad or Lahore. The Cadet College has reopened and the students have returned after being evacuated to other Cadet Colleges several years ago when rocket attacks and kidnapping threats made life too perilous. But now Razmak is at peace and thriving. The beautiful vistas and highland climate, and the good roads, provide the opportunity for a whole new industry; Tourism. There are even plans for a festival there in July.

New crops have been planted across the agency. The first crop of potatoes will be harvested with an expected yield of 1,500 tons, providing both nutrition and income for locals. Tunnel and vertical farms have been established for vegetable crops. Poultry and fish farms are becoming prosperous. A million new trees are taking root and will provide fruit, shade, and stabilization on hillsides. Most importantly, the community is engaged in the process every step of the way. Pine nuts, olives, and other 'gourmet' ingredients provide potential high-return markets and exports.

The youth are engaged in learning skills at vocational centres that will provide them with 'work-ready' capabilities and certificates in carpentry, electricals, vehicle repairs, and other trades. Construction of roads and infrastructure, and copper mining at *Degan*, are providing new jobs. Private investors are starting to see the commercial opportunities. Additional infrastructure, particularly electricity, is needed and the government will need to address this costly challenge.

Winning peace in such a historically troubled area has been an enormous challenge but many are now starting to see what extraordinary achievements have been made. Speaking recently at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, at an event to mark the 70th independence anniversary of Pakistan, the Commander British Field Army, Lt Gen Patrick Nicholas Sanders said, “Pakistan had made breathtaking gains against terrorists and extremists in tribal areas unmatched in over 150 years”. He went on to say that Pakistan Army had done more than anyone to combat extremism and terrorism and the achievements were extraordinary.

The Army is doing an impressive job leading the reconstruction and rehabilitation work alongside the FATA Secretariat, the Political Agent and his team. Bilateral and multilateral donors, humanitarian and development organisations are also working in support of initiatives and are continuing to extend their projects now that the area is opening up. The FATA Reforms are underway although these may take some time to be fully implemented.

To build on these massive achievements, it is also up to the broader community to support peace in North Waziristan and other regions of FATA through ‘adopting’ schools, clinics, and other initiatives that provide long-term benefits for stability. North Waziristan may seem remote from the cities of Pakistan but peace in this once-troubled area, also means peace in the cities.

The *Tochi Valley* has had a long and colourful history. This beautiful valley, running from Bannu through Mir Ali and Miranshah, out to Degan, Boya and beyond, has seen many conflicts over the centuries. Today, it is at peace.

In the days of the British, it was the scene of many skirmishes between the tribesmen and the British Indian Army. The history books are full of interesting tales of the British attempting to subjugate the tribes, usually unsuccessfully. It is worth reading some of the books and articles on the history of North Waziristan and bordering areas

of Afghanistan to get a better understanding of the fierce and independent tribesmen and their battles with the British. Most accounts were written by British officers and are imperialistic in their tone but they do provide a background to the many conflicts in the past century or two.

The British have long gone but since 2001 when the U.S. and foreign forces invaded Afghanistan, trouble in the Tribal Agencies started to escalate. Despite many attempts at building peace between militant factions and the state, trouble intensified to a point where military operations were needed to defeat the growing threat. It is not easy, nor desirable, for any army to have to fight its own people and Pakistan wanted to avoid the scenario of many innocent people in the region being caught up in what would ultimately become a necessary conflict. Terrorists, including Uzbeks, Chechens and others, along with local groups, had infiltrated and taken over communities, basically holding them as a collective human shield. In all instances across the seven Tribal Agencies, the Army moved the population out to protect innocent families. This was a massive effort and a huge cost to the state and more so, to the people many of whom lost everything. However, with talks bringing no resolution, and attacks growing in the area and the cities, the only solution was to launch the operations.

Operation *Zarb-e-Azb*, launched in June 2014, finally brought to an end the reign of terror of the militant groups that had moved into North Waziristan from Afghanistan and beyond to join forces with local militants. The alliances of these groups including the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Jundallah and the Haqqani network were a threat to the country and the region. Tribal elders and thousands of innocent civilians and soldiers have died at the hands of these groups. The success of the military operations has led to a significant reduction of terror attacks in the country.

Following the operations, the government and Army could then start the process of bringing home the displaced population and rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

These were already underway in the other six Agencies that had previously been cleared. The efforts have been massive and will continue for some time. The terrain and location of villages in North Waziristan makes the task more challenging but the leap forward from what was to what is and what will be, is impressive.

I travelled to different parts of North Waziristan to get a better understanding of the difference in areas and what is happening. The areas are quite distinctive in nature and the Tochi Valley with its beauty and history is one area that is showing great potential.

New roads are making travel in North Waziristan so much easier. A new road from Miranshah to Boya is under construction and will soon be surfaced making it an even more pleasant journey out through the valley following the Tochi River. When I visited Boya – located a little over 20 kilometres from Miranshah – the valley was looking most beautiful. Sun shining on the rugged ranges and the mud and brick houses and compounds in villages along the river, trees with bright green foliage, healthy crops in the fields, and children playing cricket, it seemed a vision of serenity. It was hard to imagine that so recently this had been the scene of so much misery.

Fighting in the area to defeat some of the most ruthless terrorists including Uzbeks and others involved in the attack on the Karachi Airport, was intense. Large caches of weapons and explosives were found in the clearing operations, a reminder of the firepower capability that terrorists can muster.

With the majority of the community having returned to the Tochi Valley, life is moving to the new normal that is obvious across all of North Waziristan. The transition from a terrorist-infested area, to a peaceful community that has returned from displacement is not without challenges. But so much has been done already to rehabilitate this area and the prospects for the future are looking good.

Not so long ago, when the soldiers moved through this area,

the children made the 'hand across the throat' sign, wishing death to the soldiers. Now they wave happily and often salute the soldiers. Sometimes, they even pause from their game of cricket to run to the roadside to wave. This is reflection of love for Pakistan Army among tribal children and elders.

What a spectacular tourist drive this could be one day, now that peace has been restored. When more facilities are built, and the area opens up more to visitors, this will be a 'must visit' area. Let us hope that will be soon as tourism brings a lot of money to any area and the local people would prosper.

The people of the Boya and Degan area are already seeing new opportunities for prosperity at their doorstep with the discovery of copper and the opening of a mine and processing facilities. This is significant. Industry is needed across all of FATA and this once 'no-go' area of North Waziristan can certainly benefit from such ventures.

The abundance of minerals including copper, chromite, oil, and gas in FATA has been known for some years. However, the instability and threat of terrorism was too high for investors to take a chance on mining. That has changed. In 2016, the Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the FATA Development Authority (FDA) to open a copper mine at Degan. FWO, through its subsidiary MEDO then partnered with Yantai Xinhai Mining Machinery to build a copper beneficiation plant that will have a capacity of 1,500 tons per day.

What is impressive about the agreement is that it will give 18 percent of the revenue to the local community, 10 percent to the FATA Development Authority, and 22 percent to corporate social responsibility initiatives to be spent on local projects.

In addition, this will bring jobs, not only at the mine and processing plant but also in the provision of support services from businesses in the community. Investment in industry can help communities make the leap from subsistence living to prosperity. The investment in this copper mine is a major step

in encouraging other investors to look at opportunities in mining and other industries.

The Tochi Valley is very close to the Afghanistan Border. Although the situation with Afghanistan is often fractious, the benefits for both countries in building trade are obvious. As North Waziristan opens up, and with the excellent roads linking it with the cities in Pakistan and to the border, new opportunities will arise for trade in minerals, fruit and vegetables, and other goods. Enhanced trade and effective joint border management will increase the chances for long-term peace on both sides of the border.

What is concerning though is that the situation in Afghanistan appears to be worsening. With the Afghan Taliban controlling large swathes of the country and a growing presence of Daesh, it is hard to say what will happen. The Trump Administration has recently announced that more U.S. troops will be sent to Afghanistan but the situation remains unclear whether this will make a difference when billions of dollars and fifteen years of a huge presence of U.S. and ISAF forces on the ground with a large Afghan Army could not bring peace. Foreign analysts do not seem positive that this latest increase will help due to the growing power of Afghan Taliban and Daesh across the country. For Pakistan, which has done so much to defeat terrorism, and lost so many lives to bring peace within its own borders, peace in Afghanistan is critical.

The improvements have already been made in these villages around Boya and Degan. One of the most important of these is the small hospital, which is currently staffed by Army medical officers, lady health workers, and local medical assistants. The area has significant health problems that have not previously been addressed including general healthcare, cardiology, and women's health. Healthcare is a vital component for the well-being of this area to progress and prosperity. One of the major health problems highlighted by the Army doctors, and which should be prioritized and addressed in community health is that of *malaria* and *leishmaniasis*, both of which are common in this area.

These two maladies, delivered by mosquitos and sandflies respectively, are extremely dangerous and can cause long-term illnesses and even death. While many are more familiar with malaria, less is understood about *leishmaniasis* which is a dangerous and painful disease. The World Health Organisation suggests that *leishmaniasis* affects some of the poorest people on earth, and is associated with malnutrition, population displacement, poor housing, a weak immune system and lack of financial resources. The disease is linked to environmental changes such as deforestation, building of dams, irrigation schemes, and urbanization.

According to health advisories, “affected regions are often remote and unstable, with limited resources for treating this disease.” Doctors Without Borders calls leishmaniasis “one of the most dangerous neglected tropical diseases.” It can be transmitted from one human to another in certain circumstances. The Organization also states that this disease is second only to malaria in parasitic causes of death. It can cause skin lesions, mainly ulcers, on exposed parts of the body, leaving life-long scars and serious disability.

Treating the illness is one thing though no vaccines are available, but more important is to take preventative measures, and to get to the cause of the problem. The World Health Organisation provides advice on how communities can reduce the risk. Raising awareness of the risks of these two diseases carried by tiny flying monsters is clearly an activity that would be helpful to the communities. Government health officials and possibly the World Health Organisation or other humanitarian agencies could support the work that the Army is already doing enough on this, including research into the local environmental conditions in which these insects thrive to eliminate the breeding grounds. It would be of great benefit to the local people and their future well-being.

The growing number of good schools in the area also provide opportunities not only for good education and vocational training for boys and girls, but also to inculcate

awareness of hygiene, health, and also about the local environment. Children are wise and like to share what they learn with their parents. This will further raise awareness of important community health issues. The same applies to the Women's Vocational Centres. Sharing the benefits of health issues and how best to address these, is extremely helpful in spreading the word. This is already happening at the Centres.

The local people are not just leaving it up to the Army to do the work; they too are taking the initiative. Although the Army has built excellent local markets, it is a positive sign to see so many small 'tuckshops', scrap metal and building materials depots, tyre repairers, and other small businesses along the roadside. Farming families are adapting new techniques they have learned from the Army to get better crop yields. Another sign of positive change is the visible pride the *Khasardars* have in their duties. There is no shortage of candidates to join up.

Tochi Valley has the potential to become a symbol of what can be achieved in the process of bringing long-term peace and stability and to become a prosperous area of the country. The components are all there and the current situation is looking very promising indeed. With support and encouragement, the education of children and youth, improved health and well-being for all, plus economic prosperity through investment, small business and agriculture, the future looks bright in the Tochi Valley.

It is difficult to align the constant U.S. mantra that Pakistan is 'not doing enough' in the war against terrorism when we take a look at just what has and continues to be done. To say that the mantra is unreasonable and extremely disappointing is an understatement. So many lives have been lost in Pakistan in a long battle to defeat the scourge of terrorism, much of which has emanated from events in Afghanistan.

Operations across all seven tribal agencies, in Swat, throughout Karachi and the rest of the country, and now Khyber-IV to drive out the last remnants of terror groups in Rajgal Valley have cost many lives but cleared the areas and



terrorist attacks have reduced enormously. Pakistan is fencing the border but, like so many other initiatives, this is facing resistance from Afghanistan.

Pakistan continues to both fight any pockets of resistance and at the same time move ahead with resettlement of displaced families, rehabilitate and reconstruct areas damaged by fighting. I have focused on North Waziristan, where the scale of peace building and progress in reconstruction and rehabilitation has been astounding. The work continues across the agency at a rapid pace and will continue for some time.

As North Waziristan transits from a humanitarian operation to long-term development, it is worthwhile looking at the most recent achievements, and the challenges that lie ahead that could hinder sustainable progress.

In the past two months, the Army has opened Razmak for local tourism and it has been hugely successful. The long term potential, assuming the tranquil and beautiful environment is managed sensitively, is limitless. The weather changes throughout the year and this small hamlet enjoys four seasons; though sometimes in the course of a few hours. Sitting at an altitude of just over 6,600 feet, and with mountains rising up to 11,000 feet, it is today an oasis of tranquility amongst the pine trees and lovely old buildings. A total surprise in Razmak was when I visited the new 'coffee shop' serving *cappuccino*, *latte* and assorted delicious treats. This for sure is going to be popular with visitors.

During the occupation and administration of the area by the British it became known as "Little London" due to the resemblance with an English village. When the British finally departed the area after partition and skirmishes with the local tribes, they left behind some lovely old architecture, and a cantonment that even today, maintains the style of an English village.

In more recent history, Razmak came under attack from the Taliban with rockets landing in the cantonment. Among the

targets was the Razmak Cadet College, established in the old British barracks in 1978. These attacks, and the kidnapping of several students, led to a full evacuation of all students for five years until peace prevailed. Today, the students are back, living and studying in their beautiful campus amongst the pine trees and quiet calm on this old hill station.

The area around Razmak is rich in minerals that will provide extensive opportunities for future industry and prosperity for the local communities. However, I must add a word of caution. Mining companies will need to protect the environment to ensure that this magical place does not lose its charm and clean environment.

The drive to Razmak from Miranshah along the new road is scenic and provides glimpse of rural life as it gradually winds its way into higher terrain past hillside compounds, small farms and villages. A stop-off at historic *Alexandra Fort* built by the British in the early 1900s gives a magnificent 360-degree view of the area. A hiking trail follows the road up to the top for those who feel energetic. Inspirational quotes to encourage hikers dot the trail and, for those who are feeling a bit weary, seats and tables are located at scenic points. This is becoming a popular visit point for locals who drive there from Miranshah and Mir Ali to enjoy a picnic. The area has its own microclimate and the weather changes rapidly. During my visit, within the course of an hour, the weather changed from bright, hot sunshine to approaching rain and a sudden drop in temperature. And just a few days before, snow had fallen on *Alexandra Fort*.

Pakistan Army has constructed a new building for the *Political Agent* at *Dosali*, an area between Miranshah and Razmak, to replace one destroyed during the fighting. This will enable the government officials to provide more effective services to the communities in the area.

Over in the Tochi Valley, the new Golden Arrow Montessori School has been opened in Degan for some very excited children who attended the opening in their best and brightest

clothes. This is such a significant step for the area and has received great support from the community. And nearby at Boya, a new Women's Vocational Centre has been opened. When I met with women in Boya during my visit, they were extremely excited about getting a new centre soon. Word has it they are now very happy indeed and enjoying the opportunities the Centre provides. Pakistan Army has changed the milieu from terrorism to peace in North Waziristan.

And as another sign of the new normalcy, families were able to celebrate Eid in their own villages. Pakistan Army arranged five festivals in different areas across the agency with enthusiastic participation of local communities.

Recently, an education seminar was arranged by the civil servants in the region. This was a great opportunity to engage the local communities in discussions about building literacy and the importance of education. Parents are particularly keen to get their boys and girls into schools and are very supportive of education plans for North Waziristan.

Many other projects are under way and every month, a new facility, a road, an infrastructure component, opens for the public to make life easier. So things are certainly progressing well. But there are still development challenges ahead. The Army continues to do outstanding work, building on the massive achievements to date. However, the job is not theirs alone.

The Government needs to move forward on the FATA reforms and set a clear path for the future. To do this, they need to take the people along with the discussions so that they are comfortable with the process to integrate FATA into mainstream Pakistan, but without losing their culture. The transition period will be lengthy and complex so it should be started as soon as possible and with full engagement of all the stakeholders. More funds need to be ploughed into the area for facilities and upskilling of services to prepare for integration. But at the same time, the reconstruction and rehabilitation must continue till completion.

One area that has been sensitive is the matter of compensation for houses destroyed or damaged in the military operations. The Government promise was for PKR 160,000 for a damaged house, and PKR 400,000 for a destroyed house. This arrangement was not only for North Waziristan, but also for entire FATA. The Community Loss Compensation Program was originally envisaged as a more holistic program which would have provided a range of support and capacity building and training services to accompany the compensation. However, a change in the methodology diluted the additional benefits. The important issue though, is that all those who have suffered loss, are compensated as soon as possible.

While many have already received their payments, some are still waiting in parts of the FATA. This is an issue for the Government that should be attended to as soon as possible. The assessment teams, which include civilians and military personnel, carry out their work on the instructions of the FATA Secretariat once an area is de-notified. One thing that must be borne in mind is that basic facilities and infrastructure must be restored before an area is clear for families to return. The Army has made massive steps in fulfilling these needs and the majority of families have been able to return.

It is unlikely that PKR 400,000 will meet the cost of rebuilding some houses so the capacity building and training component would be an added benefit to assist in building back better. Donors are encouraging the government to include this additional benefit.

The international and local aid community has contributed to a number of programs to help the returning TDPs. The World Food Program (WFP), with the support of their donors, has provided returning families with food packages for a six-month period while they resettle.

The UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) is coordinating the humanitarian assistance. OCHA Head of Office for Pakistan, Ms. Heli Uusikyla, visited North Waziristan recently to assess progress on UN funded

activities and identify gaps where further support can be provided. On her return she spoke highly of the work being done by the Pakistan Army in the reconstruction and rehabilitation process. She also provided some insights into future UN assistance. Ms. Uusikyla noted, “USD 5.3 million have recently been released from UN funds for NGO projects to be implemented in the FATA, focusing on girls’ education, health, water and sanitation, and shelter support.” OCHA is also working with other UN partners, donors and INGOs to provide a coordinated transition to development.

There is one important need that is yet to be fulfilled; that of children who have lost one or both parents whose families are unable to properly provide for them. Because of the social environment, women-headed households find it particularly hard to earn an income to provide for their families. These vulnerable children must not be forgotten. It is a challenge for poor families across the country. Most find that they have no option but to send their children to *madrassas* mainly because they will receive free meals and accommodation. This places these children at high risk of falling prey to any fundamentalist ideas.

The Army has closed all *madrassas* in NWA and although this is a major step towards maintaining peace and defeating extremism, it leaves fewer options particularly for women-headed households who are unable to support their children, and for orphans. This is an opportunity for the people of Pakistan to show compassion and support efforts to meet the needs of these children through the provision of a safe and happy environment that will provide house, ‘parents’, comfortable accommodation, nutritious food, and health facilities, along with a good education. This will not only boost education and keep these children safe, it will give new hope to this area.

Moving from the first phase – humanitarian assistance – to the longer-term development assistance, can be a slow process. While some donors are keen to support FATA, including North Waziristan, there have been delays in approvals. Even when

the Army and other authorities are comfortable with the security situation, the internal organisational security processes for UN agencies, donors and INGOs can be a barrier. However, all the stakeholders are working together to find solutions and to proceed with assistance on a prioritised basis.

It is critical that the external assistance provided by UN and INGOs is aligned with the prioritised needs as determined by the people themselves, FATA Secretariat, and the Army. It should be sustainable so that when the project funding runs out, the communities are able to continue with the progress envisaged in the project documents. Too often, when project funding runs out and the aid agency departs, the situation becomes static or falls into disarray. This is not specific to Pakistan or FATA, it is a known challenge around the developing world.

But the biggest challenge ahead is a regional one. What happens in Afghanistan will certainly have an impact on Pakistan, particularly in the FATA.

A recent bipartisan high profile U.S. Senators' delegation led by the chairman of U.S. Armed Services Committee, John McCain (R) and including Lindsay Graham (R), Elizabeth Warren (D), David Perdue (R), and Sheldon Whitehouse (D) visited Pakistan recently. Senator McCain has been one of the more positive voices for Pakistan but following this visit, the signs have been less encouraging. During the visit, the delegation met with Foreign Affairs Adviser Sartaj Aziz for what was reported as positive and engaging discussion. The delegation also met Chief of Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa.

A highlight of the visit was a trip to South Waziristan to view the progress in reconstruction and rehabilitation, part of which has been funded by USAID. Senator McCain is one of the few US Senators or Members of Congress who have made regular visits to Pakistan and made an effort to understand the issues in the tribal areas. But this time, despite very positive encouragement when in Pakistan, once the delegation visited

Afghanistan after leaving Pakistan, the tone changed. The “Pakistan must do more” mantra reappeared. On arrival in Afghanistan, Senator McCain said about Pakistan at a press briefing, “We have made it very clear that they will cooperate with us particularly against the Haqqani network and against terrorist organisations”. He went on to say that, “If they don’t change their behaviour, maybe we should change our behaviour towards Pakistan.” Senator Lindsey Graham was quoted by the Afghanistan Chief Executive Officer’s office as saying, “Pakistan will be rewarded if it changed its policy and punished if it didn’t.”

Despite almost a trillion dollars spent by the U.S. on their war in Afghanistan, and large amounts by its allies, the situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate across the country. The Taliban are in control of large swathes of the country and ISIS has moved in. It does seem that Afghanistan accepts no blame for the situation despite enormous corruption, unhealthy and shaky political alliances, and a failure of policies. That Afghanistan has failed to halt the spread of ISIS within its borders is of great concern to Pakistan. The proximity of ISIS in some areas of Afghanistan particularly in regions such as Achin, Nangarhar and Tora Bora near the Pakistan border is alarming.

India’s footprint in Afghanistan continues to grow and the U.S. National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for 2018 indicates that it may grow even more through the strengthening U.S.-India alliance. The NDAA sets a time limit of 180 days to develop a strategy for enhanced defence cooperation with India. Pakistan can only wait and see what that might mean. Also in the wing is the new U.S. policy for Afghanistan, which is believed to include a tougher stance on Pakistan. Another sign of a more aggressive U.S. stance against Pakistan is the recent announcement that the U.S. will not honour its commitment to reimburse Pakistan for the outstanding \$350 million from the Coalition Support Fund. Of this, \$300 million has been reprogrammed elsewhere and the remaining \$50 million will be withheld.

As Pakistan awaits the announcement of the U.S. intentions in the region, it can only be hoped that it will do nothing to destabilise the outstanding achievements for peace in North Waziristan and all the FATA. Unless realistic and substantial efforts are made across the border in Afghanistan to defeat terrorist groups there and bring sustainable peace, and to prevent terrorists from entering Pakistan, no matter what Pakistan does on its side, it will be like clapping with one hand.



# Siachen – Where Eagles Fear to Tread

Feryal Ali Gauhar

It is still early when the flight lands in Skardu, the plane setting itself down gently like a large bird of prey descending upon a startled animal. In the air, I can sense the coming of winter. The light throws gentle shadows upon the sand dunes in this high-altitude desert landscape, cradled by mountains which appear to be sleeping behemoths, their massive presence awe-inspiring yet reassuring, as if someone is watching over you.

In the arrival lounge, I was received by Major Shumaila, Public Relations Officer (PRO) at Force Command Northern Area (FCNA), who is stationed at Gilgit. Maj Shumaila is the first woman officer in Pakistan Army from Gilgit-Baltistan and had travelled to Skardu from Gilgit to receive me, bringing along with her on the long and difficult journey, her young daughters Eeshal, Nanny, and Ateeqa. These four females would give me company while I waited in Skardu for the helicopter to fly me to Goma, and then onward to Gyari Sector where I wished to offer *Fateha* for 140 martyrs of the terrible tragedy which hit that base on April 7, 2012, burying the entire camp in snow and rock more than 50 meters deep.

Maj Shumaila had organized my meeting with the families of Gayari *Shuhada*, the next morning. That night, I sat out besides the lake at Shangrila and tried to imagine how difficult it would have been for the families to receive news that your loved one had been buried alive and that he would never return. I watched as the birds flew home to their nests, their

silhouettes dark against a luminous sky the colour of ripe apricots and peaches which blush with the warmth of summer. It was autumn then, and the trees were bare, the fruit already picked and consumed or dried for the long winter. What was it like for the wives and children, the parents of these men who never came home?

Coming to Skardu is like coming home, in a strange, deeply felt way. This is where my late mother chose to spend the last twenty years of her life, caring for the many mothers and children who would visit her health centres in Skardu and Hussainabad, many of them severely anemic, most of them malnourished, poor, clad in second-hand clothes bought off the numerous carts parked in the crowded bazaar. For twenty years my mother came to know these women and their families, and came to hold them in the highest esteem for their serenity and dignity in the face of so much hardship. I wondered if I would witness for myself that same quiet grace when I met with the widows the next morning. I knew that I shared a sense of loss with them, having grieved at my mother's sudden death in her beloved Baltistan, receiving her mortal remains in a casket which had to be transported through landslide and roadblocks along the world's highest highway. In my heart there was certain stillness, a certain acceptance of the terrible things which scar us, against which we, mere mortals, have no power.

The air carried with it news of snowfall on some far mountain peaks, and I gathered myself and my belongings, tearing myself away from the lakeshore reluctantly. The day had ended, but a journey still lay ahead, for which I needed to prepare, for this was a journey like none other that I had ever taken.

### **Her Limpid Eyes**

“When my father left I did not know I would not see him again.” Ambereen, not yet twelve years old, speaks like a woman with many years woven into the fabric of her young soul. “He put his hand on my head and said: *‘Apna khayal*

*rakho* – (look after yourself)', and then he left. We never saw him again. And he left us to look after ourselves, since his father, my Dada, asked us to leave soon after we heard the news of his death..."

Ambereen is perhaps the most beautiful little girl I have ever had the privilege to meet. Her eyes are like a lake, the waters calm and limpid. She holds onto her aunt's hand while looking straight at me, unfaltering, unwavering, trusting. Ambereen lives with her aunt in Shigar while her mother lives in Skardu, looking after the other three children, all boys, now attending the Army Public School in the headquarters of Baltistan. I ask Ambereen what she wants to be when she grows up. Without a moment's hesitation she says: "A doctor with the Army Medical Corps... I want to make sure that our beloved soldiers return home to their families and do not die unattended, wherever they may be posted to serve the country."

Ambereen's father, a sepoy in a Northern Light Infantry (NLI) battalion, died in the massive avalanche which destroyed the Battalion Headquarters of 6 NLI at Gyari, a barren desolate place now, a veritable graveyard for the dreams of 140 men, both civilians and military officers and soldiers. There were thirty families in the room with me, widows and their children, gathered together to share their stories, their suffering, their dreams and their aspirations. I learnt from the women that when a soldier dies, his family is informed by members of the unit, sometimes accompanied by an officer, who bears the *Shaheed's* personal belongings and hands these over to the family. I was told of the moment when the news of the many deaths in these treacherous mountains came, of the disbelief, of the inability to accept that their loved one shall never return. One of the women told me that her husband had come home to condole the death of his friend. He left the village after three days, leaving his fifteen-year-old wife with his aged father. He never returned, and the day his wife was informed of his death, she delivered their child, a boy, who would never see his father!

There were many stories, of widows who had to leave the homes of their in-laws since they were now considered a burden on the meager resources of the family. There was the story of Ruqqaiyah who had to take her five children from her in-laws' home in Shilding to Skardu after her father-in-law took the money paid by the Pak Army on her husband's death, leaving her with nothing. She remembered when the soldiers, accompanied by a subedar came to the house and handed over her husband's personal belongings in a trunk and a cheque. Nine months after that day, Ruqqaiyah was asked to leave and to make her own way through life. Her youngest was a month and a half, her eldest ten.

I turned to the ten-year-old boy, Mehdi Ali, and ask him what he wants to be when he grows up. He is shy, and almost inaudible, so I move closer to him in order to hear his response. He says that he wants to be an officer, or just a soldier, like his martyred father. I stare at his pale face and then look at his small hands, the skin cracked and dry. I look up again and see the tears welling in his eyes, and I turn away, for the grief carried in this little boy's heart is more than I can bear.

With a heavy heart I returned to my room and prepared for the journey to the north-east ranges, as close as possible to the Line of Control (LOC) which has sparked so many conflicts in the past 68 years of our existence. I study the maps I have printed out, looking for the places where I expect to land in this rugged, inhospitable terrain. These are just tiny dots in the huge mass of rock and snow and ice, reminders of our own insignificance in the natural order of things. I shudder to think of what life for our troops must be like in temperatures which fall below minus 40 degrees Celsius, even lower with the wind chill factor. These are temperatures that were spoken about with horror just last year as the "polar vortex" hit the northern hemisphere and froze even the breath rising from our lungs. Why is a war being fought over masses of ice and snow and rock in a place where no one has ever lived and thrived in the history of humankind? The answer can be best sought from the country that initiated and imposed this conflict, India.

I had placed my fur-lined boots and ancient woolen duffle coat with its hood at the foot of my bed, taking care to remember my leather gloves and the beret I have had since I was a university student in Montreal, Canada, several decades ago. I struggled with the choice of cameras, wondering if my small steady shot camera would suffice or whether I should lug the larger digital single lens reflex camera with its 300mm zoom lens. Convinced that I would be weighing myself down with an extra, unnecessary burden at altitudes where each step requires the careful calibration of breath, I reluctantly put away the larger, more sophisticated camera and turned down the covers, snuggling up against the chill on my first evening in Skardu. I knew it would be infinitely colder where I was going, and I said a silent prayer for a safe journey, and another one for the safety of the people I had come to greet, to talk to, to learn from, and to write about. It is not every day that one gets the opportunity to travel to bases where the snow never melts, where the skin is burnt black with the sun, where the mere touch of bare metal against bare skin can tear the flesh. It is not every day that one meets the men who have lived and fought at the world's highest battlefield, the world's largest non-polar glacier which apparently has no strategic value but which has claimed 3000 Pakistani and 5000 Indian Army men since 1984.

According to one source, India gained more than 1000 square miles of territory because of its military operations in Siachen, the source for the 80km-long Nubra River, a tributary of the Shyok, which is part of the Indus River system. The volume of the glacier has been reduced by 35 percent over the last twenty years. Global warming and military activity have been cited as the main reasons for the receding of the glacier. It is time to take stock of human and environmental loss and to wage a war against war itself.

But before I took this journey, it was important that I met the families of those who never returned, buried forever in the snows which cover the treacherous slopes of these, most magnificent mountains.

## Feet of Clay

On the map the feet of the mountains are like the claws of gigantic creatures reaching out to devour whatever they can overpower. The ridges and crags are the bones of these claws, the many rivulets and tributaries flowing down from melting glaciers are the veins and arteries of this creature which lives in the far north, watching us, waiting to destroy all those who dared to venture forth into its frozen lap.

The helicopter left Skardu at the appointed time, Maj Shumaila had left her toddler with Atteqa at a relative's home, and we were airborne by 10:30 a.m. Lt Col Faisal was assisted by Maj Rizwan in piloting the chopper, part of the 'Fearless Five Squadron' based at Skardu. We followed the Indus River as it winds its way past Hussainabad where my late mother had set up a centre for the healthcare of mothers and children. I tried to find it from the helicopter – it was located at the edge of the road leading towards Kargil, branching off towards Shigar once it crossed the Indus. I followed the Skardu-Kargil road, a snake winding along the Indus and dipping south with the bend in the river, the "Lion River". We were soon to arrive at Youching where Brig Liaquat Mehmood looks after the deployment of his men to the posts along the LOC with India.

At Keris, the Shyok River flows into the Indus, a grand meeting of glacial waters rushing down from the barren slopes of the Karakoram. The road turns south towards Khaplu, and the helicopter flew over the hamlets of Ghawari, Kharfaq, Dagboni Balgar, Barah until we sighted Khaplu, a picturesque town nestled in the lap of the mountains, an oasis of stately poplars, their leaves turning gold with autumn's first chill. Behind us was the town of Saling at the mouth of the Hushe River valley. If we continued north into that valley we would come to the Masherbrum peak, located in the Ghanche District of Gilgit Baltistan. At 7,821 metres it is the 22<sup>nd</sup> highest mountain in the world and the 9<sup>th</sup> highest in Pakistan. But we continued towards another range of these magnificent mountains, the Saltoro, following the Saltoro and Ghyari

rivers, flying over the town of Farowa and the hamlets of Dunsam, Konith, Mandik, Palit and Haldi. Cautiously, the helicopter began to set itself down onto the helipad at Goma – the battalion deployed in that general area was a NLI Regiment and its Commanding Officer, Lt Col Ghulam Ali was accompanying us in another chopper.

I looked out towards the base and wondered at the courage it takes to live in an area which appeared to have been hewn out of rock, literally. These men are here to fight a war, one which was waged on Pakistan and the one we could do without, and on the face of it, they seemed to be living in this wilderness as if it was the most natural thing to do.

Many of the men serving with the NLI regiment are from Gilgit Baltistan, and would be familiar with living at altitudes unbearable for most of us living in the south. But even these hardy mountain men cannot endure for prolonged periods of time the harsh temperatures at the further posts towards which we were heading.

For survival here, not mere equipment is necessary, but essentially the courage, motivation and hard professional training of Pakistan Army. “Our soldiers are trained to live and fight where the eagles fear to tread”.

### **The Top of the World, the End of the Earth**

Sunlight falls on the slopes of the mountains and blinds one with a dazzling glare. It is not possible to keep one's eyes unprotected here at this altitude with the slopes permanently covered with snow and ice. We arrived at Ibrahim Sector at an altitude of 19,000 feet above sea level, and Lt Col Faisal had instructed me to fill my lungs with oxygen from a cylinder provided in the helicopter even before we landed in the soft snow of the '*Hasrat Glacier*' lying in the folds of the Saltoro Ridge.

The Saltoro Ridge originates from the Sia Kangri in the Karakoram Ridge and the altitudes range from 5450 to 7720

metres (17,880 to 25,300 feet). The major passes on this ridge are Sia La at 5589 metres (18,336 feet) and Bilafond La at 5450 metres (17,880 feet), and Gyong La at 5689 metres (18,665 feet). We entered the land of glaciers and crevasse by flying over the *Gyong Pass*. Below us were huge tracts of moving masses of ice and snow, rocks, and glaciers that feed the rivers which, in turn, feed our crops, and feed humanity. The glaciers are like massive brush strokes painted by a giant who commands this land of mountains. No one lives here, except for the legendary *Paris* and their consorts, the *Deo* of ancient, from mythological times.

We had come to visit the thirteen men serving at Ibrahim Post, commanded by Capt Rao, a young officer from Bahawalpur. As Col Faisal set the chopper down, I saw three big dogs playing in the snow – I was fascinated by this sight: two golden haired dogs and a darker one, frolicking in the snow as if that was their playground. These must be sniffer dogs trained to seek out men fallen into crevasse or buried beneath the snow. I was to later meet their canine colleagues at the Goma where fourteen of the finest German Shepherds were being trained for the same purpose. Having lived with animals all my life, I am more convinced every day about their intelligence and intuition, and of course, the loyalty of dogs is legendary, something I am writing about in a novel based on the heroic stories of Siachen soldiers and their four-legged companions.

I alighted from the chopper cautiously, mindful that the snow is several feet deep and that crevasses lie hidden all around us. From the chopper I had seen the two men in snowsuits, guns held at the ready, standing at the edge of what appeared to be a ridge or a crevasse. What had startled me was the rope that tied them together, a precaution taken when guarding the treacherous terrain which serves as home for these brave men. If one of them took a wrong step and fell into a crevasse, the other one would be in a position to pull, or later help in his rescue. It was an arrangement that tied both men to the interest of mutual survival. Perhaps all of us should have that rope connecting us so that when one of us falls, the other



can pull us up – is that the way to save humanity from destroying itself, by building such connections, visible and otherwise?

I was careful with my breathing, concerned that I could collapse by hyperventilating, or that the lack of oxygen in my lungs could cause memory loss. I consciously shielded my heart condition from the officers who had arranged my visit, afraid that they would not deem me medically fit to undertake the journey. Aware of the risk I had taken, I had promised myself not to let these officers down, and so calmed my breathing to a slow, deliberate rhythm, measuring each step as if it was a question of life and death.

Indeed, living at this altitude has led to serious illnesses, to amputations due to frost-bite, to burns which eat the flesh, to heart attacks which claim the lives of the young.

I had to take this risk in order to understand the peril faced by each of these men and their colleagues posted further up the ridge. I had to meet these brave men, soldiers and officers, cooks and porters, men who lived in an inhuman environment, whose families received an odd call once in a while informing them of the welfare of their loved one.

Capt Rao led Maj Shumaila and I up the slope to where the men await us. All of them were in white snowsuits, their boots protecting their feet from frost bite and goggles protecting their eyes from snow blindness. Maj Shumaila wore the *parka* provided for her, and I was pleased to see that she had also worn the extra pair of boots I had carried, “just in case”. In fact, this young Major looked rather fetching in her ensemble, my boots matching the *khaki* of her *sari*, which, incidentally, which she was wearing as her uniform and that is worn by all women officers of the Pakistan Army. I believe Maj Shumaila was among the few lady officers to arrive at Ibrahim Post wearing a *sari*. History had been made during our visit; the impossible had become possible!

There were further surprises up ahead – I made my way

through the snow laboriously, praying that I would not pass out and make a sheer fool of myself. I was assisted by Capt Rao and a walking stick, and reached the flat area designated for our tea time break. A table fashioned out of a carton or a trunk and covered with a colourful table-cloth, was laden with freshly fried *pakor*as, *samosas* and *potato chips*. Two bowls contained fresh *chutney* and *raita*, and bottles of soft drinks sparkled in the snow while tea was poured into delicate cups. I had no words to express my awe as I looked around at those men who had not seen their families or been near anything familiar for several months, and yet had produced a tea fit for a 'queen'. How do they manage at this altitude to even light a fire? How long does it take to melt the snow for tea? How often can they afford to bathe? What do they eat, and how often do they speak to their families? What happens when one of them falls sick, or is injured? Have any of them ever lost the will to survive here, in this wilderness where no man dares to get lost for fear of never being found?

Capt Rao answered my questions patiently: it takes much time to melt the snow in order to have drinking water, so bathing is out of question. Food is stored in a special stone hut, carried by porters using mules and donkeys. Beyond Ibrahim Post only porters can carry the supplies as it is impossible for pack animals to climb further (across the border I believe mules are given shots of rum to encourage them to climb impossible heights, deluding them with a sense of false courage).

I met the porter who had arrived the day before – he was a small man, from Astore, dressed casually in sweat pants, a T-shirt and a jacket open at the chest. On his head was a woollen cap and sunglasses to shield his eyes from the glare. He wore ordinary joggers in his feet. Paid between rupees four hundred and one thousand per day, he would climb up to the farthest post at 21,000 feet, seventy kilograms of supplies strapped to his back. I look at his face, a young man, his skin burnt black, a smile playing on his face, and I wonder at the strength packed into his small frame, and the resolve carried in his heart. He didn't think much of the work he does – it is all part of his own

survival in a world where war costs not only human lives but billions of dollars a year; money which could be spent on the welfare of young men like our porter from Astore.

I finished my tea and walked up to the slope where the soldiers stood on guard, guns held ready. As we proceeded slowly towards the several winterized tents and the storage hut, I was directed to look up at the sky where a white fleck flits in the air. I was not sure what I was looking at – I had not expected to see birds at this altitude, though there were four ravens flying around the storage hut, I was quite sure, unless I was hallucinating due to the lack of oxygen! Capt Rao told me it was not a bird we were watching, in fact, we were being watched by a drone flown by the “enemy” across the ridge the moment our chopper must have been spotted. I thought of the futility of this war, of the costs incurred, of the need to constantly be vigilant, to ward off attacks in the middle of the night, to survive the freezing temperatures, to continue to believe in the value of war as a tool to settle conflict.

And in my mind I imagined the lives of millions of my fellow citizens who do not have clean water to drink, adequate health care, access to education and justice, or even a nourishing meal twice a day. Could our warring countries not put these resources and our imagination to better use? Was there not a need to reconsider the hatred that fuels these conflicts, putting the welfare of our people before “strategic” considerations of the security apparatus? For what good is the state if the nation is uncared for? If children die for want of nourishment and drinking water and medical aid? If women cannot choose the number of children they want to bear, if men cannot find meaningful employment? These are the questions that mostly pertain to the army across the border as they are the ones who initiated this war, and also a major hurdle in peaceful resolution of this hazardous ‘war game’. Indian leadership has much to answer to the families of soldiers employed on both sides of the border.

I talked to the men at Ibrahim Post until it was time to go – many of them were from Punjab and had never seen snow in

their lives before coming here. Put through a rigorous process of acclimatization and training in Skardu, Youching and Goma, these men spent an average of 8-10 weeks at these posts, guarding our frontiers. Once their replacements are ready, they make their way slowly back to Goma where they are taken care of any medical need and, where the barber cuts their hair and shaves them, readying them for re-entry into the world.

I had seen that barber shop at Goma – it is like any other salon in our beloved country, complete with barber's chair and mirror, a collection of after-shave lotions and creams, posters of handsome young men sporting dashing hairstyles, and a vase carrying red plastic roses placed on a shelf with pride. Just outside the officer's living quarters, another profusion of red blooms bursted forth on a bush of wild roses, '*Sia-Chen*' in Balti, a name given to a place on top of the world, at the end of the earth, that place of absence and longing, a place which has carved a space in my heart where I keep the image of two ducks, three dogs, four ravens and many brave men safe, etched into the velvet of my eyelids, engraved like a soldier's badge of honour.

# For World Peace

**Maj Faqeer Hussain**

Mankind has always been beset by the 'difference'; of opinion, of faith and of way of living. Few 'constants', however, remain unwilling to be changed or reduced to 'insignificance', whatever the miracles the science can bring about; these are humanism, virtue, justice, honour, charity, selflessness and above all the 'sacrifice'. Life is an expression of sacrifice; may it be at home or at battlefield. Every specie sacrifices to endure the continuity of the coming generation. What, however, lends reverence to the process is the element of 'Choice'? The choosing of the option with a measure of consciousness brings the sanctity due to the 'sacrifice'; otherwise the process does not go beyond the word 'compulsion'. In what cause, for what principle for whose sake; this is what makes the choice so sublime and sacrifice so venerable. Martyrdom, however, assumes the loftiest pedestal. Imagine the goodness of a soul willing to shuffle off the garment of physical life for the sake of others.

Traditionally, a soldier personifies a figure who values his life as a 'trust' and is willing to offer it in the pursuance of his cause. Pakistan Army puts a high premium on its men and officers who keep the 'flag of motherland' high, no matter what the cost is. Friends and Foes are all full of praise for this selfless fact. Combat or comfort, crisis or calamity, challenge or danger, battlefield or peacekeeping, the 'Men of Honour' of Pakistan Army have always outshone their compatriots in prevailing against the challenges. While all the domains that fall within the ambit of army obliging it to deliver, involve own nation; the peacekeeping shines forth as an entirely different enterprise involving the betterment of other nations. This

particular dimension adds to the importance and far-reaching impact of the role that a Pakistani soldier has to perform in the international milieu and with the multi-nation force. Every soldier represents the national ethos, embodies the national character and reflects the national spirit.

The journey of humanitarian service by Pakistan Army under the aegis of United Nations spans well over half a century; with the deployment of first contingent in Congo in 1960. Serving all across the globe in 23 countries with 41 missions, the Pakistani Peacekeepers (including police and paramilitary forces) have proven to be the veritable arm of the nation projecting its standing and proving their competence. The challenges surmounted in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Haiti have become the part of their folklore. And the sacrifices offered by Pakistan Army in Somalia are the part of the chronicles of the United Nations history as well as the part of tradition of our own glory. The Somalian mission of Pakistan Army remains unsurpassed in terms of the commitment with the cause, capacity to persist against the challenge and ability to humble the hazards flung upon an unsuspecting body of peacekeepers doing its service to humanity by a rogue and unruly militia (Somali National Army – the militia of Somali clan leader 'Farah Aideed') that had the least ethics for the combat or armed engagement.

Somalia is located in the 'Horns of Africa' with its coastline running along 'Arabian Sea' and 'Gulf of Aden'. The northwestern part remained a protectorate of British from 1884 and its northeastern, central and southern parts remained a protectorate of Italians from 1889 until in 1949, when it came under United Nations Trusteeship. In July 1960, after the two regions were united, it was given independence. In 1969, Mohammad Siad Barre seized power until, in 1991, his government collapsed as the Somali Civil War broke out. The famine, drought, starvation and inter-clan killings ensuing the civil war ravaged the country's infrastructure and its people. By end 1992, more than half a million people were killed and more than 3 million were displaced. The world got alarmed over the humanitarian crisis and the United Nations

deployed its first mission UNOSOM-1 in December 1992. In line with its commitment to the humanity, Pakistan was the first country to deploy its contingent in Somalia earning international accolades for its positive commitment to international peace.

June 5, 1993 was a routine calendar day like any other day. But not for Pakistan Army and men and officers of 10 Baloch Regiment. It had in its womb the premonitions that a Peacekeeping Force could never construe to be of any meanings detrimental to their mission as well as existence. But as the day unfolded, the tragedy unfolded too, making the accounts of a heroic tale that was written by the blood of Pakistani soldiers in the line of duty. A company size strength of 10 Baloch Regiment was assigned the task of carrying out an inspection of the 'Weapons Depot' owned by Gen Farah Aideed, in line with agreed upon commitment. Located in southern Mogadishu on 21 October Road, the site was reported and confirmed to be a neutral place by United Nations Staff. The unsuspecting peacekeepers of Pakistan Army, rather imbued with the spirit of avoiding clash and combat, made to the site. The roadblocks, gun brandishing and jeering by the unruly mobs enroute, however, signalled the antagonism all around. Avoiding to do anything that could incite or provoke the situation, 10 Baloch set about to inspecting the cache.

While the team was calmly into the task, the unprovoked fury unleashed. The Militia of Gen Farah Aideed was cunning enough to wait and time its well-planned assault on the troops of United Nations/Pakistan Army. With a massive fire of small arms, machine guns and RPGs from well-hidden positions, a battalion of gangsters ambushed the Pakistani troops, who not only reorganized themselves well, but reacted back with striking punch to them. The sense of danger and will to persist was inbuilt in the combat response of our troops. The fighting ensued and the casualties, too. Major Syed Riaz Manzoor *Shaheed (Sitara-i-Jurat)* was commissioned in 10 Baloch Regiment in 1984. The professional standards earned by him over his highly demanding, *albeit* brief career speak of the professionalism of an infantry soldier. He was chosen for the

formidable part of the operation, as a rescue and evacuation commander for the beleaguered comrades at the combat site. While the vulnerability was a given, his ability to outdo it was also a given. Sense and sacrifice were to be his swords in surmounting the challenge. He employed both and did the miracle.

Fighting his way through upto the combat site, Maj Riaz effectively engaged the enemy combatants, carefully avoiding the shield of ordinary women and children that distracted the peacekeepers, and quietened the hostile guns. The toll was expected, and the expectation came true. While leading the rescue and evacuation operation from the front, the commander willingly exposed himself to the danger. What else can be the choice of a true commander in the face of the danger; he has to grapple it to down it. Maj Riaz prevailed upon the danger, rescued the comrades, evacuated the wounded and surrounded to safety but not without cost.

His courage cost him the bullets in the chest; a true sign of an honourably fallen soldier. Total 24 soldiers and one officer of Pakistan Army laid their lives for the sake of humanity and country. In recognition of his unsurpassed courage in the face of the danger and his supreme sacrifice, this 'son of soil' was honoured with the prestigious operational gallantry award, '*Sitara-i-Jurat*', posthumously. His manly portrait adorns the wall of tea bar of 10 Baloch Regiment but his soul must be in the blessed hall of Heaven. Pakistan Army and the nation are proud of and grateful to their *Shuhada*, forever.



# Not the Bygone Days!

**Brig Anwaar Ahmed**

It is made to believe that the creation of Bangladesh was a result of extreme hatred for the West Pakistanis by the East Pakistanis. The most convenient and ever exploited ploy – particularly the Indians are blaming the Pakistan Army for committing gross atrocities. However, in both the countries, a large segment of population has tremendous goodwill and passionate feelings for each other. Such is the goodwill that prevails between the two armies. This is evident through individual soldiers' level contacts as well as between the institutions. At the institutional level, there is a regular mutual training exchange programme that is well under way for years now. This cordiality is often at display once the officers and men of both the armies interact and operate under the UN peacekeeping missions. Here, I would share few occasions that I witnessed myself.

In 2005, the troops of both the countries operated together in DR Congo. On December 16, 2004, a unique gesture of goodwill was witnessed. The Pakistani contingent had planned to present sweets to the Bangladeshi contingent on their independence day, while the Bangladeshi contingent had decided not to overtly undertake the celebrations in order not to hurt the Pakistanis' feelings. However, the Pakistani contingent greeted the Bangladeshi brethren and thanked them for respecting their emotions. Despite having own religious teacher and mosque, the Pakistani contingent offered Eid prayers together with the Bangladeshi contingent behind their religious teacher who very eloquently offered dua both in Urdu and Bangla languages. It's a case of sense of sacrifice and belonging between the two nations. Next year on February 25,

2005, the FNI rebels ambushed a 21-member Bangladeshi patrol brutally killing nine soldiers including a Captain. It was the second highest number of casualties the Bangladeshi Army had suffered. Those who were killed included Capt Shahid, Warrant Officer Sohrab, Sergeant Siraj-ul-Islam, Corporal Atoar Rahman, Leading Seaman Nurul Islam and privates Abdus Salam, Zahirul Islam and Belal Hossain.

There was a shock over the incident all over. On February 25 no other contingent was in a position to undertake the dead bodies' recovery mission. The Pakistani contingent volunteered to undertake this high risk mission. While the armed rebels had still encircled the site, the Pakistani troops on board Bangladesh's Air Force helicopters went in and recovered all the dead bodies. There were emotional scenes among the Bangladeshi soldiers while receiving the dead bodies. On February 26, during the funeral ceremony, all the civil and military staff paid respect to the martyrs. One of the coffins was shouldered to the aircraft by the Pakistani soldiers as a gesture of solidarity.

In order to bring the perpetrators to the book, one of the rarest operations in the UN history ensued. On February 28 and March 1, 2005, the Pakistani contingent undertook a high risk operation wherein 60 rebels were killed, besides their headquarters was destroyed. Two Pakistani soldiers got critically injured; one permanently lost his both eyes while the other suffered hearing impairment.

Although the operation may be misconstrued as revenge but a collective sense of loss and grief remained a force multiplier. After a week's time the then Bangladeshi Army Chief of General Staff (later Chief of Army Staff) General Moin U Ahmed visited the Pakistani troops and thanked them for their support to Bangladeshi troops.

The Pakistani nation has always been supporting Bangladesh's achievements and successes. Dealing with the history honestly and magnanimously will help shape the future, rather than prejudices and bitterness. Despite Indira

Gandhi's notorious remarks about the Two-Nation Theory,  
both the nations exist as independent Muslim states.

# Loga Operation

**An eyewitness account of an operation undertaken by  
the Pakistan Army contingent in Congo**

**Brig Anwaar Ahmed**

February 25, 2005, like many other days of the year, was a moderate day in Bunia, the eastern part of Democratic Republic (DR) of Congo. William Lacy Swing, the Senior Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), was on helicopter tour with eleven ambassadors from various countries and was convincing them on stable security and humanitarian situation in that region. The Ituri Brigade Commander, Brigadier Dev Bahadur Ghale and myself, being the Pakistani Battalion Commander, accompanied. It was widely believed that the largest ever UN mission namely MONUC was fast losing its credence in maintaining peace in the area and was termed as “toothless mission” in the face of audacious and ever growing threats from various militant factions against the civilian population and UN peacekeepers.

The entourage returned by afternoon. Deputy Brigade Commander Colonel Mehmood, a Bangladeshi officer, broke the shocking news that the nine Bangladeshi soldiers who were on a routine patrol that morning had been ambushed and killed. The worst was that the dead bodies were still at the ambush site since the rebels presumably of the Nationalist and Integrationist Front (FNI) militia had encircled the area and were resisting evacuation.

The sun was fast going down and the aviation did not have night flying capability. The gut feeling was that if the bodies were not recovered in next few hours, they would probably

never be recovered. Congo had a history of cannibalism. No orders to any troops had been given in the absence of command. PAKBAT-II (3 Punjab) was tasked to recover the dead bodies as soon as possible. A quick rescue mission was planned. Two MI-17 helicopters loaded with PAKBAT troops were rushed to the site within no time. The area had been effectively cordoned off by the rebels. Blue helmets were identified with some difficulty. The rebels opened fire. The troops jumped down from helicopters with running rotors and rushed for the bodies.

All nine bodies were rescued amidst intense firing from the nearby bushes. The bodies were badly mutilated. All the weapons and equipment had been taken away by the rebels. The Bangladeshi troops had gathered at the landing site to receive their bodies. There were extremely moving scenes. Everyone had broken over fallen comrades. Next morning, the martyred were accorded highest protocol by the UN and local administration. PAKBAT, as a symbol of solidarity and support, carried one of the coffins to the C130 which had arrived from Bangladesh to carry the martyrs to their loved ones. The feeling of pain, loss and losing was beyond description among the Pakistani troops. There was a deadly silence after the aircraft left. Nobody knew what was to follow. Under the circumstances, the UN mission couldn't go on.

It was huge blow to the reputation of the UN peacekeepers. Bangladesh, one of the largest troop contributing countries, had suffered the ever highest loss on a UN mission. Bangladesh observed March 1, 2005 as a day of mourning for its fallen soldiers, the day when Loga Operation was being conducted. The Battalion was in no condition to undertake any punitive action against the perpetrators. In the evening, a meeting was called at the Brigade HQ to review the future course of action. It was decided to undertake military action against the rebels responsible for such a heinous crime. PAKBAT was once again tasked for the operation.

I was leading the PAKBAT troops as we moved to Tche, a distant location for this purpose. A platoon each from NEPBAT

and South Africa were given in support, besides the Indian MI-25 and Bangladeshi MI-17 helicopters. On February 28, a heliborne operation against the suspected rebels' location was conducted which was only partially successful in finding few weapons. It was a tough and disappointing day. Late at night Maj Abdul Hakeem Arif, passed credible information about the Nationalist and Integrationist Front (FNI) headquarters in Loga village, some 22 kilometres from Tche.

The information was passed quite late at night; hence no detailed planning could be done. Ground troops mounted in APCs set out for the operation by about 7 a.m. The convoy had reached half way when an APC broke down beyond local repair. It could neither be returned nor taken along. There was grave risk in leaving it under the situation, that too without long range communication. However, no precious time could be wasted in deliberation. It was left under command a Nepalese Captain with some PAKBAT and NEPBAT troops with clear rules of engagement in case of a danger.

The rebels had been sufficiently alerted due to helicopters and APCs' noise. As the APCs neared Loga village, they came under intense fire. It took an hour to enter the village. Maj Nisar with his troops entered the village by 1030 hours after intense gun battle. I soon realized that the troops had been surrounded from all directions. The football ground where the helicopters carrying the South African troops were about to land, had also been occupied by the rebels. The helicopters unaware of the ground danger, were immediately sent back. The troops under Capt Zia were rushed to get the ground cleared off rebels. He reported that the rebels were using heavy weapons including mortars and RPG-7s. This took considerable time and effort. FNI headquarters was established in a market as it was easy for them to collect extortion from the population and shopkeepers.

House to house clearance was started as the troops made their foothold. A lot of ammunition and weapons were being recovered. Maj Amir Zahid reported about the presence of some suspicious person in a mud room. The person was not

responding to any warning. Usually no chances are taken during the violent search operations. However, prudence suggested a careful checking. It revealed that a woman had covered herself under the blanket. She had given birth to a baby that morning and had been abandoned. She was immediately taken care of by our doctor, given some eatables and was comforted through the interpreter.

On the other side, there was no let-off from the fire. The rebels appeared to be under the influence of locally developed drugs which made them fight irrespective of losses. In the meantime, Capt Saqib reported safe landing of the South African troops. By 1330 hours, it was decided to call off the operation. Before the troops left the area, I observed that the mud room with the lady who had delivered the baby, had caught fire. Immediately, some soldiers were rushed to get the two occupants out. Before the roof collapsed, the lady and her baby had been taken out.

The troops reached the football ground with a lot of difficulty since clean disengagement was difficult in the face of rebels' fire. Having secured the troops in the football ground, I asked Capt Deshpal Singh from India, the MI-25 pilot, to engage the rebels. However, due to close proximity, the engagement could result in fratricide, advised the pilot who was observing the things in much better way. Hence, the troops had to rely on their own. Immediately an APC carrying 106 mm RR on an improvised mount was moved to support the troops. While the barrel was being lowered, it accidentally went off. Two soldiers who were just behind the APC were hit by massive back blast. Sepoy Itebar from the SSG lost both his eyes, while Sepoy Gulzar Ahmed got damaged his one eye and both ears.

Capt Desieko, the RSABAT (Royal South African) Platoon Commander, was under tremendous pressure since his troops were exchanging fire with the rebels across the elephant grass surrounding the football field. He was asked to call back his troops. The battlefield confusion was at its best. The PAKBAT troops facing outside were about to shoot at the withdrawing

South African troops due to their similarity with the rebels both in complexion and uniform. With nerve-breaking care, the fratricide was avoided. The South African troops had been inserted through Bangladeshi helicopters, but for extraction, the Indian MI-17 had been sent which had less capacity than that of the Bangladeshi helicopter.

In addition, now there were two casualties which had to be evacuated to the base hospital. With a lot of difficulty, the additional troops were adjusted in the APCs. On checking the fate of broken APC and route, the MI-25 pilots reported that the APC was safe; however, the rebels had laid ambushes at three different places. The troops were given orders to deal with the situation. After clearing the ambush sites, entailing heavy exchange of fire, the convoy reached the broken APC sight. The APC was towed with another APC and the convoy reached Tche around 10 p.m. Quick stock of men and material was undertaken and found in order. It was difficult to give count of militia's casualties. A careful estimate and the intelligence reports suggested militia casualties to be around 60.

The success of the operation had lasting impact on the overall stability of DRC. New locations were occupied such as Magbwalu. It also paved way for elections. Success of the operation was widely covered by the international media though the local media was mostly silent. Maj Gen Moeen Ahmed, then CGS and later COAS Bangladesh Army, visited PAKBAT on March 19, 2005 and remarked, "I am extremely happy to visit 3 Punjab in Ituri, also very happy to see that it is doing an excellent job in maintaining peace in the area. Thanks a lot for the support the battalion had provided on February 25, 2005, when we lost nine soldiers. All the best."

The performance of Pakistani troops caught attention of the international media. The *New York Times*, in its March 3, 2005 edition reported, "The gun battle took place on Tuesday between 242 Pakistani peacekeepers and militia fighters. It broke out at a heavily fortified militia camp near the village of Loga, 20 miles north of Bunia, the capital of the lawless Ituri



region.” “While on operation we were fired upon, so we immediately responded”, the Pakistani officer said, adding, “50 to 60 militia members had been confirmed dead.”

A website ‘news.telegraph.com’ commented on March 7, 2005, “After years of passively watching while the world’s most vicious conflict raged around them in Congo, the United Nations peacekeepers have at last taken the fight to the enemy.” *Al Jazeera* network also took the story on its website on March 2, 2005 and wrote, “The clash was one of the biggest involving the UN force in the DRC, where the militiamen roam vast swathes of the lawless East Africa’s third-biggest country.” On the similar date, March 2, 2005, BBC reported the news commenting, “the UN troops strike back in DR Congo. The United Nations peacekeepers in the DRC have killed more than 50 militiamen in a gun battle in the north-east. The Pakistani UN troops had used helicopter gunships and armoured vehicles in the operation against the militia.”

# The Black Hawk Down

**A successful 'rescue mission' conducted by Pakistani soldiers that saved lives of many American soldiers**

**Lt Col Kamal Anwar Chaudhary**

**Mogadishu** (October 3-4, 1993)

It was on October 3, 1993, that the U.S. intelligence found clue of a secret meeting to take place in Olympia Hotel, a two-storey building in the heart of Mogadishu city. It was learnt that General Farah Aidid, the notorious warlord of the troubled Somalia, and his aide Colonel Omer Jess would be present in the meeting. It was irresistible for the eager Americans to seize the moment and apprehend or kill the Somali warlord. To ensure that the mission is accomplished successfully, an elaborate heliborne and ground force was constituted comprising the Army Rangers, Delta Force, Gunship Helicopters, Little Birds, Black Hawks and infantry.

The operation commenced by a heliborne force, firing a salvo of anti-tank missiles into the compound, while Delta Force and Rangers roped down from hovering Black Hawks towards the building. Whilst some Somalis within the building escaped after the missile attack, the American forces were able to capture some 24 civilians. To avenge the American intrusion into their heartland, the Somali militia rounded up as many Aidid supporters as possible and, within minutes, hundreds of armed civilian-soldiers were marching towards the American positions. They fired RPG-7 rockets at the three Black Hawks hovering in the air, sending two Black Hawks spinning down to the ground while the third, though damaged, was able to escape. The ground convoy, a part of this operation, was to

reach the site to provide intimate infantry support by cordoning off the target area. This convoy too came under fire on its way to the Olympia Hotel. Eventually, after suffering casualties, the convoy managed to reach the building where the civilian-prisoners were held. These civilian-prisoners were hurriedly loaded on trucks, still under fire from the militiamen.

In such a condition, the convoy resumed its move out of the city while several soldiers had to travel on foot due to limited space aboard the vehicles. As would happen in any such like situation, the convoy was ordered to immediately reach the location of the downed Black Hawks to bolster the strength of the Task Force and also to help it extricate from an increasingly ugly situation. The soldiers on foot reached the helicopter site instantly. The vehicle convoy did not oblige and moved back to its headquarters under orders of the convoy commander who opined that the convoy had already suffered enough casualties. This left the downed crewmen and soldiers to defend for themselves.

As the nightfall approached, roughly 90 American soldiers had made their defensive positions near the site of the first crash. Little Bird gunships provided air support as best as they could with mini-guns as thousands of Somali militiamen closed in all around the ground forces. The survivors were also attempting to keep the militia at bay while retrieving the available medical supplies and ammunition from airdrops. With wounded men, limited ammunition and a growing militiamen presence, the situation for the survivors was getting bleak.

Located in the Horn of Africa, Somalia was ravaged by a bloody civil war which had started in 1980s. In January 1991, Somalian President Mohammed Siad Barre was overthrown and the Somali National Army disbanded. The erstwhile soldiers reconstituted as irregular regional forces or joined the clan militias. The main rebel group in Mogadishu was the United Somali Congress, which later divided into two armed factions: one led by Ali Mahdi Muhammad, who later became

the president, and the other by Gen Mohamed Farrah Aideed. The civil war led to the destruction of Somalia's agriculture which led to starvation in large parts of the country. The international community began to send food supplies to halt the starvation, but vast amounts of food used to be hijacked by the local clan leaders who would sell food to purchase weapons. This situation necessitated the employment of a peacekeeping force in August 1992 as a part of UNITAF (Unified Task Force) and the U.S. military transporters started and led the multinational relief effort in Somalia. Though massive, the relief still proved to be inadequate to stop death and displacement of the Somali people, besides growing security concerns due to ongoing activities of the warlords. It was in this context that the scope of the UNITAF was enlarged to conduct relief as well as security operations. The UNSC authorized the transition of UN force from UNITAF to UNOSOM II and all fifteen Somali parties agreed to the terms except Farrah Aidid. Defiant Aidid's militia attacked a Pakistani force (10 Baloch) on June 5, 1993 that had been tasked with the inspection of an arms cache located at a radio station, which resulted in 24 casualties and 57 wounded. Responding to the blatant act, the UNSC passed a resolution declaring war on Aidid and his forces.

Still stranded in a grim situation, the UN Quick Reaction Force (QRF) was put into action to extricate the stranded personnel after the Black Hawks went down. This force consisted of infantry, some remaining elements of the original Delta Force and Army Rangers accompanying them. The Pakistani UN forces constituted a major part of the QRF and provided all out support to the besieged Americans. 15 Frontier Force Regiment and the Squadron of 19 Lancers played the leading role in rescue operation.

The squadron of 19 Lancers was at the seaport to receive the ship carrying tanks from Pakistan, when it received call from the Pakistan Brigade Headquarters to join the UN QRF to be part of the rescue mission being planned by the Americans. The APCs of 15 FF were also placed under command the armour squadron to provide local protection to the tanks. The

task given to squadron of 19 Lancers was to lead to the crash site, cordon off the area, provide fire support at the crash site and cover the withdrawal of the force to the nearest Pakistani base.

Tanks of 19 Lancers rolled out of the seaport at 2230 hours, leading the U.S. Rangers' QRF and, with the help of effective speculative fire, reached the crash site without any loss. Two of the tanks took position on the shoulders of the narrow street, where the entrapped Rangers were fighting for their lives inside a building, whilst the other team took position on road crossings on either side of this street. The U.S. Rangers dismounted and went into the street while the Pakistani tanks kept on exchanging fire with the Somalis, preventing their efforts to get into the same street.

At around 0350 hours, the Rangers started coming out of the narrow street and started mounting the APCs, but owing to some wrong calculation of the APCs, it became difficult to accommodate everyone. Meanwhile, the Somalis were reorganizing to quell efforts of rescue force; and started bringing heavy fire at the place where APCs were parked. Therefore, the remaining U.S. personnel were accommodated in the tanks and APCs of Pakistan Army. The convoy managed to extricate and found a temporary reprieve at an open air stadium-turned-hospital held by the Pakistan Army contingent. At around 0640 hours in the morning, soon after which the U.S. gunship helicopters started punishing all the suspected sites of the Somalis and destroyed all the buildings which, in their opinion, were harbouring the militia.

The operation by the Americans to apprehend the warlord eventually became a huge embarrassment for the Clinton administration. By the time the American Task Force was extricated with the help of Pakistani contingent, it had suffered 73 wounded, 18 dead (including 3 Pakistani soldiers) and one helicopter pilot taken prisoner. This episode had such a shocking effect on the American psyche that it continued to shape the U.S. policy for long term and restricted the American involvement in the subsequent humanitarian crisis.

Pakistan Army proved its mettle in the time of crisis and brave officers and soldiers added a brilliant chapter in its brilliant history of peacekeeping operations. Ironically, this incident is mentioned in the U.S. media, movies and literature as an exceptional U.S. operation (which it certainly was not) and gives a very cursory touch to the role played by the Pakistani contingent, which actually extricated the U.S. Task Force at the peril of their own lives. Had it not been for the bravery and chivalry of the Pakistani QRF, the U.S. force would have remained surrounded and obviously, suffered heavier losses.

# A Martyr of UN

**Palwasha Faiz Khattak**

‘*Shahadat*’ is not just what we call death; it's something more than that, higher than any rank, bigger than any achievement and more honourable than any medal. When a soldier embraces ‘*shahadat*’, the eyes of his loved ones not only have tears and sorrows but they are also covered by aroma of pride, glory and honour.

How can his loved ones be so composed and calm? The answer to this arising question is simple, the departed one is not an ordinary traveler to the valley of death. He is a Martyr, a *Shaheed* who has offered his blood, youth, dreams and life to his loving country, his sacred motherland and for a secure future of his fellow countrymen and the generations. He willingly welcomes *shahadat* with open arms and smiling face and with a contented heart, because he knows it is a pride with which only a few are blessed, and he is the chosen one.

Allah in the Quran says, “*The people who get killed in Lord’s way, they live, finding their provision from their Lord*”. (Aal-e-Imran 169-172)

Here is the story of a valiant soldier of the Pakistan Army who embraced *shahadat* during his tenure at the United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping Mission in Sierra Leone on June 29, 2004. The ‘Martyr of Sierra Leone’ was none else but my own father.

My father Lieutenant Colonel Faizullah Khan was born on February 10, 1962 in a far-flung village Ali Khel of District Karak (near Kohat). He did his matriculation from the

Government High School Sabirabad (Karak) in 1978 and further did his F.Sc. from the Government College Karak in 1980. With his sheer hard work and dedication, he was selected for induction in the Pakistan Army as an officer and joined the Pakistan Military Academy in 1982. Upon completion of training, he was commissioned in 29 Frontier Force Regiment (FF) in 1984 as a Second Lieutenant with 69 PMA Long Course.

The Officer had the basic instinct of extreme hard work, sincerity of cause, and dedication towards his duty. In his military career, he achieved all important milestones which included his stint as an instructor at the Army High Altitude and Snow Warfare School - Rattu, Platoon Commander at Pakistan Military Academy, Brigade Major of an Infantry Brigade, Commanding Officer 29 FF and General Staff Officer-I (Operations) at 41 Division. He also underwent Staff Course during 1994 with good grades.

Lt Col Faizullah was posted at Quetta after commanding his unit in Gujranwala in 2002. After serving one year at Quetta, he was selected to serve as Staff Officer in the UN Mission in Sierra Leone, which is considered to be an honour for any military officer.

Lt Col Faizullah joined his UN batch in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone on August 18, 2003. Owing to his nature, he kept on working hard and performed his duties with utmost devotion.

It was a bright sunny Tuesday June 29, 2004. Lt Col Faizullah was moving out for reconnaissance of the area with other officers and staff. His flight was rescheduled from June 30 to June 29. Total 24 passengers including 16 Pakistan Army personnel and 3 Russian pilots boarded the helicopter (MI-8) at 0900 hours (Sierra Leone time). The take-off was smooth and usual. It was around 1000 hours when the helicopter lost its contact with the control tower and reportedly crashed within next 15 minutes in the thick dense trees near the mountains of Yengema. Heavy fire broke out at the crash site



due to the accident. As soon as the officials were informed, the rescue teams were sent to the site to look for any survivors and to recover the bodies. The teams reached the crash site at night as the route was difficult and the temperature was very low because of heavy rains. The bodies were recovered and Lt Col Faizullah's body was recognised by the artificial tooth he wore.

After seven days of long wait, body of my father was received by the family and relatives at the PAF base Chaklala and was then taken to our native village for burial. He was laid to rest with full military honour on July 6, 2004.

He offered his life for the honour of his uniform while serving abroad, which truly indicates that we are a peaceful nation and do not hesitate from even sacrificing our lives to establish peace, anywhere in the world. Later he was awarded the UN Peacekeeping medal along with other 15 '*Shuhada*' of the Pakistan Army.

Today, while I write about my father, the words seem to be less. I miss him but, knowing that he is a *Shaheed*, consoles my soul. Yes, I feel at loss and my heart aches when people around me talk about their fathers, but I look at them with pride in my eyes, a thing they might never understand. He has got a rank most people only dream of, and I believe he was always special. He was made for it but maybe it was too early.

It has been nine years since he left but he remains alive in the hearts of his loved ones. He will be remembered for long in our prayers and our hearts for the years to come. I miss him in the sunlight, moonlight and the stars. May Allah bless him and grant us the courage to bear this loss. *Ameen*.

I am a proud daughter of a great father!

# Maximum Courage

**Brief accounts of the acts of valour displayed by the recipients of highest gallantry award Nishan-i-Haider**

**Col Azam Qadri (R)**

**Capt Raja Muhammad Sarwar Shaheed** (1910-July 27, 1948)

Captain Muhammad Sarwar was the first *Nishan-i-Haider* recipient in the history of our great nation. He was born in village Singhori, Rawalpindi in 1910. His father, Raja Muhammad Hayat Khan served in the British Indian Army and rose to the rank of Havildar. He served with distinction during WW-I and was awarded with a war medal. Along with the medal, the British government also awarded him with three squares of agricultural land in Chak 229, Tehsil Samundri, Faisalabad. After his retirement from the British Indian Army, Raja Muhammad Hayat Khan was also appointed as the “*numberdar*” of his village. He passed away on February 23, 1932.

Since his childhood, Raja Muhammad Sarwar was fond of reading and he acquired extensive religious knowledge. The people of his village named him “*Sakhi* (generous) Sarwar”. The chief characteristic of his nature was piety and devotion. His other hobbies were horse riding, hunting, and playing football.

He started his military career in the ranks as a Sepoy. He was a self-made man who finally rose to be a Commissioned Officer. He joined as a recruit in Baloch Regiment on April 15, 1929 and got his initial training from the old Baloch Centre at

Karachi. He served there until April 30, 1941. On April 27, 1944, he passed out as a Commissioned Officer from Indian Military Academy Dehradun and took part in World War II, where he was awarded *Burma Star*.

After Independence, Capt Muhammad Sarwar joined the Punjab Regiment of Pakistan Army. Capt Muhammad Sarwar was serving as a Company Commander in the Uri Sector in Kashmir when he was tasked by his Battalion Commander to undertake a very important operation that involved a preemptive attack on a well defended Indian position that was to serve as a base for further operations by his battalion. The Indian Army had landed in Srinagar on October 27, 1947 and since then advanced up to Uri. The Indians had plans to capture the remaining Kashmir. There was a need to stop the Indian advance and save innocent Kashmiris. Young Capt Sarwar decided to volunteer for noble cause of defending Kashmir.

The strength of the Indian Army was more than eight Brigades in Uri Sector and they were supported by tanks and engineers. What made the task more challenging was the fact that the Indian posts were located on uphill positions and had many LMG positions and tanks in this area. The Commanding Officer asked for a volunteer who could silence the enemy tanks and guns by ‘surprise attack’. Capt Muhammad Sarwar said, “Sir, I will perform this duty”. Capt Muhammad Sarwar thus planned his attack with diminutive details and the essence of his success depended upon the charge with an element of surprise. This called for highest level of leadership to lead his Company by example, which he did by leading the charge himself.

By attacking a strongly fortified enemy position under heavy machine gun, grenade, and mortar fire, he not only led his Company bravely but inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. Having achieved this initial foothold, he held it against several repeated counter-attacks and finally secured it as a base of future operations. In order to provide a safe passage to his battalion, he volunteered to make way for the rest of his

battalion.

On the night of July 27, 1948 at 0300 hours, he took along six men, crawled out of his bunker to cut the enemy's barbed wire barrier to make way for his battalion to move through this gap for further operations. He moved stealthily and bravely, closed up to the defensive position of the Indians and was able to cut the barbed wire for his battalion to pass through. While he was waiting to guide his comrades, he was picked up by the Indians, when he was still perched up near the gap in the barbed wire, he received a direct burst of enemy's heavy machine gun fire, and was wounded badly. He however, continued guiding his battalion despite being badly wounded and eventually embraced *shahadat* on the spot. By that time, the battalion was able to pass through, assemble and complete its task successfully.

In recognition of his courage, selflessness, and bravery that was beyond the call of duty, he was posthumously awarded with the first *Nishan-i-Haider*.

**Naik Saif Ali Janjua Shaheed** (April 25, 1922-October 26, 1948)

Naik Saif Ali Janjua was born in a Janjua Rajput family on April 25, 1922 in Khandbaz (Khandhar) Tehsil Nakial, Kotli (Azad Jammu and Kashmir). Saif joined the Royal Corps of Engineers in the British Indian Army as a "Sapper" (Sepoy in Engineers) on March 18, 1941, when he was only 18 years old. Later, he served overseas for four years during WW II. On termination of war, his unit sailed back to the subcontinent, and remained stationed at Jullundur and Lahore.

After completing his service in the British Indian Army in 1947, he came back to his native town to apply his knowledge to good use and started raising a volunteer *Haidari Force*. He also inspired and got support of Sardar Fateh Muhammad Karailvi. On January 1, 1948, *Haidari Force* was further raised to a battalion strength and named as "*Sher-e-Riasti Battalion*", under the command of Lt Col Muhammad Sher

Khan. Later on during the reorganisation phase of Azad Kashmir Regular Forces (AKRF), "*Sher-e-Riasti Battalion*" was redesignated as 18 Azad Kashmir Battalion. Indian forces after landing in Srinagar on October 27, 1947, advanced with the intention to capture whole of Kashmir. "*Sher-e-Riasti Battalion*" (18AK) of Pakistan Army comprising Kashmiri Muslims could not stay silent and joined the *Azad Forces* against Indian occupation. Naik Saif, being part of the battalion, participated in these operations with full zeal and fervor.

Saif Ali Janjua showed exceptional leadership qualities, and was promoted as a Naik, well before his time and appointed as Platoon Commander; an appointment normally given to officers or Junior Commissioned Officers. While acting as a Platoon Commander, he set personal examples in gallantry and inflicted heavy losses on the enemy at *Bhudha Khanna* where his platoon was given the responsibility to defend *Bhudha Khanna*.

During this period of reorganisation of freedom fighters, a major Indian offensive supported by armour, artillery, and air force to establish link-up with Poonch was gaining momentum in Mendhar Sector. A platoon of "*Sher-e-Riasti Battalion*", commanded by Naik Saif Ali Janjua, was deployed on the dominant *Pir Kalewa* feature (6640) along the *Rajauri-Bhimber Gali* route. The Indians attacked with 5 and 19 Brigade at *Pir Kalewa* on October 20, 1948; but these attempts were repulsed every time. However, the Indian Army was successful towards the right of *Pir Kalewa* feature and captured *Naili* and *Sarola*. The defences at *Pir Kalewa* were untenable and the situation had deteriorated further but Naik Saif and his platoon were determined to stop the Indian advance. On night October 24-25, 1948, Naik Saif inducted a few more volunteers from his own village to strengthen his post. On the night of October 25-26, 1948, Indian attack by 5 Brigade Group with armour in support and occasional air strikes commenced all along the front was held by "*Sher-e-Riasti Battalion*". The Indian Army captured *Bhudha Khanna*, which was defended by a platoon of B Company and then

managed to isolate defences at *Pir Kalewa*.

The Indians successfully moved towards the rear of *Pir Kalewa* feature, developed pressure on *Barot Gali* by 0500 hours and then launched major attack against *Pir Kalewa* post. The Indians were allowed to move forward up to about 100 yards and then Naik Saif ordered his platoon to engage the assaulting troops with all available firepower. He led his men gallantly and continued shouting slogans of encouragement while also passing instructions. Meanwhile, a complete section had suffered heavy casualties, but Naik Saif single-handedly held the position until the arrival of reinforcements. He himself took over the *Bren gun* and started effectively engaging the hapless advancing enemy soldiers from an open place.

The devotion, highest standard of bravery and exemplary leadership of Naik Saif was instrumental in forcing the enemy to withdraw. The Indians reorganised with fresh troops at 0615 hours. After air strikes, Indian artillery, tanks and mortars continually engaged the position for two hours. Then the Indians resumed their attack on the post with fresh troops. However, they again failed and were repulsed thrice.

Brave Naik Saif had in the meantime received severe splinter wounds in both his legs during the enemy shelling, but he continued firing his *Bren gun*. Despite his severe wounds, he also continued commanding his men effectively by encouraging and regrouping them to face renewed Indian attacks.

By 1500 hours, fourth Indian attempt against *Pir Kalewa* post had also been repulsed but the enemy artillery was continuously and heavily engaging the position. The communication with Battalion Headquarters was restored during the respite in fighting and resultantly, the reinforcement was rushed towards *Pir Kalewa*.

In the meantime, gallant Saif hit and brought down an enemy aircraft with his *Bren gun* fire. It was at this time when

all the available ammunition at the post had been expended and the reinforcement had not reached yet. Naik Saif had suffered huge loss of blood from his wounds; however, he dragged himself around to collect ammunition from the dead and wounded, and distributed it personally to the surviving soldiers. Naik Saif was reorganising and repositioning his surviving men to face another fresh wave of enemy assault, which was preceded by even heavier and intense artillery shelling, when an artillery shell hit him fatally.

The Indians could not succeed to capture the post despite heavy losses until brave Naik Saif Ali was alive. Due to the severe injuries, he embraced martyrdom on October 26, 1948. The extreme selfless and most courageous conduct displayed by Naik Saif Ali Janjua under worst battle conditions is a unique example of chivalry.

On his unique selfless conduct and devotion to duty, Saif Ali Janjua was awarded *Hilal-i-Kashmir* (posthumous), the highest operational award of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, on March 14, 1949. The Government of Pakistan, on November 30, 1995 notified the equivalence of *Hilal-i-Kashmir* with *Nishan-i-Haider*. Hence Naik Saif Ali Janjua became the 9<sup>th</sup> recipient of *Nishan-i-Haider*.

### **Maj Tufail Muhammad Shaheed** (1914-August 7, 1958)

Major Tufail Muhammad was born in 1914 at Hoshiarpur (now part of Indian Punjab). He got his commission in 1943 and joined the Punjab Regiment. At the time of partition, he opted to come to Pakistan, and thereafter he joined Pakistan Army, and got his first posting to 1/16 Punjab Regiment (later redesignated as 13 Punjab). During his professionally exceptional career, he served on several instructional and command assignments.

In 1958, Maj Tufail Muhammed was posted to East Pakistan as a company commander in a border militia battalion of East Pakistan Rifles (EPR). During his tenure of duty, the Indian troops infiltrated into Pakistani territory

through the *Pathoria Forest* and captured a village in the area of Lakshmipur on the Pakistani side of the border.

His battalion was tasked to evict the enemy and the Battalion Commander ordered Maj Tufail to launch an attack to push out the Indian troops from the village. The attack was launched on August 7, 1958. Taking cover of the darkness, he attacked the Indians by dividing his attacking force into three groups. During the assault on enemy positions, Maj Tufail Muhammad was hit by three bullets, that pierced his stomach. He did not lose his wits, and using sheer will-power when he was bleeding profusely, he kept advancing towards his objective.

During the attack, he spotted an Indian Light Machine Gun (LMG) that was making the task of attacking force difficult and even accounted for the *shahadat* of another officer. After locating this gun, he closed up and threw a grenade, silencing this LMG. With fatal injuries, he crawled further towards an enemy officer, who was aiming to kill a Pakistani soldier. In a hand-to-hand fight, Maj Tufail Muhammad struck the Indian officer's head with his own steel helmet. Despite being fatally wounded, he led the whole operation until all the area was cleared off the Indian troops.

By his sheer presence and leading troops from the front, this brave son of the soil kept boosting the morale of his men, who were now entangled in hand-to-hand fight, and finally Indians fled, leaving behind four dead and three prisoners. By the time the operation was completed, he had lost a lot of blood and energy due to bullet injuries. At that juncture, he conveyed to his junior officer, "I have completed my duty; the enemy is on the run, you take over the command now".

With the mission now completed, Maj Tufail took a sigh of relief, thanked Almighty Allah, and embraced *Shahadat* smilingly, thus becoming immortal. For his act of bravery, showing great resilience and perseverance while leading from the front, killing an Indian commander despite being wounded in a hand-to-hand fight, something rarely displayed in war, he was awarded with *Nishan-i-Haider*.



## **Maj Raja Aziz Bhatti Shaheed (1928-September 11, 1965)**

Originally named Aziz Ahmad, Major Aziz Bhatti was born in 1928. During the period he was in Hong Kong, his name stayed as Aziz Ahmad. Even the initials on the golden ring he wore had engravings of "A.A." "As a nick name," said his mother, "We called him Raja".

In 1946, Maj Aziz Bhatti was enlisted as Airman with the RIAF and within a short period rose to rank of Corporal by 1947. At the time of partition, he decided to join Pakistan Army and applied for selection as an officer. He was selected for the first course to be organised and run at the Pakistan Military Academy – The 1<sup>st</sup> PMA Long Course. The Course started in the last week of January 1948. Gentleman Cadet Aziz Bhatti excelled and performed well in all aspects of life at PMA.

At the passing out parade of 1<sup>st</sup> PMA Long Course, Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan, was the chief guest. For distinguishing himself as the best all-round cadet, and for being the most brilliant in academics, Liaquat Ali Khan presented the Sword of Honour and the Norman Gold Medal to Gentleman Cadet Raja Aziz Bhatti. Aziz Bhatti's Khalid Company (being Champion Company) was also awarded with the Quaid-i-Azam's Banner.

It was generally accepted that of all the parades held at PMA, this happened to be the finest. There was such alacrity and power in the 'words of command' of Raja Aziz Bhatti, that even the spectators came to 'attention' in their seats! At the time of passing out, he joined the 4/16 Punjab Regiment (now 17 Punjab) as a commissioned officer. With only 11 months of service, he was appointed as Adjutant of the Battalion. He was later on posted to the School of Infantry & Tactics, Quetta, from where he appeared for the entrance examination for Command and Staff College. Humble as ever he asked all friends to pray for his success. As expected, his name appeared on top of the list of successful candidates. His selection for the foreign staff course at Kingston Staff College Canada was due

recognition of his brilliance as officer. Leaving aside Pakistan, there was hardly any other country where an officer with such a short service was selected for that course. He was promoted to the rank of Major before he left for Canada. Very popular in the College he, as usual, distinguished himself in every test. Writing to Brig Niazi from there, he said, "My English seems to be better than that of the Britishers; my exercise books hardly have any red marks on the pages."

During the Kingston Course, Maj Gen Hayauddin (who was killed in the Cairo crash), came over from New York. When he saw results of the tests Maj Bhatti had taken at the Staff College, he was immensely pleased and congratulated him. Maj Aziz Bhatti passed his Canadian Staff Course with distinction. On return, the C-in-C of the Army, Gen Muhammad Ayub Khan, sent him a special message of felicitations.

When September 1965 war broke out, Maj Aziz Bhatti's Alpha Company was deployed forward of BRB Canal. On September 6, once Indian advancing columns in their bid to surprise Pakistanis found Maj Aziz Bhatti's men ready to receive them with unwavering will to defend Lahore at all costs. As a Company Commander, Maj Bhatti chose to locate himself with his forward platoon under constant firing from Indian tanks and artillery. He resisted for six days and nights defending a Pakistani outpost on the strategic BRB Canal. A day before his martyrdom, the commanding officer had sent him word that since he had been fighting untiringly for the last few days, he should take a little rest and that another officer was being sent to replace him. Maj Aziz's reply is a reflection of extreme patriotism saying, "Do not call me back. I will shed the last drop of my blood in the defence of my dear homeland". These words serve as an inspiration for future generations of Pakistan Army soldiers and officers.

On September 10, while constantly observing the enemy terrain, Maj Bhatti noticed some trucks speeding up at intervals behind a cluster of trees, stopping at a point for a while and then dashing back. It was evident that the enemy

was again dumping ammunition and armament at that place. In the meantime, he also saw a convoy of 13 vehicles moving up. He kept his eyes on it. As it got close to milestone 17/18, he ordered fire. The entire convoy was destroyed, engulfed in a huge cloud of smoke. It was evident from the gunpowder what these vehicles were carrying.

In the afternoon, IAF aircraft made their appearance felt again, had a circle or two over the border, and went back without any action. Things then appeared quiet; no transport vehicles were visible, nor was there any sign of troops movement. He had hardly slept for 15 minutes when he stood up saying, "Is it actually the sound of moving tanks, or am I imagining it?" he asked those around him. Capt Anwar replied, "You are very right. These definitely are tanks; I'm already trying to locate them." Maj Bhatti picked up the binoculars, and managed to get two enemy tanks in view. He ordered the fire and both were knocked down. He continued to scan the area but could not observe any further movement. Nevertheless, he remained alert all the time.

But sooner, the enemy launched the attack with an Infantry Brigade comprising 16 Punjab and 4 Sikh Regiments, with a tank regiment and heavy artillery in their support. By 10 o'clock in the night when shelling had stopped, Maj Bhatti went upstairs and called all the others over the wireless set, and then threw a flare to have an overall view of the area. By then the light emanating from enemy's truck captured during the day, that was set ablaze by the shelling enabled them to watch the Indians. At the same time, shouts of *Jai Hind* were also heard. Obviously, enemy tanks and infantry had come up closer to Burki Police Station.

Maj Bhatti now reorganised his troops on the home bank of the canal and directed the "*jawans*" to take position along the embankment. He climbed up, and started surveying enemy activity in the area. At night, the Regiment Adjutant, Anwar Muniruddin, came over to meet him. He narrated to him the episodes of previous days, recounting the enemys attacks, how they were repulsed and how they managed to pull back safely

after the ammunition had been exhausted. Then he handed over his gold ring to him. "Make sure to deliver it at my place in case I am martyred," he urged.

Anwar put on the ring on his own finger. Maj Bhatti had been wearing it all along since his Hong Kong days. He turned to Anwar again, "You are a young officer," he said, "You'll one day write the history of your Regiment. Bhatti may not be among you at that time, but one thing you must definitely keep in mind – don't forget to mention the historic role of the artillery in this war." The last sun of Maj Bhatti's life had come up. Passing to the left of Havildar Nazir's platoon holding position near Company Headquarters, he went up the canal bank, and started surveying the far side through his binoculars. Havildar Maj Faiz Ali was lowered down the embankment due to enemy fire. He shouted, "Sir, there's fire from that side – please come down." "I cannot look around from that position," said Maj Aziz, "It is certainly dangerous standing here but then everything is from God! If '*Shahadat*' is in store for me, I'll welcome it."

Soon some tanks were seen advancing towards the canal from the direction of Burki. Under their cover, infantry was also on the march. Indicating their positions, Maj Bhatti ordered fire. Off went the guns but the shells did not land where desired. He quickly passed another message. This time the shells found the target. He was overjoyed. Two enemy tanks had been knocked down. Capt Anwar (Artillery) was directing the fire. Maj Bhatti appreciated his precision. "Well done, Anwar," he said loudly.

Just then, an enemy shell whizzed past Maj Bhatti, cut across a nearby *shisham* tree and landed on the heap of bricks, which had been dug out of the trenches and stocked there. That point was hardly a few feet away. A cloud of dust arose. His men around feared that the Major had been hit! They ran towards him but found him unscathed. "Go back to your positions immediately," ordered Maj Bhatti, "This shell was not for me; the one for me has yet to be manufactured in India's ordnance factories!"

Destiny was smiling at what Maj Bhatti had just uttered. He was about to raise his binoculars and scan the enemy area when an armoured piercing shot fired from an Indian tank hit him in the chest and passed through his right lung. He fell face down on the bank. Havildar Maj Faiz Ali and Sepoy Aman Khan rushed to his aid but by then that highly dedicated, valorous, selfless human being, an exceptional and unique military hero had been relieved of his duty.

**Pilot Officer Rashid Minhas Shaheed** (February 17, 1951-August 20, 1971)

Born in the metropolitan city of Karachi on February 17, 1951 Rashid belonged to the famous Minhas clan of Rajputs. At partition in 1947, Rashid's father migrated from Gurdaspur (Indian Punjab) to Pakistan. Rashid had a great passion for aero-modelling and used to spend his entire pocket money buying the aircraft models especially those of fighter jets.

Since childhood, he wanted to join the Armed Forces of Pakistan. His school days' diary records indicate the same. On August 7, 1965 he wrote in his diary, "Today I promise from my heart that out of three defence forces I will definitely join any one." His parents on the other hand were ignorant of his hidden passion as his father always wanted him to become an engineer. However, after seeing the eagerness of his young boy, he had no other option but to surrender to his overwhelming passion.

Rashid completed his O' and A' levels with distinction at the age of 18 and joined PAF College Lower Topa for initial training. During his days at Lower Topa, he displayed extraordinary talent in literary activities and emerged as a promising orator. After training at Lower Topa, he joined 51<sup>st</sup> GD(P) Course at PAF Academy Risalpur in August 1969. At the Academy, his passion for flying saw no limits. He did his primary and basic flying training on *Harvard* and *T-37* aircraft respectively and showed great promise.

March 14, 1971 was the historic and proud day in the life of young Rashid Minhas. On this memorable day, he earned his 'wing' and became Pilot Officer. After spending a few days with his family, Rashid went for the conversion course on T-33 aircraft at Masroor Airbase. Unaware what the destiny had in store for him, Rashid started flying training with No. 2 Squadron.

On August 20, 1971, around 1100 hours, Rashid got ready to take off for his second solo flight in a T-33 jet trainer. He started his engines and completed the checks, the ground crew gave 'thumbs up' (signal to taxi out) and saluted him (not knowing that this was his last salute to the young warrior). As Minhas was taxiing towards the runway, his Bengali instructor pilot, Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman, came on the taxiway and signalled him to stop. Thinking that his instructor might want to give some last minute instructions, Minhas stopped the aircraft. Mati forced his way into the rear cockpit and seized controls of the aircraft; the jet took off and turned towards India.

Soon the radio at Mauripur (now Masroor) Control Tower became alive and Minhas informed that he was being hijacked. The air controller requested him to resend his message and confirm that it was hijacking. The events that followed later were the tale of great courage and patriotism. In the air, Minhas struggled physically to wrest control from Rahman; each man tried to overpower the other through the mechanically linked flight controls. The instructor wanted him to fly to India; however, the determined Rashid was not ready for it. The ferocious struggle continued for minutes and as the aircraft neared the Indian border, Rashid Minhas knew what he was supposed to do. He knew that the honour of his country was far greater than his precious life. Some 32 miles (51 km) from the Indian border, Rashid Minhas deliberately put the aircraft nose down and that made the jet to crash near Thatta.

Rashid Minhas rendered supreme sacrifice for the honour of the country and became a national hero. Later investigation showed that Rahman intended to defect along with the jet

trainer to India to join his compatriots in Bangladesh. Minhas was posthumously awarded with Pakistan's top military honour, the *Nishan-i-Haider* and became the youngest man and the only member of the PAF to win the prestigious gallantry award.

**Citation of Gallantry Award (NH):** The citation of Rashid Minhas *Shaheed* gives account of his bravery as: "On the morning of Friday, August 20, 1971, Pilot Officer Rashid Minhas, a pilot still under training, was in the front seat of a jet trainer, taxiing out for take-off. An instructor pilot from the same unit forced his way into the rear cockpit, seized control of the aircraft and having taken off, headed the aircraft towards India. With just some 40 miles of Pakistan territory remaining, Minhas had only one course open to him to prevent his aircraft from entering India. Without hesitation and living up to highest traditions of the PAF, Rashid Minhas tried to regain control of his aircraft but finding this to be impossible in the face of the superior skill and experience of his instructor, forced the aircraft to crash at a point 32 miles from the Indian border. In doing so, Pilot Officer Minhas deliberately made the supreme sacrifice for the honour of Pakistan and service to which he belonged. For this act of heroism beyond the call of duty, the President of Pakistan is pleased to award the NH to Pilot Officer Rashid Minhas".

**Maj Shabbir Sharif Shaheed** (April 28, 1943-December 6, 1971)

Major Shabbir Sharif *Shaheed* was born on April 28, 1943 at *Kunjah*, a small town of District Gujrat. His father, late Maj Muhammad Sharif joined the British Indian Army in 1935 and retired from Pakistan Army in 1965. Maj Shabbir has four brothers and sisters. The eldest sister is Mrs. Khalida Saadat, brother Capt (retd) Mumtaz Sharif, *Sitara-e-Basalat*, younger sister Mrs. Najmi Kamran and his youngest brother, Gen Raheel Sharif, the ex-Chief of Army Staff, Pakistan Army.

In 1950, Maj Shabbir started his early education from Presentation Convent School, Rawalpindi. He was

intellectually an exceptional student. While studying at Government College Lahore in 1961, he was selected for Pakistan Army and underwent training with 29 Long Course at PMA, Kakul. Maj Shabbir was an outstanding player of hockey, cricket, football, athletics and cycling. He had been declared the best sportsman of hockey and cricket in Saint Anthony High School. At the PMA, he passed out on top, winning the Sword of Honour.

In 1965 War, after the commencement and facing tough resistance, 6 FF operation was slowed down and suffered casualties. The Brigade Commander at that stage ordered 6 FF to send out a reconnaissance patrol to take a look at the deployment of Indians on and around '*Troti*' feature. Shabbir who was originally tasked to carry out reconnaissance saw an opportunity where an artillery battery was in a state of rest and not fully alert. Seeing an opportunity, he changed his mind and instead of going back, he attacked the Gun Positions and got them into a panic, thus forcing them to either withdraw or surrender. He captured four Indian POWs and having destroyed two guns, he brought along a field gun towed to a gun-tower (Shaktiman). He put his own wounded soldiers and Indian POWs in the same vehicle.

He returned with full information about the Indian deployments as well as captured soldiers. Operations of 10 Infantry Brigade were resumed with 6 FF again leading on the main axis with 13 Lancers in support and the other action being undertaken by 14 Punjab Regiment, which were to move on the right flank and manoeuvre, and get around Troti Feature and face towards *Jaurian*. These operations were a great success and the Indians panicked and ran. The Brigade took a large number of vehicles, ammunition dumps and POWs. It was perhaps the largest ever haul of men and materials in all our wars with India. Maj Shabbir was awarded *Sitara-e-Jurat* during the War.

In 1971 War, at the outbreak of hostilities, a preemptive operation was launched to capture the *Sabuna Bund* in order to give greater depth and protection to the Sulaimanki



Headworks. Maj Shabbir not only captured that with lightning speed but held his positions against all odds. During the war, a company commander from India, Maj Narain Singh, had sworn before going on attack that he either would retake the bridge, or would never return. Narain Singh was also interested in defeating Shabbir Sharif, as for the last two days he had been hearing from his own men that the Pakistani side had a very tough commander with them. While the battle was going on, Narain Singh, with a few men, came very close to Shabbir's position. "Where is Shabbir Sharif?" He called out, "If he has the courage, he should come out right now and face me like a man." Shabbir Sharif, being as hot-headed as was the Singh, left his position and jumped in front of him upon the call. Perhaps, Narain Singh could not make out that it was Shabbir Sharif, as it was very dark, and he lobbed a grenade in his direction. The grenade exploded a few feet away from Shabbir and his shirt caught fire. A hand-to-hand combat followed between Sharif and Singh. After a short struggle, Shabbir managed to throw Singh on the ground and put his knee on his chest. Taking the Sten gun from his hand, he emptied it on Singh's chest. While the Pakistani soldiers came to Sharif to check whether he was alright, those accompanying Singh disappeared in the darkness.

The ferocious non-stop battle of December 4, 5 and 6 was an amazing feat of valour and sacrifice led by the Company Commander, Maj Shabbir. At around 1100 hours on December 6 the Indians launched yet another major counter-attack with tanks, preceded by an air strike and heavy artillery fire. Maj Shabbir started firing on the Indian tanks with 106 mm Recoilless Rifle. While he was engaged in targeting the enemy tanks, one of the enemy tanks fired with its main gun at him, which proved fatal. Maj Shabbir gave his life leading from the front and fighting until the last minute. Here was a brave man whose mere presence was a guarantee of victory. He had said this before the war, "If war breaks out this time, I will not be a witness to ceasefire".

It is worth mentioning that this operation by 6FF was so humiliating for the Indians that in 12 days, they changed their

General Officer Commanding, and Brigade Commanders thrice in this Sector. He was decorated with *Nishan-i-Haider* for his bravery and deeds of valour.

**Maj Muhammad Akram Shaheed** (September 25, 1941-December 5, 1971)

Major Muhammad Akram *Shaheed* was born on September 25, 1941 in a small village named Dinga, very close to Kharian Cantonment. He got his initial education from Chakri Middle School, and then joined the Military College Jhelum. While at the Military College, he was known for his skills in playing hockey and excelled in it. He was also known for his boxing skills.

On July 3, 1953, he left the college and joined the Punjab Regimental Centre (then located at Jhelum) in the Boys Company of 14 Punjab Regiment. This Regimental Centre used to train boys aged 15 to 17 years for their future induction in Pakistan Army. After completing his recruit training, Akram joined 4/14 Punjab Regiment (later redesignated as 8 Punjab Regiment). 8 Punjab therefore, is his parent battalion. After having served for about 8 years, Muhammad Akram applied for commission in Pakistan Army.

He was not selected in the first attempt; however, he made it in the second attempt and was selected in March 1961 for the 28 PMA Long Course. He passed out in October 1963. While at PMA, he led the PMA hockey team and won the inter-Academy trophy beating PAF and Naval Academy teams. He was also awarded with the PMA Colour in hockey. He also excelled professionally by being the best firer in his course, thus winning the Best Firer's Trophy.

On his commissioning, he joined the Frontier Force Regiment and joined a very well-known Infantry Battalion, the 4<sup>th</sup> Frontier Force Regiment (4 FF) on October 13, 1963. All through his service, he had a good service record, and was promoted as Major in September 1970 after attending the Military Intelligence Course.

In 1971, the situation in East Pakistan was getting worse because Indian troops were consistently penetrating inside East Pakistan borders, and were sponsoring an insurgency through the so called 'indigenous' terrorist organisation "*Mukti Bahini*" to destabilise East Pakistan. It was not long after that an all-out war started in December 1971. The main objective of the Indian Army was to get control of Bogra, thereby cutting off Pakistani forces in the north from the rest of East Pakistan. The best way of getting to Bogra was through the town of Hilli. The frontal assault on the Pakistan fortifications took a huge toll on the Indian Army. In a renewed effort and further strengthening, the 20 Indian Mountain Division with strength of 20,000 men, led by Maj Gen Lachhman Singh, comprising 66 Brigade, 165 Brigade, 202 Brigade, and 340 Brigade (all infantry units), 3 Armoured Brigade, 471 Engineer Brigade, and two artillery brigades augmented by 33 Corps Artillery attacked Hilli sector.

The ground troops were aided by aerial support provided by the Indian Air Force, which had already acquired total air superiority in the East and were armed with rockets, guns, and 1000-lbs bombs. On the Pakistan side, the Area of Responsibility was with 205 Brigade, led by Brigadier (later Major General) Tajammul Hussain Malik. 205 Brigade had deployed 4 FF, 13 FF, and 8 Baloch Regiments. Maj Akram was commanding Charlie Company of the 4 FF Regiment in the forward most localities of the Hilli Sector. This Company position was very vital and had blocked enemy's route of advance. His Company came under continuous Indian Army attacks duly supported by Indian Air Force, heavy artillery, and armour. Charlie Company, commanded by Maj Muhammad Akram, put up a heroic resistance that earned praises even from the Indians.

He with his brave Company stood like a rock between the Indian forces, and Pakistani positions for over two weeks, despite the Indians outnumbered them in manpower, firepower, and total air superiority, using even helicopters, and aircraft to the best use.

Maj Muhammad Akram and his men repulsed every successive attack, inflicting heavy casualties on the Indians. This battle was unique as it had begun before the official declaration of the Pakistan-India war and continued even after the formal surrender of troops at Dhaka. The Indians on several occasions, using megaphones and shoutings at his company, asked him to surrender but Maj Akram refused. However, the sense of sacrifice, valour, and chivalry was at its apex for the men of this Company but their source of strength remained embodied in the personality of Maj Muhammad Akram, whose confident voice and firm orders to deal with the ever-changing situation gave him a stature of a force that raged even fiercer than any battalion. His conduct and resolve incessantly generated high spirit for all his subordinates. Each attack of the enemy on that day was repulsed. By the evening of December 5 the enemy was only engaging Charlie Company positions with tanks and artillery fire.

It was in such a deafening and shattering holocaust of fire and fury, which had been constantly raging for about three days and steadily weakening strength of the company was pulling on to the hastily prepared defensive positions. Maj Akram was personally conducting the battle from the forward defended locality. The need to solve the nuisance of tank fire became the need of the hour. At this juncture, the moment arrived, which became a classic example of highest sense of leadership, commitment and heroism. Maj Muhammad Akram acted beyond the known limits of sacrifice and rose up to create a history.

Carrying a 40 mm Chinese Rocket Launcher, he crawled along with his runner right up to the clump where enemy tanks were positioned and sited himself at the distance of almost 100 meters from them. From this position, he engaged these tanks. With incredible precision, he destroyed three tanks. It created an immense dread in the armour column of the enemy. While adjusting the aiming sight on the fourth tank, the smoke got cleared. An enemy tank spotted him, and quickly opened fire with its .50 browning. He was shot through his neck. Akram's

last words were “*Hold out until last*”. The bravest son of the Paltan graced the ground as a paragon of gallantry and heroism. Even after the *shahadat* of their Company Commander, Charlie Company was able to hold on to its positions, and foiled the Indian attempts to gain a foothold nor were they allowed maintaining momentum in their attacks. For his outstanding bravery, he was awarded with *Nishan-i-Haider*, posthumously.

**Sowar Muhammad Hussain Shaheed** (June 18, 1949-December 10, 1971)

Sowar Muhammad Hussain was born in Dhok Pir Bakhsh, near Jatli in Gujar Khan (Punjab) on June 18, 1949. He was the only son of his parents and had one sister. At the time of Pakistan-India war in 1965, Sowar Muhammad Hussain was in Devi High School in his village but the young Muhammad Hussain had been so inspired by the role of Armed Forces that he had made up his mind to join the Army. As a child, and later on when he joined the army, Sowar Muhammad was fond of playing *kabaddi* and was good at it. He lived a simple life with clean habits.

He got enrolled in Pakistan Army and joined Armoured Corps as a recruit on September 3, 1966 at a young age of 17 years. On his passing out from the Armoured Corps Centre, Sowar Muhammad Hussain joined 20 Lancers. This Regiment was then stationed in Sialkot when the war broke out in 1971. Sowar Muhammad Hussain took active part in every battle which his unit was engaged in, unmindful of any danger no matter how grave was the situation. Despite his trade being a driver, he always yearned to participate in active battle.

Sowar Muhammad Hussain was performing the duties as driver of a Dodge truck in a Squadron of 20 Lancers. On December 5, 1971, while braving intense shelling and direct fire from enemy tanks and infantry, he went from trench to trench, delivering ammunition to the 106 mm Recoilless Rifle crews, who were engaging the Indian tanks on the frontline. It was then that his vehicle got a direct hit by Indian artillery shelling.

Since his vehicle had been knocked out, he was assigned a new responsibility of spotting Indian tanks and then help engaging them by own 106 mm Recoilless Rifles. He carried out this duty most brilliantly and was able to locate even well camouflaged tanks of the Indian Army. In order to do so, at times he had to stay out in the open, changing his position to know the location of Indian tanks. Through his correct target indication, own Recoilless Rifles were able to hit Indian tanks to good effect. On the following day, he went out with four fighting patrols and undertook the most hazardous missions.

On December 10, 1971, he spotted the Indians digging in all along a minefield laid out by Pakistan Army near village *Harrar Khurd*. He immediately informed the Second-in-Command of his unit. While having reported about this development, he on his own initiative directed accurate fire at the enemy resulting in the destruction of enemy tanks. In the process, he was hit in the chest by a burst of machine gun fire, and embraced *shahadat* on December 10, 1971. At the time of *shahadat*, he was just 22 years old. Sowar Muhammad Hussain had the distinction of being the first among soldiers cadre of Pakistan Army to be awarded with *Nishan-i-Haider* for his unmatched courage and gallantry war performance.

20 Lancers has since been given the honour of being called 20 Lancers (Haidari) due to brave Sowar Muhammad Hussain's actions and making his regiment the only armour regiment that has been awarded with the *Nishan-i-Haider*.

**Lance Naik Muhammad Mahfuz Shaheed** (October 25, 1944-December 17, 1971)

Mahfuz *Shaheed* was born on October 25, 1944 in Pind Malikan (now Mahfuzabad), Rawalpindi district. He was enlisted in the Army on October 25, 1962. It is a coincidence that the date of birth and date of joining of Mahfuz *Shaheed* was the same, October 25. After his recruit training from Punjab Regimental Centre, he joined 15 Punjab Regiment, where he was posted to the Alpha Company.

When war broke out in 1971, Lance Naik Muhammad Mahfuz was deployed on the Wagah-Attari Sector with his company. His company was ordered to carry out an attack on village “*Pul Kanjri*” from where the Indian Army had been exerting immense pressure on Pakistani troops facing them. This Indian position was quite close from the defended positions of Pakistani troops but was very heavily held by the Indians. As part of his Company’s attack, he was deputed by his Company Commander to form part of the firebase and support the attack by manning the Light Machine Gun (LMG). Therefore, he was part of that detachment that covered the move of the assaulting troops leading wave. As the attack progressed, his detachment too moved forward with the assaulting troops, until they were caught up in crossfire. This crossfire was incessant, and that too combined with all calibres of artillery shelling. His detachment kept creeping up and during this act, his companion firing the LMG embraced *shahadat*.

He got hold of this LMG and started firing at the Indians with renewed vigour and motivation, inflicting heavy casualties on them. While he was engaging the Indians, a direct enemy shell destroyed his LMG. This did not stop young Mahfuz. He had seen an enemy bunker whose automatic fire had inflicted heavy casualties on his comrades. By using his best training in the art of field craft, he closed up with enemy position, going straight for this LMG position. While he was closing up, both of his legs were injured badly by shell splinters and bullets, and he was totally incapacitated and therefore pinned down, unable to even walk.

Lying face down, he kept observing the battle scene and decided to go for bunker that housed this Indian LMG. Hardly fit for walking or even moving, he still gathered all his energy and resolve to go for it at any cost to avenge his fallen comrades and complete the mission of his Company. By stealthily crawling initially, he managed to close up with the LMG bunker and somehow was able to get around the rear entrance limpingly, while the Indian detachment was engaging

the advancing Pakistani attacking forces, he managed to muster up all his strength, and not only pounced on the firer but he went for his neck and strangled him to death with his bare hands. Meanwhile, the other crew member, who was watching the grappling match, managed to bayonet him and got him fatally wounded, and he fell down more or less unconscious by now.

His brave action resulted in the capture of Indian position in a miraculous attack, and remains one of the finest actions at tactical levels in the history of Pakistan Army. The attacking troops managed to capture this formidable position by sheer dint of the courage of Mahfuz *Shaheed*. After the 1971 War, when the flag meetings took place, the Indian Army Commander conveyed to the Pakistani Commander that he had been in many actions in wars and real life, but he never came across someone as brave as Mahfuz *Shaheed*. Former Army Chief, Gen Tikka Khan said these words in praise of Muhammad Mahfuz *Shaheed*, “The *Shaheed* has set an unprecedented example for emulating by all men of the Pakistan Army. The whole nation and Pakistan Army is proud of his bravery and actions”.

### **Capt Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed** (January 1, 1970-July 5, 1999)

Karnal Sher Khan was born on January 1, 1970 in village Fujun (*Nawan Kili*) in District Swabi. His father, Khursheed Khan was a farmer and his mother died when he was only eight years old, in 1978. His paternal aunts brought him up. His family is deeply religious, and they say that Sher was an embodiment of piety and Islamic teachings. Karnal Sher's grandfather Mr. Ghalib Khan had participated as a volunteer in the 1948 Kashmir War.

When Karnal Sher Khan was born, his grandfather proposed to name him “Karnal Sher Khan”. Karnal Sher's father objected to this name but Sher's grandfather replied that Sher Khan would accomplish what he (Ghalib Khan) could not, and that he would become a Colonel in Pakistan Army.



That is how Captain Karnal Sher Khan came to be called as “Karnal Sher Khan”.

Owing to his martial instincts, he joined Pakistan Air Force as Airman in 1988, and was declared All Round Best Airman in his batch. After the basic training, he was posted to the School of Aeronautics at Korangi, Karachi for advance training where he was awarded with the “Chief of Air Staff Trophy” for his outstanding performance. In February 1991, he was posted to Risalpur as electrical fitter.

His mind was not at ease, and had a growing inner desire to be where the action was. With a burning desire to become an officer and to be a leader in action, he decided to join Pakistan Army. The Inter Services Selection Board rejected him in his first attempt. He, however, with his persistence made it in the second attempt, and was selected for commission with 90 PMA Long Course in October 1992. He was commissioned on October 24, 1994 and joined 27 Sindh Regiment. He is remembered by his colleagues to be cheerful, and was always smiling. He established a reputation of being a highly motivated and devoted soldier. He was fondly called as *Shera* (lion) and was very popular among officers and soldiers/colleagues.

Desirous of some real action and to get away from routine, he volunteered to serve at the Line of Control in Kashmir. His request was acceded to, and he was posted to 12 NLI Battalion in January 1998. He was soon deputed to defend posts in *Mashko* Valley in the *Gultary* area of the Kargil Sector. While defending these posts, he repeatedly pushed back the Indians that were far superior in numbers and modern weaponry. He dealt a severe blow to the attacking Indians particularly on 8 Sikh Infantry Battalion, that was not only stopped but pushed back. He even counter-attacked the enemy during the day as the situation demanded. He wanted to defeat the enemy even if the cost was his life. It was a surprise attack for Indian Army, as they were not expecting it. Knowing the importance of his post, Karnal Sher was not only successful in forcing the enemy to retreat but also followed them to their base camp, and

embraced *shahadat* in the process. He killed many Indian soldiers who became fearful of his attacks and ran away. He with his twenty-one comrades moved with lightning speed, fighting closely, and was able to penetrate the battalion headquarters of 8 Sikh Regiment. During the close quarter battle, he lost most of his comrades, was surrounded and ordered to surrender but he decided to continue attacking and fought till his last breath. He eventually embraced martyrdom while fighting.

Indian authors could not stop themselves from praising the ferocious counter-attack by Capt Karnal Sher Khan *Shaheed*, *Nishan-i-Haider*, and his men on their blocking position. Indian author Amarinder Singh in his book “*A Ridge Too Far*” appreciated this act of bravery as: “At 0645 hours the next morning, the first counter-attack by a weak platoon of twenty men came in; it was broken short of Helmet. Forty-five minutes later, the two “*Sangars*” (posts) manned by Naib Subedar Karnail Singh and Naib Subedar Rawail Singh holding the MMG and AGL on the forward edge of the perimeter of the Helmet defences, were both hit by the RPG rockets, killing both the JCOs. Havildar Sukhwant Singh took command and beat off the first attack. However, a much determined attack in greater strength and led by two officers was then launched. Having lost his two JCOs and suffered heavy casualties, the Lieutenant withdrew to India Gate, as did Subedar Sardar Singh and his forward MMG detachment. The enemy pursued them as far as India Gate. There despite the sustained and heavy fire of Maj Parmar and his men, they reached the edge of the defensive perimeter and did not falter until both of the officers had been killed. Of the two Pakistani Officers who led the attack, one, later identified as Capt Karnal Sher of 12 NLI... was awarded with Pakistan’s highest award for gallantry....” (*A Ridge Too Far*, Amarinder Singh).

After his *shahadat* when his body was recovered, a few Indian soldiers tried to maltreat his body, the Commanding Officer of 8 Sikh ordered them to step back, and treat him with honour as he had fought bravely. His remains were later shifted in an honourable manner to Srinagar. He also stated

that he should be rewarded with the highest gallantry award of Pakistan. His written citation by the Indian Commanding Officer makes not only him and his family proud but also Pakistan Army, and the Pakistani nation as a whole.

### **Havildar Lalak Jan Shaheed** (April 1, 1967-July 7, 1999)

Havildar Lalak Jan was born in village Hundur of tehsil Yaseen, Ghizer in 1967. He received his early education from Government Middle School for Boys Hundur. Havildar Lalak Jan possessed a strong martial instinct since his childhood and to fulfill his desires, he joined Northern Light Infantry Regimental Centre as a recruit in 1984.

After successful completion of his one-year training at *Bunji*, he was posted to 12 NLI (Northern Light Infantry) Regiment in 1985. Havildar Lalak Jan was having smart military bearing and therefore, picked up for training as a part of special guards. Seeing his smart military bearing and disciplined conduct as special guard, Lalak Jan was included in the General Officer Commanding (GOC) Guard of 12 Division. He was later on selected to represent his battalion in Brigade commando platoon competition, where he secured the first position. In 1994, Havildar Lalak Jan was posted as weapon training instructor in (NLI) Regiment Training Centre Bunji. He remained Company Havildar Major of Jinnah Company and performed the duties of Special Guard Commander at *Yadgar-e-Shuhada* in the Regimental Centre. He was posted back to the unit in December 1997, and was appointed Company Havildar Major of Alpha Company.

In the 1999 Kargil conflict, Havildar Lalak Jan was Second-in-Command of his post along Line of Control. During the course of war, the Indian forces attacked his post many times. Havildar Lalak Jan was deployed ahead of his post as 'screens' to give early warning as well as inflict casualties on the enemy. Havildar Lalak Jan along with his two men at the 'screens' was repulsing the Indian attacks with great valour, and was able to inflict heavy casualties on the Indians with his Light Machine Gun (LMG). On July 5 around 1700 hours, Lance Naik Bashir

and Sepoy Bakhmal Shah embraced *shahadat* due to Indian sniper fire, yet Havildar Lalak Jan stood fast alone against the advancing enemy. Meanwhile, intense enemy attacks and long fight resulted in shortage of ammunition and Havildar Lalak Jan went to the dead enemy soldiers and collected their weapons and ammunition, and started repulsing the Indian attacks with more valour and vigour. By 1830 hours, Havildar Lalak Jan received one bullet of enemy automatics but refused to vacate his position. Despite his injury he was manning all the firing bays around his position simultaneously in order to paint a false picture of own manpower to the Indians. Meanwhile, he received two more bullets during the combat, but kept the Indians at bay for five consecutive days despite being outnumbered. Miraculously, reinforcement from the battalion headquarters under command of Capt Kashif Khalil and Capt Ahmad arrived at about 0400 hours on July 7, 1999 and the position was restored.

On seeing the condition of Lalak Jan, Capt Ahmed told him to go back to the base camp as his arm was in no condition to be used. Lalak Jan told his officer that he did not want to die on a hospital bed, but would rather die in the battlefield. He told him that he should not worry about the arm. While this was going on, the Indians started shelling from a secret bunker in an adjacent hill. By that time, Capt Ahmad had taken up the command of the handful of troops. He realised that the fire was coming from a hidden bunker and directed fire towards it, but the effort was in vain. There was only one way left to counter the hidden Indian bunker; it had to be blown up from a closer range.

When the injured Lalak Jan volunteered for the mission, the Captain, who was of the opinion that he would do it himself, immediately rejected his plea. However, Lalak Jan persuaded him, giving him his previous landmine laying experience coupled with his mountaineering skills as the qualifying conditions for his selection for the task. The Captain agreed.

Lalak Jan put a bag of explosives on his back, and while

shouldering an AK-47 descended the hill for the second time amidst heavy Indian shelling. Managing to avoid being seen by the Indian forces, and utilising his knowledge of the hills to take cover, he located the secret bunker and threw the explosives inside. The bunker, which was also an ammunition dump, blew up in what was probably the biggest blast ever heard in that area. Lalak Jan managed to take cover, but the Indian Army lost 19 to 20 men inside and around the bunker. The other Indian soldiers saw Lalak Jan, and opened fire on him. Surrounded from all sides by Indian fire, Lalak Jan tried to resist and return fire. This effort was in vain, and Lalak Jan embraced *shahadat* when a number of bullets pierced through his chest. Later, the Commanding Officer of 12 NLI sent two commando forces to recover the body of Lalak Jan. The two forces were called 'Ababeel' and 'Uqaab'. *Ababeel* provided the covering fire while *Uqaab* went into the destroyed enemy bunker to retrieve the body of Lalak Jan. When his body was found, Lalak Jan had his AK-47 clinched to his chest.

The unflinching courage and bravery of Havildar Lalak Jan and his men at Qadir Post was also acknowledged by the enemy forces attacking Qadir Post in the following words: "There were no wounded and no prisoners. Nor any man abandoned his position. It has been most gallant defense action fought to the last man last bullet". The undaunted valour and courage displayed by Havildar Lalak Jan *Shaheed* wrote shining pages of history, which will remain alive as a source of motivation for generations in profession of soldiery.

# A Soldiers' General

**An attribute to Maj Gen Sanaullah Niazi Shaheed and his achievements with special focus on his Swat vision**

**Col Syed Imran Naqvi, TJ**

*And say NOT of those who are killed in the way of Allah, 'they are dead'. Nay, they are living, but you perceive (it) not.*

(Al Baqarah-154)

Few people in this world have such an existence that they are larger than life itself and even death is incapable of erasing their presence.

The history of Pakistan Army is replete with examples of resolute bravery, selfless leadership and supreme sacrifices. The military leaders in Pakistan Army always take pride in leading troops from the front, and this is the reason that the casualty ratio between the leaders and the led in Pakistan Army is one of the highest in the world and we are surely proud of it.

Of late a new chapter of bravery was added in the archives of audacious achievements, when Major General Sanaullah Khan Niazi along with Lieutenant Colonel Tauseef and Lance Naik Irfan Sattar embraced *shahadat* near the Pakistan-Afghan border in District Upper Dir. *"To Allah we belong and to Whom we shall return."*

The General entered the operational area in February 2013 as General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the infantry division

deployed in Swat. He was a visionary military commander and a staunch supporter of breaking the *status quo*. In a short span of just seven months, besides ensuring stable security environment, the General pursued numerous socio-economic events in Swat. It was due to his relentless efforts that tourism got revived, bringing back life to normalcy and business to the commoners of Malakand. His earnest endeavours, besides catalysing his predecessors' contributions, ensured the changing of local and international perception about Swat, which has indeed become "A Success Story" of the Pakistan Army.

The aura around General Sanaullah was that of compassion, logic and wisdom above and beyond ordinary minds. His vision was to restore normalcy in Swat and enable the civil administration to gradually take over the Malakand region, while retaining the built-in capability of the Army to react expeditiously (when required). It was due to this clarity of thought and his power of decision that the General was respected in military and civil circles alike. He was a beacon of hope under which Swat was progressing at a rapid pace and an all-encompassing approach was being pursued to build the capacity of law enforcement agencies and ultimately ensure a smooth transition in times to come.

Maj Gen Sanaullah was born on September 10, 1963 in a respectable family from Daudkhel, Mianwali, the people of which are known for their valour and respect for human values. 'Like Father, like Son', the General was brought up to become an upright and an honest human being like his father, DSP Khalas Khan, a legendary Police officer, who served most part of his career in Quetta. After his basic education, the General joined the Pakistan Army in December 1983 and was commissioned in one of the prestigious Baloch Regiments. Gen Sana was a thorough professional and a true infantry man, whose affection towards his troops earned him an eternal name; A Soldiers' General. A kind and contented heart was a distinct attribute of his personality, which earned him great respect of his under commands.

During his illustrious career, the General served at almost all-important assignments. A graduate of Command and Staff College, Quetta and Armed Forces War Course (National Defence University) from both Islamabad and China, he also had a vast experience of command, staff and instructional assignments. The General remained as a Brigade Major of an Infantry Brigade (twice), General Staff Officer Grade 2 (Chief of General Staff Secretariat) and Director Military Training - Combat (Military Training Directorate). He commanded an Infantry Battalion and an Independent Infantry Brigade Group. He served as a Military Observer in the United Nations Mission in Angola and also commanded a contingent in the United Nations Mission, Sierra Leone. He also served on the faculty of Pakistan Military Academy, School of Infantry & Tactics and Command and Staff College, Quetta. He was happily married, and had two daughters.

He always stressed upon setting a personal example and leading from the front. His urge to spend maximum time with his troops at the forward posts made him travel very frequently, despite the risk of presenting a high value target. It was due to this insistence that he was a very regular visitor of his Area of Responsibility (AoR) and, meeting officers, troops and even civilians (*Lashkar* commanders) was a normal routine. I remember once (a week prior to his *shahadat*), when a threat to a forward post (along Pakistan-Afghanistan border) was shared with him, he was most desperate to reach his men the same night.

On September 14, 2013, Maj Gen Sanaullah departed from his headquarters on an operational visit of the border posts in Chitral and Upper Dir. After visiting Arandu Post in Chitral, he landed on Sabar OP (Upper Dir) in a helicopter and moved on foot to Malatar Post. Owing to the tragic incident of June 24, 2012, when a sanitization operation in Sunai Darra (Upper Dir), claimed precious lives of 18 soldiers of 33 Baloch, the General always wished to stay a night at Malatar post to boost the morale of his troops.

On September 15, after the night stay at the border post,



while moving to the Battalion Headquarters of 33 Baloch, an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) exploded under the vehicle of the General Officer, resulting in his *shahadat* along with Lieutenant Colonel Tauseef (Commanding Officer 33 Baloch) and Lance Naik Irfan, 33 Baloch.

It was due to the General's audacious and undaunted policies that the terrorists were unable to recreate any space and were thus desperate to exploit any fleeting opportunity. The people responsible for the General's martyrdom should be considered nothing more than barbarians. Their sole purpose is to undo the efforts made by the Pakistan Army, thus posing a clear and present danger to the state. Their actions over the years have proven the fact that there is no trace of humanity or reason in the hearts of the enemy. Their heinous crimes should not go unpunished and their malevolent intentions towards Pakistan must never materialise. The great sacrifices made by him and hundreds of other brave officers and soldiers of our Army will certainly bear fruit, *Insha Allah!*

Maj Gen Sanaullah *Shaheed* was indeed a Soldiers' General and a true specimen of a gallant military leader, who laid his life for his men. His distinct attributes of loyalty to his country, simplicity and quick decision-making earned him great respect of his subordinates, colleagues and seniors. The likes of Gen Sanaullah can only be found in the pages of illustrious Muslim history.

May Allah grant him the highest pedestal in *Jannah (Ameen)*.

# Soldiers for Life

**Lt Gen Tariq Waseem (R)**

What is it that binds people together, year after year after year? A shared destiny, belief in a common cause, a unifying culture, cherished memories, and the strength that comes from an abiding relationship. This is the sum of a military professional's *esprit de corps*, at the heart of the camaraderie that marks its members as part of a unique enterprise. Military men join up as strangers, arriving from disparate backgrounds and from all corners of the land. They begin to live together through all the vagaries that the demands of their solemn oath places upon them. They share great moments, reveling in each other's joys and achievements, providing strength in their sorrows, and building around them a vast family that becomes a 'band of brothers' knitted together by collective experiences. When the time comes to bid farewell they merely fade away, but they can never leave. We are all soldiers for life!

Recently, I had the tremendous good fortune to witness all of this in person. The occasion was the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of 40<sup>th</sup> PMA Long Course held at Abbottabad from May 5-7, 2017. I led a three-man organizing committee tasked to arrange a gathering to celebrate the day we joined the Pakistan Army. It started off as an exploratory venture, but as time wore on, it took a life of its own, drawing in some three hundred people across four generations and three continents, from ages 87 years to six months old! Our ambitions for the event were propelled by the excitement that it generated amongst old friends, who not only wished to reconnect at the place of their first meeting but wanted their memories to be passed on to the following generations. As the magnitude of the task grew, so did the logistics of it. We were staring into the

impossibility of delivering to expectations, when the military's *esprit de corps* intervened. From the General Headquarters to PMA Kakul to institutions and units in Abbottabad, all embraced our desires as their own, lending enthusiasm and cooperation that was unprecedented and spontaneous. One motivation guided them all – “we do not forget our veterans and we will do all we can to make the bonds that keep us together even stronger”. One event, one celebration, one day that epitomizes the collective responsibility of the military family to its enduring ethos of togetherness!

The veterans of 40<sup>th</sup> PMA Long Course (May 7, 1967 - April 19, 1969) arrived at PMA, Kakul at 0930 hours on May 6, 2017 to commemorate the completion of exactly 50 years since they first entered these very same gates! A galaxy of 276 guests – the founding Term Commander, Platoon Commanders, Gentlemen Cadets, wives, children and grandchildren – were warmly welcomed behind the Main Mess, on the steps to the Rafiullah Drill Square (RDS). Out of 167 course mates (including Naval Cadets) that formed the original batch, 126 are alive, of whom 65 attended this memorable occasion along with their families. There was an air of excitement as friends reconnected under a magical, nostalgic spell – embracing and hugging and patting each other amidst shouts of joy! The backdrop of the Main Mess served as the ideal platform to preserve the memory of this ‘Grand Gathering’ in group photographs with and without the families.

As the trumpets rang out, the PMA Drill Staff swung into action. The course mates were mustered for the traditional ‘Parade’, organized into their original five platoons led by their respective SUOs (in our time 1<sup>st</sup> Pakistan Battalion comprised of five companies: Khalid, Tariq, Qasim, Salah-Ud-Din and Aurangzeb). They were then put through their paces, under the watchful eyes of the Adjutant as he sat astride his magnificent charger, and paraded around the RDS with long-forgotten skills. The Drill Subedar Major censured Tariq Platoon (the Champion in 1969) for their “poor drill”, to the amusement of the spectators and the other platoons! The families looked on from the enclosures, with rapt attention and curiosity, taking

pictures and making videos. These retired and ageing officers, once again perked up and became young cadets, as they proudly tried to recapture the glorious moments from the past.

The *PMA Band* played the same old tunes, as these “officers-turned-cadets” slow-marched up the stairs to the lilting strains of “*Al Wida*” in a re-enactment of their passing-out, to disappear once again into the *Main Mess*. Their families followed them and joined them for some well-earned ‘*Hi-Tea*’ and refreshments. The guests mingled around as they exchanged more memories, accomplishments and pleasantries with each other, introducing families and creating new friendships.

The guests were then divided into two groups and they embarked upon a ‘Tour of PMA’. The voyage through PMA, in fact, proved exciting as well as wistful. It was meant to be a drive-through the now massive PMA complex, but everybody demanded stops along the way to dismount from the buses to experience first-hand their respective Company Lines, the rooms they lived in, the many venues of their ‘ragging’, the *Mile Track*, *Horse and Saddle Club*, *Visitors’ Centre*, *Museum* etc. They cherished the places of their own time and admired the new structures. The officers and their families were especially mesmerized to find the original data of their time in the PMA Museum in the form of *Long Roll*, *Rising Crescent*, individual, group and company photos, the *Honour Boards*, *memorabilia* from their past, etc. In fact, the *Museum* took them back to their own time within a compact capsule.

The guests then arrived for the ‘*Formal Commemoration Lunch*’ at the imposing 3rd Pakistan Battalion Mess and relished the full-service meal, experiencing once again the formality and dignity of dining at the PMA, with its unique cooking aroma and the enthralling ambiance of their *Alma Mater*. During the lunch, a pictorial slide show of their time, with the music of their own Passing Out Parade playing in the background, was projected on screens around the hall. Then, as the Course Senior, I rose up and led a silent prayer to honour the *Shuhada* and to remember the departed colleagues

of the Course. In my address to the assembled guests, I reminisced with the help of photographs and montages, sharing many interesting incidents from our training. I emphasized the value of this event, as a continuation of military traditions designed to foster ever greater cohesion.

On behalf of the Course, I thanked Maj Gen Abdullah Dogar, the Commandant PMA, and his team for extending extraordinary support to enable such an unprecedented celebration of our Golden Jubilee. Special thanks were extended to Lt Col Taimur, CO 3<sup>rd</sup> Pakistan Battalion; Maj Usman Sarwar, the Coordinating Officer; and Maj Sarfraz Ahmed, Exo Museum for their hard work and cooperation. A standing ovation was given to two course mates, Brig Ijaz Rasool (retd) and Col Tahir Mumtaz (retd), for their tireless efforts in organizing this memorable event on such an unprecedented scale. ‘Souvenirs’ were then presented by an eminent selection of Platoon Commanders, senior members and the Company SUOs to the many local institutions and units – the Baloch, Frontier Force and AMC Regimental Centres, the ASPT & MW, the MES, FWO, Topo Survey Unit, and Station Headquarters – who contributed most enthusiastically in hosting the event.

Finally, the founding Term Commander of 40<sup>th</sup> PMA Brig Azam Mirza (retd), was invited to join me in unveiling the ‘*Course Gift*’ to PMA Kakul: a magnificent trophy representing the “*Battle Standards of the Warriors of Islam*”, a truly inspirational memento that we hope will serve as a lasting beacon for the gentlemen cadets.

The majestic ceremony came to an end around 1600 hours, with the Band playing familiar tunes as the Course departed the PMA grounds carrying with them unforgettable memories – from the past and the present.

This was not the end of the celebrations, however.

The guests reassembled at the Baloch Regimental Centre for ‘Dinner and Musical Evening’, which turned into a night of

songs, dances, gaiety and fun. There was an air of informality and vitality as the families arrived at the beautifully decorated lawns overlooking the lights of Abbottabad. This was a moment for photographs and much laughter, before everyone settled down to hear Brig Ijaz Rasool (retd) describe the year-long journey towards holding the Golden Jubilee. There were interesting facts and data, from ISSB selections to a full count of what and where each of our colleagues became, to details on attendance and financial stock-taking. The wives of our departed colleagues and of the organisers were then invited to cut the '*Jubilee Cake*', crafted in the colours of PMA and the five companies of 1<sup>st</sup> Pak Battalion.

A lavish sit-down dinner followed, served to the accompaniment of live music. Well satiated, the families joined together as they were regaled by the melodious voice of 'Bulbul-e-Hazara'. The course mates became young again as they swayed to the rhythm of the songs, interspersed with the recounting of some light moments from the past by Brig Javed Aziz (retd). The night wore on and not a single person was spared from taking the floor and moving to the tunes! There was much more fun in stock, but a wild storm and rain put a halt to the festivities around midnight. One surprise awaited the families as they exited the venue, however: individually packed and labelled 'Gift Bags' filled with especially prepared mementoes for each and every one – cadets, wives, children and grandchildren – all 276 of them!

The next day, before the Course departed for their homes, there was one last activity still waiting for them – a casual outing to the Piffers' Golf Club for 'Brunch and Picnic', with games played out by all ages! The venue was exquisitely set up by the hosts amidst lush green lawns and towering maple trees in the backdrop of the Abbottabad hills. Stalls were set up with snacks and balloon-shooting and other games of skill for the children. The wives contested keenly at putting a golf ball; the girls ran the spoon and potato race; the boys, the wheelbarrow race. There were other events like thread-and-needle, sack, and three-legged races amidst a constant clamour to claim more than 40 prizes on offer!

The men re-paired to one corner where a general body meeting of the 'Fortieth Forte Association' finalized course matters and lauded the contributions of past office bearers, Brig Tariq Mohar (retd) and Mr. Osama Tariq to keep the fraternity together. Regret was expressed at the negative attitude of Bangladesh government in not allowing some of our desirous Bengali course mates from participating. Finally, it was unanimously agreed to begin the process of compiling a Memory Book for publication by April 19, 2019 to mark the Golden Jubilee of the Passing Out. With everyone tired from the activities all around, they now turned their attention to the sumptuous brunch, accompanied by more friendly banter and some much needed relaxing in the sun. As the hour of departure came nearer, there was a last round of photographs, and vows all around to carry the flame of this 50 years bond of comradeship forward, into the next generation.

Finally, with heavy hearts and tearful eyes and leaden feet, this great family of friends took leave of each other, locking themselves in one last tight embrace, not wanting to let go. Then, they sauntered off into the distance, looking back and exchanging furtive glances, not knowing what lay in the future for them. Rumi had said: "This moment is all that there is. But, do not grieve. The moments you lose come around as memories that are forever." The family of 40<sup>th</sup> PMA Long Course had lived their moments joyously, transforming them into priceless vignettes, reflected in everlasting memories. *'Fortieth Forte Forever'!*

On my return from the event, I wrote a letter of thanks on behalf of the Course to Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff. I said to the Chief: "We were blessed to have had these dedicated and committed institutions, as well as individuals with an abiding sense of personal devotion, working tirelessly to honour us and our memories. It was most humbling for us to receive such respect and attention, many years after we last wore our uniforms. Each and every one of us came away with renewed pride in our glorious heritage of *camaraderie* and *esprit de corps*, and in this great brotherhood and profession

that will never cease to be a part of us. We wish to express our deepest appreciation and gratitude to all under your command for living up to the oldest and grandest of all military traditions: that we are one family – never forgotten, never separated, never retired.”

We are sure that those who follow us will continue to receive the Chief's encouragement and the military's institutional patronage. Fostering cohesion and developing a spirit of comradeship lies at the foundation of our profession, sustaining and nurturing its growth. Our prayers for the glory, strength, and well-being of the Pakistan Army!



# To My Soldier Brother

In this hour when I make my bed to sleep, I think of you my dear brother, that you must be in some rocky area along the mountains, where you will be sleeping another night. I remember so well from our childhood days how much had you always been conscious of your comfortable sleep but you were in no way reluctant to leave these pampered habits when you decided to wear this graceful uniform. You knew it since the day one that this uniform will bring hardships and challenges for you, yet you remained adamant.

I miss you, I miss your smile, the smile of your contentment, the smile of a valiant soldier, smile of a son of this sacred soil who has taken an oath to serve this nation at the best irrespective of any loss to himself. When our mother misses you, she goes to your room to see your picture in the uniform with tears in her eyes and yet she says, "I am the mother of a soldier and these are the tears of gratitude." Our father keeps following the news from Operation *Radd-ul-Fasaad* and later shares his analysis with his friends in the evening with pride that his son is also a part of war against terrorism for the country.

My dear brother, I hope you read this letter soon, we miss you but we feel contented when we pray for you and for all those who are with you there. In fact, this connection of prayers is the most beautiful thing that we have with you now. I am so sure that other soldiers' sisters, mothers, fathers, brothers, wives and children miss them the same way as we miss you. May you and all of them be successful. *Ameen!* May we make a peaceful and prosperous Pakistan soon. *Ameen!*

Your proud sister  
Asma Ishaq

# The Pakistani Soldier Today

Shaukat Qadir

*‘The only thing harder than getting a new idea into the military mind, is to get an old one out.’*

(B. H. Liddell Hart)

In my generation of soldiers, I was fortunate to spend a little more time in combat zones than most others, but obviously, less than some others – not by design, merely by default. However, when I total the entire period of my combat experience, I cannot go beyond three and a half years out of thirty odd.

Today, Pakistan Army’s young officers of ten years’ service have more combat experience than I.

When I was on the faculty of the Command and Staff College, Quetta, in 1997, I wrote a paper on ‘Why Peacetime Soldiers Cannot Produce Wartime Leaders’ and sent it to the Military Training Directorate at GHQ. It was highly appreciated but, none of my recommendations were heeded.

It seems that fortune has led us to an unending war, merely for me to have a glimpse of the Pakistani soldier and officer groomed by years of combat.

Now, it has been more than 15 years since Pakistan entered the affray of GWOT, the Global War On Terror, and, over time, the number of troops in constant combat have risen to about 300,000.

The bulk of the troops in combat is, of necessity, infantry. But, despite the fact that almost two thirds of combat troops in the Pakistan Army is infantry, these are insufficient for both roles – defence of the international border and anti-terrorist operations.

Consequently, all the “arms” in the army have been rotating to take turns in combat in what is called “Infantry Role” i.e., for a specified period, troops and officers from Armoured Corps, Artillery, Engineers, Signals, all go into battle as if they were infantry.

All infantry units and, to a slightly lesser degree, other units seem to be in combat zone endlessly. They are moved out from anti-guerrilla operations to be deployed at, either the LoC, the Working Boundary between AJK and IOK or the international border.

A stint on border defence is considered peacetime station. It is during this period that the units get to train troops.

I was not aware of the fact that there is an international index on Troops to Officers' Casualty Ratio (TOCR), among other related indices, until it was pointed out to me one day in a discussion abroad, when I was a Lt Col. The context was that the Pakistani TOCR was very high and, therefore, the Pakistani officer was, by inference, naturally foolhardy or was trained to be so.

Even then, I protested this inference.

But now, I have studied the subject. Yes, the Pakistani TOCR is high; it has always been. Until we entered GWOT, it was as high as 1:12 i.e., to every 12 soldiers we lost an officer. Now it has risen further; it is 1:9.

I am very proud of this because our young officer leads from the front; dies but not buckles!

Wherever the officers lead, the troops invariably follow. Where the officer merely commands, troops may still go but their performance is likely to be less enthusiastic. And where troops are always merely commanded, their enthusiasm will wane more and more.

During the Second World War, the American General, George S. Patton, slapped a soldier who had been admitted to hospital due to “battle fatigue”. Patton, being obviously unfamiliar with the reality of this disease, accused the soldier of malingering.

The hospital staff complained and it came to the notice of Patton’s superiors and Patton had to tender a public apology or lose his command. He apologized.

The point here is that, though not unanimous in their opinion, some psychiatrists are of the view that soldiers who see their superiors of high ranks expose themselves to combat, are less likely to suffer from battle fatigue and related subjects.

If this contention is true, then Patton may have been the victim of a verdict which was harsher than it could have been; merely because Patton was among the Generals who also led.

But, when I learnt of this index, I also learnt of other related ones i.e., Battle Fatigue Ratio (BFR), Ratio of Suicide in Combat (RSC), etc.

Until this last experience, our wars had been too brief to result in such consequences. This experience has made up for lost centuries. And yet, we have an amazingly low ratio of those suffering from battle fatigue or related mental disorders; under 0.5 percent.

Admittedly, due to lack of awareness among troops, there may be some suffering from problems who have not reported it. But still, it is amazingly low.

There has not been a single instance of suicide in the

combat zone. Some soldiers have committed suicide after returning home but only very few. The majority among them could be suffering from either post-combat disorders or post-retirement domestic pressure. Even so, the percentage is closer to nil than to a number.

About two decades ago, a rather unfriendly neighbour was in a similar situation fighting numerous domestic insurgencies. Though considerably better off than we have been, their infantry units were rotating at the rate of 3:2:3 i.e., three years in combat zone, two years in a peace station and again three years in combat.

I recall the concerns being expressed by their *general staff* about, not only the increasing number of suicides among soldiers but also of “combat murders”. Murders of NCOs, JCOs and officers by soldiers during combat.

There is not a single recorded instance of murder in combat in the last 15 years in the Pakistan Army.

Yes, indeed, this is a battle-hardened army with veteran soldiers of all ranks.

Many of our today's officers may have never heard of a “*Mess-Night*” or “*Dinner Night*”. They may have no appetite for attire and refined niceties and, may use their hands to feed themselves, instead of a fork or knife, they may even be incapable of small talk. But give them a weapon, give them a section to command and you can sleep well; confident that your country is well guarded.

I am the patient of an insatiable and incurable disease: curiosity. So, despite the fact that I shed my uniform a little under two decades ago, I have had occasion to see this army grow in stature and ability.

In 2009, when forces were assembling for the assault on South Waziristan, I spoke to few of the soldiers. My chief concern was that they were going to assault an area where

their brethren resided. But they were grimly determined and sure of their being in the 'right'. Even the Pashtun among them knew they were fighting an "enemy".

I recall my first visit to the casualty ward of CMH to meet the injured soldiers and the officers' ward in CMH to visit the wounded officers. Some had lost limbs, others maimed and bed-ridden for life. But almost all were looking ahead at what they could do despite their injuries and handicap. These were men with wounded bodies but hearts and a will of steel that was infinite!

Those who seemed depressed, were being cajoled by other wounded. They could laugh at their own sufferings, share concerns of their fellows, and grieve their dead and yet, dream of their future. I was amazed and I still weep unashamedly as I narrate this heartwarming and chilling incident.

In 2014 and '2015 again I met soldiers and this time they could smile through their determination. These were genuine veterans.

I am proud of having been an ordinary soldier, not even a "has-been" but, a never-was in an army that has bred such proud soldiers in all ranks.

No wonder General Raheel Sharif (retd) could warn our enemies not to take this army of veterans lightly. Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa could well do the same and say, "Don't take this army of veterans lightly. These are the finest of fighting soldiers".

While it would remain unsaid but implicit in the statement above is that it is led at each level, not commanded.

# Pakistan: A Symbol of Resilience

**Lt Col Sohail Akbar Bajwa**

Pakistan stands today as the epicentre of global geopolitics. While most of the propaganda portrays Pakistan as the hub of terrorism, inching towards an economic default and labeled as a failed state, the actual Pakistan remains shrouded and mystified somewhere else. This perhaps is a product of imprecise knowledge of various academics about this land, its history, culture and above all its people. Such is a delirium of these clairvoyants of doom and gloom for Pakistan that they are even presenting maps of crippled Pakistan.

Given the environments, circumstances and challenges faced by Pakistan, any other country of the world might have collapsed. Moreover, all developed societies and nations have been evolved through similar glitches and severities thus Pakistan is no exception to this historical process.

The idea of Pakistan can be encapsulated in the two statements of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. First with regards to his resolve during the creation of Pakistan i.e. "Better a moth-eaten Pakistan than no Pakistan at all," and second on his vision and recipe for future of Pakistan when he said, "I have no doubt that with Unity, Faith and Discipline we will compare with any nation of the world... We must sink individualism and petty jealousies and make up our minds to serve the people with honesty and faithfulness."

No sooner than Pakistan got independence, predictions of its break-up started to pop up all over. From Jawaharlal Nehru

to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, it seemed as if the good neighbour's mindset was not ready to accept an independent neighbour. It will be justified to say that Pakistan was born badly bruised, hurt and in fact penniless. It is an intricate story shrouded by betrayals and intrigues. It was not given the right shares in terms of capital and property. It is ironical that a lawyer by profession, Sir Cyril Radcliffe who was the Chief of Boundary Commission mandated to map the partition, came for the first time to India on a five weeks trip on July 10, 1947 to draw lines on a dead map deciding the fate of 390 million living beings. Presenting his partition map on August 9, 1947, he then left for Britain never to return again. As a result of his irresponsible and illogical mapping, 14.2 million people had to shuffle across the borders and in process at least half-a-million people died as a result of migratory riots. Total 7.2 million refugees poured into Pakistan, which was already marred with void economy and infrastructure. The genesis of Kashmir and water issues between Pakistan and India dates back to almost the same period.

In 1948, merely a year old lacking of trained men and machinery, there was a war between Pakistan and India over Kashmir. Such was a state of affairs that even the head of Pakistan Army was a British officer. By 1959, Pakistan, surviving on agricultural economy, was striving to get water controlled by India. Pakistan fought back diplomatically to broker the Indus Water Treaty in 1960 and survived yet again. Five years later in 1965, Pakistan was imposed upon with another major war over Kashmir, again. Despite being a member of SEATO and CENTO, Pakistan fought with no support from the Treaty friends, with a foe much larger in size and far vicious in design. By 1971 Pakistan was fighting its third major war on dual fronts, internally against Mukti Bahini in East Pakistan (aided covertly by India) and Indian Armed Forces on external front, and that too in two theatres of war, thousand miles apart. By January 1972, Pakistan had been reduced to the half. Although Bangladesh came into being, nonetheless, Pakistan continued to live, survive and thrive with much to the chagrin of its obvious and existential foes.



Meanwhile, internal threats continued to surface in Balochistan intermittently from 1948 to 1975 and lastly erupted in 2005, which is unabated till date.

Intimidation by its neighbour also persisted; India tested its nuclear weapon in 1974. This marked the dawn of nuclear race in the subcontinent. Attainment of nuclear technology to achieve strategic balance thus became inevitable for Pakistan. On May 28, 1998 it joined the powerful club of nuclear states – Pakistan now could no longer be cowed down by a nuclear threat from its neighbourhood. The day became a celebrated “*Yaum-e-Takbeer*”.

In 1979, the Soviet Army invaded Afghanistan and in no time, the Soviet presence became an imminent threat to Pakistan also, with its ultimate goal of reaching the warm waters of Arabian Sea. Without going into political discussion as to the justification of Pakistan’s entry into the Afghan War, simple fact is that Pakistan bore the brunt of this war. By 1986, the number of Afghan refugees reached around the highest 6.8 million burdening an already poor nation. Pakistan fought as a frontline state and the Soviets left Afghanistan in 1989 for the world to wonder!

In 1984 it was subjected to Siachen invasion by India. Pakistan Army went up without necessary equipment at an altitude of over 20,000 feet to fight for its honour and survival and that it did successfully. Some of Pakistan’s military operations in Siachen post-1984 years are legendary and epic. In 1986 it was again threatened by India; this time in the plains of Punjab. President Gen Zia ul Haq went to witness a cricket match in India diffusing the imminent war threat with brilliant diplomacy later known to be referred to as Cricket Diplomacy. Pakistan stood tall yet again.

In the year 1999, Pakistan fought the Kargil War and in December 2001, it was threatened by India yet again and the military stand-off between the two nuclear states continued for over 13 months, which left India panting in despair and withdrawing its forces back to its barracks in 2003.

Before coming to its wounds in the Global War on Terrorism, let's just count a few of the natural disasters Pakistan braved all along its history. Some of the worst hits include floods of 1950 in the Punjab, earthquake of 1974 in Hunza, drought of 2000 in Balochistan, earthquake of October 2005 in Kashmir and parts of KPK, cyclone Yemyin of 2007 in Sindh and Balochistan and recent floods of 2010 and 2011 affecting almost the entire country. These natural disasters cost Pakistan dearly in terms of human lives, infrastructure and economy.

After 9/11, Pakistan joined the Global War on Terrorism that led to military operations in FATA. In this war, Pakistan has been wounded badly, and deeply cut. A cursory glance on the terrorist attacks at our strategic assets like the PAF bases in Kamra and Samungli, Naval Base Mehran, GHQ, POF Wah, international airports of Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta would surely reveal the vicious connections involved much beyond the war in FATA. But the worst has been the loss of human lives in mosques and schools. The nation has sacrificed over 50,000 including sons, daughters, mothers and fathers. Bloodbath in the Rawalpindi Parade Lane mosque and Peshawar APS have been the darkest hours in the War on Terror (WOT). Still when the West blames Pakistan for dual play, one is compelled to term it either sheer naivety or absolute hypocrisy. In the WOT, under challenging circumstances and difficult terrain, Pakistan Army's achievements are praise worthy.

One needs to understand a simple fact that no country or nation is free of issues. Nations evolve to better forms with the carvings of sweat and blood, building up institutions and reforms and all that doesn't happen overnight. China, Japan, Iran, Turkey, Russia and much of Europe are centuries old cultures and have matured after experiencing various movements, revolutions, wars and internal upheavals. The USA for example got independence in 1776 and is almost 240 years old. Pakistan in this whole kaleidoscope is merely 67 years old; fairly young and in the process of carving into a nation.

Let's take a stock of claims against Pakistan and see if that's happening only in Pakistan or otherwise. Issues of women rights and gender discrimination for example are such oft associated terms with Pakistan. It is interesting to note that women were given the right to vote (suffrage) in Europe mainly after the First World War (1918), centuries later than the proudly trumpeted Treaty of Magna Carta, Reformation and the Renaissance. Even the US gave women the right to vote in 1920 (144 years after its independence). On the contrary, Pakistan gave the women right to vote in the very first year of its birth. Miss Fatima Jinnah contested for Pakistan's Presidential elections in 1965 while Benazir Bhutto was the first Muslim woman elected as Prime Minister of the country; this is beside the fact that the women representation in the Pakistani parliament is one of the highest in the world.

As concerns discrimination, it was racial discrimination in the USA, which deferred the African Americans the right to vote till 1965 (179 years after the independence) under the Voting Rights Act of US Constitution. Voting rights for the Australian aboriginals were granted in 1962 almost 60 years after their independence. Apartheid (racial discrimination) prevailed in South Africa for almost 46 years from 1948 to 1994 when Nelson Mandela came into power and apartheid was abolished. And here is Pakistan where we all live in same blocks and towns – the Muslims, Hindus, Christians and others without any discrimination. Our history is not haunted by the shadows of Ku Klux Klan as was the case for the African Americans in the USA and extermination camps for the Jews and gypsies in Germany. We don't call Basmach is to respectable minorities as were the Muslim minority called in Russia in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. We have a much brighter history of mutual acceptance than most of the contemporary developed societies.

Sectarian conflict is no doubt a sore issue in Pakistan but such conflicts have been a part of societies, which are quintessentially the religious ones. The whole Europe fought 30 years religio-sectarian war from 1618 to 1648. The UK's war in Northern Ireland, which continued for almost 29 years

ending in 1998, was in-effect a Catholic Vs Protestant sectarian war.

When it comes to lawlessness, it will be surprising to know that lynching, which is defined as "an act of violence inflicted by a mob upon the body of another person which results in the death of the person", continued to be widely practised in the USA till 1920 (144 years after its independence). Nearly 3,500 African Americans and 1,300 Whites were lynched in the United States between the period of 1882 and 1968, mostly from 1882 to 1920. One of the modes of such mob killings was burning the victims alive. Frank Huzor in his book "Blood Demons" identifies the Hindutva pervading in India and the mob-based atrocities on Non-Hindus it carried out throughout its history. As of today, in India 220 districts in 20 states spread over 92000 sq km are still under the control of separatists namely the Naxalites, and the area as a whole called Red Corridor where the Indian Federal Law is virtually absent.

Now let us see the amazing achievement of Pakistan's resilient nation. It has grown from almost zero balance in 1947 to 25<sup>th</sup> largest economy of the world. Pakistan has the 8<sup>th</sup> largest armed forces of the world, which are renowned for their professionalism. Proudly, Pakistan has the world's best Command and Control System for the nuclear assets. We have ruled the game of squash for decades and have also been the world champions of cricket, hockey, snooker and boxing. Pakistan produces 50 percent of world's footballs. We have produced some of the finest brains like Arfa Karim Randhawa and Babar Iqbal, the youngest microsoft professionals, scientists like Dr Samar Mubarakmand, Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan and Dr Abdus Salam. It has a large philanthropist pool of people committed to the welfare of the poor – Edhi Ambulance Service is the largest privately-owned service in the world. In fact, the nation is one of the highest charity disbursing nations of the world. Pakistan is proud to have sound family traditions based on respect for head of the family and care for the young ones that have not been devoured by capitalism. We don't encourage making mockery and cartoons of people's spiritual

and religious icons and prophets in the name of freedom of speech and expression. We are proud to retain such values and codes of ethics.

Having all said and done, it's not all goodies here; Pakistan has to rise even higher. We have grey areas that we must identify and apply correction. We need to develop a more tolerant society and be more united. We need to ensure efficient tax collection with introduction of effective tax reforms enveloping the much richer masses of the country. We need to apply land reforms and help poor farmers. We need to introduce a uniform, much simpler and effective education policy all across the country. We have to think beyond personal and local constituencies for safeguarding larger national interests. We have to achieve self-sufficiency in the field of energy for which we have to build dams and energy houses. We have to unite ourselves beyond factions and barratries.

*“Pakistan is not a failed state and that Pakistan is not Afghanistan, Chechnya or Somalia. Pakistan is not about to explode. The Islamic militants are not going to take power tomorrow; the nuclear weapons are not about to be trafficked to al Qaeda; the army is not about to send the Afghan Taliban to invade India; a civil war is unlikely. The resilience of Pakistan and the nation’s continuing collective refusal to do what the west would like it to together pose questions with implications far beyond simple security concerns.”*

(Anatol Lieven)

# Fighting for Peace in Pakistan

**Dr. Amineh Hoti**

There is a famous Urdu saying “*Har Firaon k liye aik Musa hota hai*” meaning thereby ‘for every problem, there is a solution’. This is also mentioned by Allah in the Quran. It is for us, “the people of thought” or the “*Ahl-e-Aql*”, as God repeatedly calls us, to use our intellect (*aql*) to work out those solutions (and I use the word “work” intentionally because it comes with, and not without, effort and labour).

The attack on the students of Army Public School in Peshawar was particularly heartbreaking for me (as it has been for all Pakistanis) because I grew up not very far from this very school. I recall my happy childhood in Peshawar when my parents would take me for long walks in a stroller in the beautiful cantonment with its flower-filled gardens. It saddens me to know that the same Peshawar now has become a battleground for the future of Pakistan. Who could be so cruel as to kill the children and take the lives of others, and then their own? I wept once again for my nation. I asked myself, what could we do to prevent such extreme violence and hatred in the future?

When nations are seen to be weak and divided, everyone suffers especially the vulnerable children. The Prophet (PBUH), who loved children, forbade men to do any harm to children and women in war. Yet children are killed through violence in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Palestine, Gambia, and in so many other parts of today’s turbulent world. This practice is a heavy burden on the conscience of humanity and

the guilt will always haunt the perpetrators.

A unanimous voice would decree; let children live – both literally and metaphorically by allowing them to grow in their minds, ideas, and creativity. To explore the heights of knowledge without hunger, pain or loss of family and life!

The challenges for Pakistan are no exception. They can be tackled through effective planning, insight, and must be solved with foresight in the light of current world events. Thus, I would suggest few ideas as a solution to the problem.

### ***Ilm, Adab aur Insaniat* Courses: Fighting This War with the Tools of Knowledge**

The Center for Dialogue and Action (CD&A), which I have the privilege of heading at the Forman Christian College University (FCCU) in Lahore, aims to benefit institutions in the armed forces and civil services by creating opportunities for learning and growth. There is a general lack of understanding and ambiguity in Pakistan in relation to the subject of Pakistan's diversity, its religions, culture, ethnic history, and gender. If we can open the minds of the young generation to ideas of acceptance and compassion, we can successfully challenge the hatred that engendered this violence in Peshawar.

The foundation of any debate on defining our national identity and ways forward must look to a class on the vision of its founding fathers: the Quaid-i-Azam who strove for human rights and justice, Sir Syed who encouraged open-mindedness and knowledge, and Allama Muhammad Iqbal who inspired passion for learning and hard work through knowledge of our own rich history. In this context, we must examine the challenges of today's Pakistan and the opportunities ahead.

Another class focuses on what Islam is about and the early inclusive and tolerant Islamic attitudes towards the others. In yet another session, a study of Andalusia in Spain and Sicily in Italy are essential to see how people can coexist. I have been to

both places over the last few months with the research project “Journey into Europe — Islam, Immigration and Empire” accompanying my father, Professor Akbar S. Ahmed, and his team. The knowledge we gained and the people we met have been an eye-opener and a healer. We need to be aware about a past where we were creative, productive, and tolerant. From these cultures, everyone all over the world benefited, and continues to benefit, until today. The first man who flew was the Andalusian Ibn al Firnas, the astrolabe who gave direction from which the compass is inspired and which is a gift to the world from Sicily and so on and so forth.

Diversity is one of Pakistan’s key resources. The study of diversity can inspire our youth to become better citizens who respect cultural and religious differences. The study of diversity explores differences and commonalities, and provides tools to equip us to play a positive role in transforming negative attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours. Despite being unique individuals i.e. belonging to different communities, at the end of the day we are all connected through our shared values.

### **Learning Lessons from the Glory of Andalusia and the Gore of Srebrenica**

I spent this summer doing fieldwork with ‘Journey into Europe’ (JIE) team in the South of Spain at Andalusia – the jewel in the crown of civilization. It made me realize how important it is to strive for peace, creativity, and open mindedness to overcome a closed and static mindset. At its height, Andalusia was a period when Muslims, Christians and Jews under Islamic rule, lived together producing the knowledge from which the world benefits today (clocks, watches, carpets, shampoo, coffee, algebra, medicine, flight, cleanliness, and so forth). However, when Muslims and Jews were forced to leave Spain in 1492, by the decree of Isabella and Ferdinand, the dark age of the inquisition began when terror and violence reigned for Muslims and other minorities – people’s property and lives were no longer sacred. Muslims were given two harsh choices – convert or leave Spain – those



who left had to make a choice harder than death. They had to leave behind all their property and their children!

In European Bosnia, Srebrenica, which I visited with the JIE team in summer 2014, Muslim men, women and children were brutally killed 20 years ago. The Bosnian war saw over 200,000 people massacred and more than 70,000 women raped. The stories of the survivors were truly heartbreaking. Khadijah whom I interviewed in the mass graveyard of Srebrenica, lost 50 male family members.

Recently, when I visited National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Islamabad to teach a class to PhD students on peace building, I was also asked to give a talk to a hall full of army men and women in uniform – the majority of whom was from the Pakistan Army and a small number from nine other countries. My message to these brave soldiers was that they have tremendous strength and resources but the value of strength is when we use it to maintain peace. The war worth fighting was the one to keep the peace and harmony so that our children could grow up in a safe and calm country.

Andalusia teaches us that when we live in harmony together through the exploration of knowledge, there is space for growth of that civilization itself as well as for the generations to come like ripples in water, and the effects are far and wide. European enlightenment comes out of Andalusia through the spread of knowledge. Today's Europe and the West, it has been argued by many scholars, has progressed on the basis of Andalusian civilization – you'll be surprised at how many things you use today or encounter thinking these are Western marvels, actually originated in Andalusia from Muslim-Christian-Jewish coexistence!

Srebrenica teaches us to be strong, never to be weak, undivided, or unaware – to play the game of survival, but always keep out of troubled waters. Negotiation and wit are far better than rushing into problematic areas like quicksand. Revenge never gets us anywhere. Srebrenica teaches us to walk the rope of life in a balanced way with our neighbours – again

negotiating, building relations, building trust, and above all building strength of one's country, which must always be above one's personal interests.

## **Let's Work to Build our Nation, Not Just our Own House**

The experiences from this journey, my interviews with hundreds of Pakistanis abroad, the backdrop of the current media constantly chipping away at the image of Pakistan, had made me realize how valuable Pakistan is to us Pakistanis – both at home and abroad. At home, Pakistan gives us a place to live how we choose, and abroad it gives us a place of belonging, to which we hope to one day return. Pakistan is home; it is the source of our identity. It is worth the effort to save, to keep, and to work for with all our might and intellect to make Pakistan a good home for us all.

We often think that our house is our home – we keep it tidy, buy beautiful things for it, decorate it, and sometimes dump our rubbish on the streets outside it. However, our focus needs to change. Our country is our home and we must endeavour to beautify its landscape, preserve its natural beauties and not misuse them (the waters that flow from the mountains in Islamabad are polluted with sewage and rubbish as they come down from sector to sector – this can be improved by stopping this, starting with the sectors occupied by the forces); we must not misuse our national funds (what belongs to the state is not our personal fund – every penny misused is taking a bite out of the mouth of a starving person – so many parents with their children have committed suicide because of hunger in Pakistan); and we must work hard (every day, every hour of our lives counts).

Most importantly, we must be positive. Saying Pakistan will survive and making it happen is possible – it is a self-fulfilling prophecy – if we want something to happen, it will. If we want it to exist and be prosperous, it will but we must put in the effort, we must be united (Pathans, Punjabis, Sindhis, Balochis, and many others in Pakistan are part of the rich

landscape – they are our strength not weakness but only wish to be heard and wish to be given due acknowledgement, voice and leadership roles) and we must be loyal to Pakistan (above our loyalty to our tribes, political affiliations and ourselves). Our little personal gains are not worth the cost of chipping at our mother nation. Without the nation, there is no house, no dignity, no ownership, no home, and no identity.

The difficulties and harshness of being a *musafir* (traveller) on my field trip to Europe, interviewing hundreds of people, and listening to the mosaic of voices that talked to me of pain and loss, made me constantly think of the value of my home, Pakistan. I hear so and so leader has so many houses abroad and so much money in this and that Swiss bank. The reality is that no amount of houses abroad or money in banks can replace your dignity of belonging to a country that is your own. God blessed Pakistanis with a miracle against all odds – He gave us one of the biggest nations on earth (Pakistan is the second largest Muslim nation on planet earth – in size we are bigger than UK, Denmark, etc). So, let us cherish this land, value it, love it, and work hard to build it up again. I am reminded of Rudyard Kipling's wise poem, "If" which my father read to me again and again in my childhood and its strong message of the will to survive against all odds, some lines of which I want to share with you:

*If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much;  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,*

*Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!*

## **“Positive Attitude” is Essential: Counting our Blessings**

The first main step to improve our country is challenging the negative propaganda against Pakistan. Our own media must work with us, not against us, to put out ideas that this Pakistan is indeed a great country worth fighting for. We must work together to improve it in education, in ideas, and in progress. If we spit out negativity all the time, we will do nothing to improve because we will feel it is a lost case. Instead, if we say we are fed up of all the negative headlines on Pakistan and say instead, let me change this, it will change – the positive attitude will uplift people and make them work hard to build the nation.

Adopting a positive attitude, therefore, is absolutely essential. Let us create a ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’, as it is called in the social science of Sociology. If I tell a particular child or the children of my nation that they can do it, they will have hope and they will do everything to get to that point of success. If I tell them constantly that you are worthless and you cannot make it, they will subsequently give up hope and will not make it.

There is nothing that can prevent the success of our nation, but ourselves. I am confident that we can make this nation great as envisioned by its founding fathers. Let us look, for a moment, at all the stunning things we have to give us hope and reasons to survive and thrive.

**A Very Rich History.** Our country is the cradle of civilization. Though many people outside Pakistan and inside may not fully appreciate or realize this – the oldest civilization in the world is not Ancient Egypt (3000 BC) and Ancient Greece as is taught in many schools around the world. It is our own Mehrgarh (7000 BC) located in present day Balochistan. This is a stunning fact, which gives us, as a

collective people, deep roots – we are not a new civilization. Taxila is another example of having one of the most important education centres in the world (people from other parts of the world came to study here just as today they strive to go to Oxford and Cambridge in the UK). Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and other religions were born here in present day Pakistan. This land has seen many strong, tolerant, and creative leaders, for example, the great Mughals, the Sufi saints, and so forth. This is the rich historical and cultural inheritance of the people of Pakistan.

**The People of Pakistan.** With their hospitality and resilience in the face of all troubles, the people of Pakistan are survivors. “Some of the most brilliant people I have met,” a senior European academic I met recently told me, “are from Pakistan.”

**Geographic Bliss.** A stunningly beautiful vast land from the north to the south with access to water and the most breathtaking and highest mountains in the world, *Ma sha Allah!* In size, we are bigger than most European countries.

**Fabulous Weather.** Sunny most of the time – the word ‘sad’ is from Seasonally Affected Disorder – indeed while I was in the UK, people moaned about the weather all the time. They would die to have this weather which can make us happy medically.

**Faith.** Lastly, faith is very important and the key anchor – faith in the idea of hope and survival, faith in our nation, and faith in God. I’ve seen reflections of these in members of the army, civil services, educational experts and in ordinary people for whom the services strive, through the course of their lives, to make a better nation for all.

### **“You” are a Role Model Peace Builder: Embodying the Messages of Great Leaders**

The message for us in today’s Pakistan from the Holy Prophet of Islam (PBUH) is to build our own great internal

strength – faith is an important component in driving us forward and the message of God is the key to survival – to fight for peace, not war, but to defend ourselves and our national interests with great wit, and the tools of knowledge and wisdom. It is worth reminding ourselves that the Prophet (PBUH) came to Arab society in a very difficult time to challenge *Jahilya* (violent ignorance) when people killed children and disrespected humanity. He came as a Messenger from God, the Cherisher of Humanity, to remind people of the ideals of justice, humanity and compassion. That is why the title of the leader of the Muslim Army, the Prophet (PBUH), was “*Rahmat al lil Alameen*.” The beauty of his character that made his role a success was precisely his great strength of standing firmly for what is right and protecting his *Ummah* firmly within the balance of justice and compassion, while being a leader, a father, a husband, and a General. It is for this reason that we are told repeatedly by God in the Quran that the best role model for us is the Prophet of Islam. However, we can only really “know” the Prophet (PBUH) if we study his life by reading about him.

The Quaid-i-Azam – our special *Baba-e-Qaum*, is another outstanding role model for us. In the December 2014 issue of *Hilal* magazine, the message of the Quaid was loud and clear – of progress and humanity, of justice and compassion written by Professor Akbar S. Ahmed. In his character, in his manners, in his struggle for Pakistan and its survival, the Quaid is a brilliant star. Being himself an outstanding professional lawyer from a minority community, he fought for the rights of all people, especially the most vulnerable – women and those who were from the minority communities. He fought with his life and last breath to give us this nation with the help of God. It is now up to us to make it, to build it, to value it and to protect it.

This land has had many other outstanding leaders – some of whose lives have been forgotten, and remain unexplored today but remain a treasure for the students and teachers of courses such as ‘*ilm, adab aur insaniat*’ to slowly uncover one by one and explore as we are beginning to do so. These examples give us, and our children, hope. They show us how to

survive as these great leaders did in the face of all odds and adversity and to make the world we live in a better more peaceful place.

## Conclusion

After travelling for months on the research project, across Europe and earlier the Muslim world (on “*Journey into Islam*” – a book by Prof Akbar S. Ahmed, which was the first part of the four-part project, “*Journey into Europe*”) and hearing the stories of immigrants losing their homes, their countries in wars, the plane I arrive in touches the soil of Pakistan and I am grateful to be back ‘home’. I say a prayer, a ‘*sajdah to Rabbee*’ for blessing us with this home – a place better than thousand palaces. I come back enthusiastic and wanting to contribute to building this nation into a beautiful strong and united country. I pray for all those who have worked towards peace in Pakistan and in the wider regions, for the sacrifices they have made, to make a stronger peaceful world community.

Our progress will start with the building blocks and tools of knowledge and strategy. We will celebrate and be proud of Pakistan just as our neighbour, India, celebrates themselves (you may remember the widespread ads, “Made in India”, “Fabulous India,” etc). We will build on our own knowledge through courses like ‘*Ilm, Adab aur Insaniat*,’ by exploring our shared rich heritage (South Asia, Islamic, Andalusian and world debates on Dialogue of Civilizations), which will give us the confidence to propel us forward. We will begin to read up on our own history and polish up our knowledge on the Quran, on the Prophet of Islam, on the Caliphs, on the Quaid-i-Azam and so forth. This will help us understand the balance of justice, rights and respect for others and ourselves and will help us understand the balance of cause and effect. Our minorities must feel a part of, not apart from Pakistan – they must not feel as being on the periphery but included in the centre. Finally, we must acknowledge, value and protect what we have as our strengths.

Drawing inspiration from my father’s great relative, Sir

Syed Ahmed Khan; my maternal grandfather the Wali of Swat, Miangul Jahanzeb, who built universities and education centres in Aligarh and Swat where the creators of Pakistan on the one hand and on the other, girls like Malala Yusufzai comes out of, a system of education which is local (not Oxford or Cambridge); and my husband, Arsallah Khan's grandfather, Sir Akbar Khan of Hoti, who is said to have built and collected the largest library in South Asia, I am personally convinced that knowledge, and especially "Peace Building Education", is the key to strengthening and creating a progressive and successful Pakistan. That is why both my husband and I left Cambridge where I had a permanent job as Director of the first centre on Peace Studies and chose to come to Pakistan, like so many other Pakistanis who came "home", to help build our valuable homeland and contribute whatever little we have here with a great deal of passion and enthusiasm.

Finally, all of us should remember the message of the Prophet (PBUH) that scholarship is more important than anything else – it is the bright light of hope and of progress. Indeed, there is a famous saying of the Prophet: *"The ink of the scholar is more sacred than the blood of the martyr."* I urge you to think hard about this – if God in the Quran gave the highest *darja* – or status to the martyr, why is then the ink of the scholar more sacred than the blood of the martyr? It is because with scholarship comes understanding and with deeper understanding comes respect and with that, steps to peace are possible. Again, I go back to the example of the best General in any army of all times, the Prophet of Islam, who valued the tools of knowledge to fight all forms of *jahilya* (violent ignorance).

I want to leave you with the thought that "nothing is impossible" for us: We "can" soar to the highest of heights. We only need the will and mental strength to fly high. When I look at the young generations, I think that with their enthusiasm, great heights are certainly possible. For all those who serve Pakistan in their varied ways, remember Allama Iqbal's words:

*"Tu Shaheen hai, basera kar paharun ki chatanun main"!*



# Epilogue

**Tahir Mehmood**

It was a long cold dark winter night; and the clocks had already struck half-past midnight. The continuous rainfall for hours and the low clouds surrounding the windowpanes and doors had made the night more sombre and dense. The lone man sitting in the café's corner was deeply engrossed in thoughts that had made his fourth cup of coffee get further cold. The café in the tourist resort mountainous village was located a bit far away from the population. The café owner himself seemed part of the antiquity that had endured over the decades. He was well familiar with this lone man sitting in the corner for over thirty years; though the familiarity could only break the walls of brief wellbeing exchanges. He would appear once in a while each year for a month-long stay in the village, mostly in winters. Known for his quiet manners and lone long walks over the mountain tops, the man was taken as a peaceful recluse. A black mystery hollow always surrounded him. Somehow it became known that he had once served in the military and had fought a war, too. That night he sat for long, engulfed in some inner conflict, he did not talk even once. The inner conflicts are usually not visible but are often equally dreadful as open wars. His eyes were dull but demeanour rock-solid.

*He was passing through the agony of bygone years when he was young, and full of life!*

In those days he was serving in a military unit deployed in the East Wing of his country. He often missed his hometown located in the West Wing, that was different in many ways. However, like soldiers are famous for adapting to the new ways

‘in the line of duty’, he was soon absorbed by the life of the town. There he met her, and overpowered by the destiny, soon they were married. The girl was young and naïve but as beautiful as a wild little white rose. This was a union spontaneous but an act of sheer love. A bit unusual but no one could deny the oneness of the land, blood and souls. They had made it a routine to go for long night errands. In that land of ravines, lakes and mist, they would often lose the path, but then magical power of love would lead them back home. They would talk and understand not entirely dependent on words.

*In youthful days, heart is connected to the soul in a manner that ‘love’ is personified through each small act of lovers.*

A year of happiness had just passed when the war broke out in the East Wing. Brothers started fighting brothers, the blood was spilled without distinction and it further thickened the clouds of death and misery. The love was unknowingly overtaken by hate, and soon the enemy also jumped in. That night he talked to her for very long in a manner that he had never done before. He talked of love, life and perpetuity of conflict.

*And, then he started explaining the ever-overpowering love for the Motherland!*

He uttered the words in a low but firm voice, “I have put you in my heart, closed it, yet set you free. We are different but love always does not breed in similarity. Love just happens to someone. It is never chained in bonds, never two shall be one, but the oneness of souls endures the differences. Sustaining distinct uniqueness gives strength to life of individuals and societies. Oneness is a divine attribute and humans are ought to be diverse yet love takes them to this divine bliss!” And deeply drowned in mystique of love and life he mumbled, “the bond with the motherland is nothing but pure divine love.”

Overwhelmed by the power of the words he had uttered

from deep caves of inner-self, he opened the half-shut eyes. Then appeared the agony of life and reality on his face. The shadows of looming war further thickened the talk. "We learn to know, and then live under the burdens of knowing forever," again he was murmuring, "All living beings feed on all other living 'things'. This one-eyed spectacle makes the notions of peace, justice and freedom relative in nature. Man is defined, lost and found by the conflict. Perpetuity is to life, not to peace as contradictions shape and give birth to new conflicts. Peace is a dream that is never under full grasp. There are skies to fly and feet to crawl on the ground. The passionate men of freedom, courage and imagination always delimit the industry of life. They do not look down to find the pitfalls, but act to unknot the limits of the 'will'. The words without power of action are mere dreams. An idea is hope, half-action is a curse-in-waiting, and persistence is victory."

*His words were magical, and the dawn of a new day had already set in on the horizon.*

He opened his eyes to the reality and saw the shadows of conflict looming over vast fields of his motherland. It was time for the men of courage and passion to act and protect the godly motherland. And then he uttered the last words with a finality of tone she was not familiar with, "soldiers like us have been groomed to get martyred for the motherland. They are trained hard to stand for the motherland, protect it, fight for it till last. These times are hard, our freedom and identity is the cost, and I cannot shy away from the call! These are the times of valiant fights, struggle and strife, suffering and endurance, and martyrdom! This is not throwing away life, which is a unique divine gift, but standing tall to the toughest calls of duty and commitment. Life and death are both a matter of choice. The tall ones always stand high above the choice. On some beautiful morning of tomorrow, pluck a red rose and you will find me, and only then you would know the price of the blood of a martyr!" The girl could hardly utter a word but her grasp was enough to tell that she shared his cause. The cause of a soldier 'in the line of duty', the ever unchained love for the *motherland!*

*No tear could roll down, but met a silent death in the depths of heart that embodied the virtue of love.*

In the dark winter nights, the soldiers embark on the missions that are rarely known to the men living in peaceful dwellings. The deep gorges, fast flowing ravines, snow-clad mountain tops, thick forests and stormy oceans; all witness the resolve of man versus man, and man versus Nature. It is ironic but true that peace is sought through wars. 'Peace and War' is like a hide-and-seek game between life and death and soldiers play this game. Tyranny could prevail forever if there are no soldiers of peace and freedom. The soldiers fight and endure wars! The soldiers are proud young sons of their old dying mothers. They are the band of brothers who go to war – the valley of death – while singing songs and chanting slogans. Their young bodies and spirits are imbued with love, life and hope.

*Their old Generals are often cold and quiet, as they know the pain and strife that life endures once young ones die 'in the line of duty'.*

Since then many years had passed. The soldiers of war, peace and freedom had returned to their homes. The brave ones chose death, the resilient ones fought and survived. After the war, he returned to his native town in the West Wing, and could not go back to the home he had built with her. He tried to locate her, but where love once prevailed, the dust of hatred had taken over. Those who were distinct but one, had been separated. The cause of oneness which they had chosen willingly, had been lost. Often in war, the results do not entirely depend on the bravery of the soldiers. Sometimes the battles are won but the war is lost. Nature's clairvoyance cried: "the conflict is inevitable. The ready-ones to live in peace, ambitious to wage war, simpleton to be trapped, and charlatans to suffer defeat."

Lost in the fog of war and bitter memories of separation, he managed once to go back to the East Wing to find her. There

he found a demolished home that was once a symbol of life and joy. Nothing was recognisable. The love that united them once, had become a lost cause. He made muted enquiries about the girl that used to live there, but none could tell him about her. He then returned to the West Wing with empty hands, and heart filled with pain. Soon, he left the military and started ploughing the new crops in the virgin fields of the Motherland.

*He had found the shelter and cause in the love of Motherland.*

Years passed following the unstoppable flow of time and destiny. In the memory of that cold winter night of December, he often chose to visit that mountainous village and spend the nights of love, remorse and pain all alone by himself. He often chose to go for long lonely walks in the clouds. The life had turned into a wasteland without companionship. The nights were painful but days had a glimmer of hope as he could see new crops growing. He had a hope for good days once people's stomach would be filled with the healthy harvest growing in the fields. All was passing like a colourless autumn month that is waiting for blissful days of spring. And, one day, all seemed upside-down once he received a letter from the embassy of the former East Wing of his motherland. It was a letter from her daughter who was born after he had left the house. She had written about the death of her mother after that tragic war. She grew with one of her aunts who on her insistence had contacted the embassy of the West Wing to locate him.

*Next week she was coming to meet him!*

And, tonight he was sitting in the far corner of that mountain café all alone engrossed in deep thoughts. The two weeks stay of his daughter had passed like withering petals of a white rose that rarely survive the next morning of their bloom. She resembled her mother in many ways. She made numerous enquiries about their past and about her mother. They spared most nights for long walks in the memory of the departed one.

She had to go back to the former East Wing due to her studies. He had to stay in his home in the West Wing for the new crops he was hoping to reap one day. It was difficult to reach the decision of parting ways once again, but hope for seeing new crops in the *Motherland* had defined his new life. The man finally arose from his seat, gave a smiling nod to the café owner, and walked into the mist of life.

*Nature breeds life, conflict evolves, and love endures it.*

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Hilal Road, Rawalpindi, Pakistan

+92 51 9271617 | [ed.english@hilal.gov.pk](mailto:ed.english@hilal.gov.pk) | [www.ispr.gov.pk](http://www.ispr.gov.pk)

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