



FROM LONDON TO HARAM & PAKISTAN

SIKANDAR KHAN



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A PETITION

In 1964, this humble self travelled from London to the House of Allah on car. Throughout this journey, I kept writing my experiences narrating concisely in a diary. This journey was arranged by Haji Muhammad Yunus Barlas from Lahore who was and still is a resident of London. On 23rd January, 2012, approximately 48 years later, he wrote a letter to me and inquired about my wellbeing. On receiving the letter, I called him on phone. He disclosed that I had left a diary in his car which included details of my journey and he would return it on his visit to Pakistan. In February, 2012, he came to Lahore and on 14th March, he visited this humble self's modest residence along with his brother in law, Naeem-ud-din and brought the diary as well. He insisted that this travelogue should be published as soon as possible. Thus, after reasonable reviewing, it is being published for the interest of the readers.

Be informed that this is my first travelogue which, due to laziness and unfavorable circumstances, could not be published whereas the other travelogue, "Russian donkey-driver Kremensky" which was written during the travels in Europe in 1971 was published in 1984. Before this, in 1980, the first edition of "History of Chach Valley" was published and other books on various topics were published. At the end of 2011, the 4th edition of "History of Chach Valley" (Daman Abaseen) was also published.

34 years after this journey, I again went to England in 1998 for recreation and on return via airplane also went to Saudi Arabia for lesser pilgrimage. Now, for the ease and comfort of pilgrims and travellers, many facilities are being introduced which were earlier less or non-existent.

This journey of mine which took the form of an adventure spanned about 2 months. A lot of difficulties were also faced but countless gratitude to Allah that destinations were reached safe and sound. May Allah forgive those fellow companions of this journey who have now died. May their families and friends be granted fortitude and patience. Ameen.

This writer thanks respected Haji Muhammad Yunus Barlas from the bottom of his heart who gave worthy guidance for the completion of this travelogue. Besides him, I also owe to all friends especially Professor Haq Nawaz Waheed who analyzed the book's manuscript and diverted my attention towards some historic events. Readers are requested to ignore if a mistake is spotted. May Allah keep you happy. Ameen.

Wa'Salaam, Sikandar Khan, Vesa Village, Attock District.

25th May, Thursday, 2012.

Days and Nights of Bradford

In 1961, from Karachi, this humble self, after paying a fare of 1800 rupees, reached London from where he took a train. After travelling for one night, I reached my friends in Bradford which is in Yorkshire district. Initially, my residence was in No. 7 Clarendon Police, Lamb lane which was under the supervision of Sardar Hussain of Vesa Village. Besides his brother, Ghulam Hassan, another village, Tajak's Muhamamd Ibrahim, who was a former seaman, was also a resident. Arrangement of food and drinks was such that for one week, all items were brought from the grocery store. From a butcher's shop, meat of fat-tailed sheep and chicken were brought as well.

In the front room, for producing fire, sacks of charcoal were also brought so that in sheer coldness, people could feel warm and there would be less moisture in the house. Usually, twice or thrice in a week, soup would be cooked in a big pot along with *parathas* made of cow's butter. Sometimes, *sawaiyya* and *halwa* were also prepared. Dwellers of the house would take part in making food with a lot of enthusiasm and the entire work would be distributed evenly. Since there was a lot of skin on chicken, it was put in fireplace along with wasted *roti* because friends thought that it was against the sanctity of sustenance to throw it in a garbage bin.

During these days, the house owners would take, as rent, 10 shillings (half pound) per week and they were responsible for changing the bed sheets on a weekly basis whereas rent for one small room was 1 pound in which there was only one bed, one table and one chair. Only in the front room, there was an old piece of carpet cloth whereas in the other rooms, there was just a thick lampas paper. Sleeping rooms were extremely cold; the owner did not allow heaters to be used. Only the front room was warm where charcoal was burned. Two sacks were acquired in return of 1 pound. Eating expense, on average, was 1.5 pounds to 2.5 pounds per person per week. For saving money, most would wash clothes themselves rather than opting for laundry service. Bus travelling expense, from Lamb lane to Leeds, was 3-4 pence. Even then, most friends would travel on foot. Most buses were double-deckers.

Similarly, if someone was a worker at a factory or a mill far away, he would walk the distance. Laborer wages per week were usually 8 pounds whereas a skilled professional like a weaver, charge man, electrician, spinner, netter or other experienced worker was paid 20-25 pounds. For reading and writing work at office, usually, females were employed whose salaries were less than 8 pounds. In the beginning, I wished to get such a work in which reading and writing abilities could be utilized. Thus, I would often buy the local newspaper

of Bradford, "Telegraph & Argus" in which vacant positions were advertised. This newspaper's cost was 3 pence. Hence, once, I saw an add for a railway guard. I applied for it.

“TOWARDS ISTANBUL”

After getting free from Customs officers in Turkey, we started travelling on this land. We felt so happy as if we were in Pakistan. Another reason was that we could find lawful food of our taste here as we were fed up of eating bread and jam. 15 miles away from borders, we reached the first village of Turkey named Kesan. It was 12 AM in the night. We stayed in Bolte Hotel. Since the food was finished, its owner prepared rice and eggs for us. While eating, Chaudhry took few bites from Allah Dita on which the later became angry. In fact, he became so furious that he started speaking nonsense including abuses, curses and threats. I begged him to stop it, have patience and tolerance otherwise what would the Turks say on hearing it. I said that since we had reached Turkey, all his eating wishes would be fulfilled on which he finally turned silent with a sigh of relief. There was one Pakistani as well in Bolte Hotel who was going with his wife and children to England by road. For some time, I exchanged with him thoughts on our journeys. On waking up in the morning, we had breakfast. As we were about to start our journey and came outside the hotel, we saw Turkey's red flags waving in the air on all houses whether big or small. Village volunteers were coming back from duty with bayonets on their rifles.

Their faces were glowing with joy and they were filled with enthusiasm. From seeing the optimism on their faces, I realized that even if 10 countries like Greece would unite, they could not harm an iota of Turks because of the special grace and help of Allah (SWT).

On 15th April, at 9 AM in the morning, we started travelling from Kesan to Istanbul which is a famous historical city of Turkey. The weather was pleasant; the land was mostly barren; few mountains were visible; cultivation was being carried out through horses and buffalos; Turkish buffalos are as big as Pakistani cows; the journey was in progress when the other car's tire broke down; it was 12 PM and we resumed travelling after replacing the tire.

At 9:45 PM, we reached Istanbul which was previously known as Constantinople. Sultan Muhammad Fateh conquered it on 29th April, 1457 and had named it Islam. Islamabad (this one, not Pakistan's) later came to be known as Istanbul. Where River Rom and Basforas Firth meet, it is called River Danial. Istanbul is located in it; its army's importance has always been very high. Because the desire for lawful food was increasing since many days, we discovered a Tikka Kabab shop near a chowk. Thus, we entered it and ordered Tikka Kabab along with fried eggs. A shrewd servant placed food for as much

as 3 people in front of each person on which we jumped on the meal as if we had been starving since months. Servants were standing nearby with a lot of respect. When they would ask if we needed this or that thing, we would immediately tell them to bring it. After eating, we received the bill; on seeing it, Allah Dita started sweating and created a scene by shouting that it was too much and unjustified. I made him realize that since the meal had already gone down his throat, nothing could be done now and there was no point in complaining. So, while wiping his sweat, he eventually paid the bill. At times, I would think how come we digested such a huge amount of food. It is possible that Istanbul's water was as good for digestion as that of Peshawar and Lahore.

After drinking green tea, at Asar prayer timings, we visited the grave of the great companion of Holy Prophet, Abu Ayub Ansari (RZA). With the Muslim army, he was involved in the encirclement of Istanbul. Then he became ill and died; his last will was to be buried as much as possible within the area of enemies. It was fulfilled. His grave was prepared beside the vallation of fortress. Later, during Caliph Usman (RZA)'s rule, a great tomb was constructed there. People come to visit it from far away places. In front of it, there is a beautiful mosque near which there is a big graveyard where very tall gravestones present a unique scene. It seems as if there is an army which is itself standing on the heads. On Abu Ayub Ansari (RZA)'s grave, there are marble tiles. Quranic verses are inscribed on big tablets. Nearby, there was a crowd of people including both men and women. Men were mostly wearing European dresses.

After some time, we heard from the mosque the call to prayer in Arabic. Before this, we had heard that in Turkey, it is in Turkish. On departure, we headed towards the old fortress of Istanbul which, even today, looks strong and unable to repress. This part of the city is known as the European part. We crossed a bridge on cars and, on the other side, bought a ticket for ship. We landed on the ship along with the cars. After travelling for ten minutes, we reached the Asian part of Istanbul. This part is also congested and beautiful. Usually, the minarets of mosques are of pyramidal type. Among the historical and beautiful buildings of Istanbul, the museum of saints and Sufis holds a special place. Near it, there is a beautiful park. At some distance, there is a grand mosque which is known as Blue Mosque which has one minaret that is extremely high. It was constructed on orders of the famous leader, Sultan Muhammad Fateh. There is Topcapi Museum as well which consists of many bric-a-brac but due to shortage of time, we could not visit it. It also includes the swords of Holy Prophet and his companions with their names written on them.

“JOURNEY THROUGH DESERTS”

Today, it was April 11th. All of us had bought food, drink and dates as per need so that we would not feel hungry or thirsty during the journey. Water was filled in plastic drums. For each car, 25 gallons of extra petrol was bought. But we forgot the most important things, pickaxe and spaddle and had to bear it's consequences in the end. After full preparation, we departed with the ambitious aim of crossing the desert. It was 930 AM and chilling winds were blowing. The land was dry and stony. Around us, mounds of sand were throughout visible. Cars were moving very slowly. After crossing 3-4 miles with a lot of difficulty, we reached near the railway engineer's camp which was based on the reconstruction of the historic Hijaz Railway. This was the same railway line which was, during World War 1, completely destroyed by Cournel Lawrence along with transgressing Arabs so that Turks could not help their army. Our railway engineer, who was an Arab, took us to his camp and served us green tea. He gave us the same advice on travelling which Maan's Police officer had given - that cars should either be kept in Maan or taken to Tabook on trucks. But his advice was not followed. Thus, looking at the insistence of travellers, the engineer said that although the path was damaged but if they would remain courageous, they would cross the desert.

Thus, despite tiredness, we left. After crossing some distance, we would step off the cars stuck in sand and push them out of it. Sometimes, we would start walking on foot so that the cars remained lighter and could pass through sand easily. All of us, keeping our pajamas and trousers up, would keep pushing the cars. Sometimes, the cars got stuck in a very difficult way. The Turk pilgrims who were travelling on trucks in the form of groups would help in getting the cars out of sand but after a while, the cars would again get stuck. Since we didn't bring any tool, our hands would get injured or even bleed in removing the sand. We would get tired to the point of utter exhaustion after walking and pushing cars. We were left with very little drinking water, few dates and small amount of petrol. Thus, moment by moment, our anxiety and fear kept increasing.

During this time, the party of Haji Fazal Daad also passed near us and helped few times in getting our cars moving. Eventually, they too moved ahead because our cars would stop again and again as their bodies were not that tall and would get stuck easily in sand. At the time of Asar prayers, we totally lost our spirits. Hence, on my advice, two companions along with their belongings boarded on a truck of Turks so that on reaching Tabook, they would arrange trucks for us. These companions were Allah Dita and Nizamuddin. At 630 PM, we reached a valley which was surrounded by small mountains. At this time, sunset took place and darkness began covering us from all sides. Both cars had

now got stuck in sand very firmly. We were all exhausted to the fullest and had no energy to remove the cars at all. Muhammad Yunus's condition deteriorated so much that he even vomited few times. I gave him support and tried to raise his morale. In a state of semi-consciousness, he said, "Khan, my sustenance was written only till here". On hearing it, I got even more worried and thought if anyone of us would expire, what would happen to the rest? Strange and weird thoughts swept across my mind. Still, I elevated his spirits and just for psychological reasons, gave him a tablet of APC and laid him on the car seat. Isha prayer timings had begun.

After some time, a Palestinian came in a car all alone. It was Shevrolet and its body was much higher than the ground due to which it did not face any difficulty in moving. We shared few words with him. He said that he would go with us to Tabook tomorrow. Then he went into his car for sleeping which was placed at around 100 yards from us.

When he went away, one of us revealed suspicions that he may be a spy of local people and may bring them to bother us. I advised others to lock the cars and lay down in the territory of mountains nearby so that even if the locals would arrive, our lives would be safe otherwise if we would be found sitting in cars tied up, we would be in sheer trouble. However, no one was convinced and, instead, sat in cars while shivering.

I and Chaudhry kept awake to guard them because as the owner of a single Borchardt pistol, it was my responsibility to avoid the dangers of locals and animals. Thus, we kept drowsing and waking throughout the night. By the special grace of Allah, no thief, robber or local man came near us. It is also possible that someone might have come but soon lost his courage on hearing about 11 young Pakistani men.

Next morning, on Sunday, 12th April, 1964 at 5 AM, pushing the cars out of sand, we came out of the valley with a lot of difficulty. After a distance of 1 furlong, huge stones on the way became even bigger hurdles for us. It was simply impossible for cars to go through. Thus, we all sat on the ground with sheer disappointment. There was no more water and our lips had turned dry. Since yesterday, from Maan, we had covered at least 40 miles. Ghulam Rasool became emotional and said, "I will go back to Maan and from Uqba haven, travel to Jeddah on ship". Although his thoughts were fine but going back to Maan was itself suicidal because the path which we had crossed with so much hardship through the help of Turks could not be traversed all over again. Furthermore, our two companions which we sent to Tabook along with suitcases must have been waiting for us eagerly. Now, the days left in fulfilling the obligation of pilgrimage were also less in number. It would have taken a lot

of time to travel on ship. Moreover, our food and water had finished and petrol was in scarcity as well. In these circumstances, a lot of arguments went on between car owners and travelers. Car owners insisted that we should pay for sending cars on trucks to Tabook whereas our stance was that they had agreed to send us to Pakistan in return of 80 Pounds; thus, we were not bound to pay for the trucks. I made them realize that if they would stick to such stubbornness and unreasonable behavior, even our dead bodies will remain unnoticed. I said that first we should worry about our lives; then later we can decide about money mutually. Ghulam Rasool kept firm on not paying for trucks but his father, dealing with foresight, agreed to pay.

By the special grace of Allah, car owners realized the vulnerability of situation and decided that as soon as a bus of Turks would pass by, we would request them to send us trucks on reaching Tabook. Thanks to Allah, note that we were just discussing it when we saw a truck appearing. As soon as it reached near us, we waved to its driver with a cloth. This truck was owned by a resident of Ardan. With signs and broken Arabic language, we asked him to take us to Tabook. He insisted on being paid 40 Pounds. Due to necessitation, we agreed as well. Now all companions felt life in themselves. This truck was manufactured by the famous German company, Mercedes. It had very heavy tires. Its body was much higher than the ground and it could easily move over big stones. On one side, adjacent to its body, there was a long yet thin water tank from which we drank profusely and washed our faces and hands which were too dirty.

Despite intense heat, the truck driver prepared hot green tea and made us drink it. He had kept pieces of wood in his truck for burning. Then he parked the truck near a part of the railway line and placed few big stones beside it so that it was easy to make the car climb. This was the same railway line (already mentioned in first paragraph of this chapter) which Turks had built from Damascus to Madina. Few pieces of it are still present which provide guidance to travelers. Majority of its portion has been buried under the sand. The railway engineer had told us that a British company had taken 2.5 crore Pounds for its full reconstruction in 2.5 years. When the car was placed on the truck, all of us became ready to go on the truck. Extra belongings from another car were also loaded on the truck. Muhammad Yunus was left alone to protect his car. I consoled him that there was nothing to worry as I and Abdul Qayum would also be with him till another truck wasn't around.

The truck had only gone away till 50 yards when another truck appeared. On seeing it, we started praying for the truck to be empty so that we could go on it. We had asked the first truck driver to arrange one for us or otherwise, after unloading cars in Tabook, return to us. From the truck's tank, we had poured

water in our containers. We had also taken the few remaining dates from friends so that we could survive till the next truck. The first truck driver tried to grab the attention of the later by constant loud horns and switching on headlights. As a result, the later came near him and it was such a good fortune for us that it too was empty. The two drivers conversed with each other in Arabic. So the second one agreed to go to Tabook. He got hold of pieces of wood lying in his truck and prepared green tea for us as well as himself. Then he made Muhammad Yunus's car climb his truck. Again, we drank loads of water from truck's tank and thanked Allah from the bottom of our hearts for providing a bounty like water in deserts.

I was sitting beside the truck driver in the cabin whereas Abdul Qayum, Chaudhry Rashid and Muhammad Yunus were seated in the car. This truck's engine had high horse power. Whenever the truck was about to get stuck in sand, the driver would use the special gear to keep it moving. Although the heat was intense but thanks to Allah, there was cool breeze around. Since the harsh sequence of pushing cars and walking had ended, I started noticing the surroundings as well. Repeatedly, after some distance, brown mountains would appear. On some places, black mountains were seen as well which seemed like heaps of coal. Nearby, there was no trace of animal life let alone humans. At some places, in dry rainy tunnels, dry grass was visible which was upto 1 foot tall. This path was so vast that as far as our sight could reach, more and more paths could be witnessed because neither there was a road nor a sign. Thus, one could take a route wherever one wanted to go. That is the reason why a stranger, after roaming around endlessly, could turn completely hopeless about the destination, even leading to death.

According to my estimate, this track was around 15-20 miles wide. Wherever you would go, marks of car tires were seen which could easily deceive other drivers and deprive them of reaching the destination. However, the local Arabs with whom we travelled seemed to be fully aware of each and every part of the desert. In the desert, we could not see anything but sand mounds and mountains because there was mirage around us. Maybe, Allah created mirage in the form of water in order to give hope and courage to astray travelers. Thanks to Allah, we turned hopeful of escaping from the mirage alive. Mind you, on reaching Pakistan at the end of this entire journey, it appeared in the newspaper after 15-20 days that a European photographer died of thirst in this same desert.

The Arab driver explained to me through sign language that if God would will, we would reach Tabook the next day at Isha prayer timings. Since, due to climbing up and down, the car on truck would librate, the speed of truck was kept at 20 miles per hour and then 10 miles per hour later. Even then, the heads of companions would keep bumping into the car roof. Consequently, they

would scream and shout pleading to lower the truck's speed. For some time, the driver would pretend to be unaware and for some other time, he would lower the speed. Then, he would increase the speed again. The companions would again start yelling; he would again act deaf; when the voices would turn even louder, then he would again drive slower. I, too, could not do anything about it because even from his face, he seemed very crude and I feared he might expel us from the truck. Actually, he wanted to cross the desert as soon as possible and thus had to increase the speed. While travelling on truck, we entered the night. This travelling continued the next day as well. Now, it was 1 PM and the black mountains near us looked as if they had been totally burned. Besides mirage, nothing could be seen.

These truck drivers were very brave and fully knowledgeable about every part of the desert. One truck would, for a while, move to a different path and disappear and then suddenly, both trucks would start moving together. During this journey, with the exception of cars, our entire belongings would be full of sand and dust. Besides clothes, our shoes, heads, mouths, eyes, noses and ears were all caught in sand and dust. Innumerable times, we removed it from our shoes but it would not give up.

At 1:45 PM, we reached Almadura police station at Ardan's border which was like a small castle. Here, the police of Ardan's border resided and there was nothing else at all. The only thing present was the destructed railway station of the Turkish era where a broken signal and a piece of railway line was testifying it and stood there as a sign. There was also an ancient well; its water was not drinkable but even then it was a blessing in the desert. There was no trace of any trees or greenery at all.

Army trucks would bring food and drink for the police officers who were of an extremely good character. They knew a bit of English language. Their uniform was loose upon which they wore long over-coats. Everyone had revolvers and rifles of 303 and had cross-belts of bullets on their chests. On their backs, they had daggers in gloves of silver with flowers stitched on them.

Police officers told us that they had met Allah Dita and Nizamuddin, our two companions in the bus of Turks and advised them to wait at Almadura station so that trucks could be arranged for us but they didn't accept it and went to Tabook. Police officers also said that we were extremely fortunate to come out of the desert safe and sound in these circumstances otherwise it was impossible. Indeed, they were so right; in such miserable conditions, getting two trucks was a divine intervention from Allah. Few Turkish buses were here for checking.

At 330 PM, we started our journey from Almadura to Tabook. The scenario in desert was still the same as before. After some time, a typhoon started and a lot of sand was in the air. Ahead of the truck, we could not see more than 10-15 yards but the driver kept moving at same speed. Occasionally, I would give him a signal to slow down but he would say, “don’t worry” and continue without hesitation. I became extremely frightened when, due to the storm, only the truck’s bonnet was visible but the driver even changed his path as if each and every iota of the desert was mapped in his mind.

At 430 PM, the storm calmed down and we entered the first check post of Saudi Arabia which was adjacent to a small village that comprised of weak houses. However, police officers and health department’s staff lived in a proper building in which there were many water taps. We were provided with certificates of health and injection. We drank water abundantly, washed ourselves fully and labelled the desert’s police station as dirty. After resting for some time, we headed towards Tabook. Compared to Ardan’s desert, this area looked equable; the land seemed pebbly. Slowly, darkness started spreading. Sometimes, we would see the lights of Turks’ buses whereas stars in the sky kept shining and welcoming us. At 715 PM, we reached Tabook, the historic city of Saudi Arabia.

“TABOOK TO MADINA”

Through Fazal Daad, we negotiated the fare with the bus owner for the trip to Makkah. My and Abdul Qayum’s name were included in the passenger’s list. At 1130 AM, on 14th April, 1964, we headed towards Tayma. The heat was intense but the air was chilly; our bus was moving on sandy and stony land. Heavy vehicles had created pits on the way. Whenever the bus tires were about to get stuck in the sand, the engine would turn noisy as indication. Then Hassan would start steering it right and left and the bus would be free from sand. At some places, after every small distance, there were poles constructed as well so that car drivers could be guided. On the way, sometimes passengers needed to leave the bus as well so that it could easily pass through sand. When some dangerous place would be reached, the bus would start wavering here and there. On this, Hassan’s father, the conductor, would announce loudly, “Recite the *kalima*: La ilaha illallah Muhammad-ur-rasool-ullah”. So, out of sheer fear, we would start reciting it repeatedly and passionately. Then, the conductor would start chanting *durood sharif* again and again. We followed as well. When he would get tired of doing this, he would turn silent after saying, “Ali, Ali, Ali”. Then he would light a cigarette and enjoy it when the bus would get out of the trap. After some time, the bus would waver again. The same sequence of our actions would follow. Then, he would recite “allah humma salle” and we would repeat it as well with a lot of zeal and conviction. Again, when the trouble would go away, he would get his cigarette and his face wouldn’t be visible due to the smoke.

Just few minutes must have passed away when the conductor again announced danger and our cycle repeated as well. Although we had been on a much tougher journey from Maan to Tabook but we never experienced this much fear at all. We were so scared that as soon as the conductor’s voice was heard, the intense spiritual chanting would start. In my estimation, none of us had ever recited the *kalimah* so frequently as that day. While continuing to do recitation and chanting, we finally reached Tayma due to the special grace of Allah at 730 PM. It was a small town which had 3 or 4 ordinary hotels, a petrol pump, weak houses and many date trees. We had food in one hotel, offered *Salat* and spread bedsheets near the bus to lie down as there was no bedstead in the hotel. We could not sleep due to the noise of vehicles passing by all night. On the morning of 15th April, after breakfast, we headed from Tayma to Madina. This pathway is firm and intact; the land looked sandy and stony while few slight patches were grassy and bushy. Buses of Turks and fast taxis were also seen by us. The sky was completely devoid of clouds although the air was chilly.

“FEW DAYS IN MADINA”

Holy Prophet (SAW) is reported to have said, “Between my home and pulpit, there is a place which is one of the gardens of paradise”. During his lifetime, *Masjid-e-Nabwi* (Prophet’s Mosque) was constructed twice. Afterwards, its expansion and improvement took place under the following companions and Muslim leaders:-

1. Umar Farooq (RZA)
2. Usman Ghani (RZA)
3. Waleed Bin Abdul Mulk
4. Caliph Mehdi Al-Abbas
5. Sultan Ashraf Qatbai
6. Sultan Abdul Majeed Sani
7. Shah Abdul Aziz

According to a hadith, *Salat* offered in this mosque once is better than 1000 offerings of *Salat* in any other mosque besides *Masjid-e-Haram*. Subhanallah! As soon as we reached Madina, we quickly took bath, changed clothes and entered the Prophet’s Mosque. After *Salat*, we offered salutations to Holy Prophet (SAW) while standing in *Mawajha Sharif*. Immense gratitude to Allah that sinners like us had reached the beloved city of our beloved prophet, safe and secure. This mosque is extremely vast but there are so many lucky people around that it takes quite some time to enter or exit. Its old building was constructed during the Turkish age whereas the new developments have taken place under Shah Saud Ibn Abdul Aziz. Various Muslim countries offered, along with advisors, donations for it. This mosque is breathtakingly beautiful; there is an excellent arrangement of lights; innumerable electric fans are there; on the floor, there are extremely expensive carpets; through pillars of different colors, one can distinguish the initial boundaries of Holy Prophet’s cloister and the mosque; the pulpit and alcove are in addition; every person madly yearns to prostrate on such blessed places. On 16th April, 1964, I informed my younger brother, Fazal Akbar who is a resident of Bradford, UK about reaching here through a lovely card which had a wonderful picture of Makkah.

The space between the Prophet’s grave and pulpit is called *Riaz-ul-Jannah*. Holy Prophet’s resting place is situated at the mosque’s left corner in a spectacular net on which there are Quranic verses inscribed as well. On the Prophet’s left side, there are graves of the first two great caliphs of Islam. On further left, in the empty space, the mill and *mashkeeza* (leather container for water) of Fatima (RZA) are placed. According to a tradition, the grave of Prophet Jesus will be made here as well. On the left of *roza-e-aqdas*, there is a perron on which *Ashaab-e-Sufa* (RZA) used to sit. On it, the caretakers of *roza-*

e-aqdas sit dressed in white clothes. It is said that they are the descendants of the great companion, Bilal (RZA) and remain busy in Quranic recitation. I presented them a special gift on behalf of Syedaan Shah, resident of Haroon.

On all sides of *roza-e-aqdas*, there are vigilant and strict police guards on duty. There were so many people around it that it was very tough to go through. On every single step, there were young and old people fully engrossed in *durood* and *tasbih*. Some were crying with devotion and some were reciting Quran. Others were sitting in circles around scholars who were imparting religious knowledge. Those who tried to kiss or touch *roza-e-aqdas* were stopped by the police guards. The porch on left was only for females; the door which opens on this side is known as *baab-un-nisa*.

Inside the courtyard of the mosque, there was sand on both sides of the path. There were lively pigeons around and people would bring wheat for them and put it in the courtyard. The servants used to carry sacks full of wheat to evacuate the place for people otherwise there was too much mess. Since there was no space left inside, many people offered *Salat* outside the mosque in roads and streets on their carpet mats forming rows. The bigger gate of this mosque is grand and majestic; it's called *baab Abdul Majeed*. Outside the mosque, some part has been made firm and intact where people rest. Hawkers sell dates, prayer-beads, handkerchief, prayer-mats and carpets.

Madina is a highly clean and beautiful city. Besides many grand and impressive mosques, mighty and tall buildings are there which include hotels as well. In front of the bigger gate of Prophet's mosque, there are 2 hotels owned by Pakistanis. The shops have abundance of goods, means and wealth of all kinds. The groups of pilgrims are coming and going; their arrival from Tabook as well is still continuing. Near this mosque, there is the famous graveyard, *Jannat-ul-Baqi* in which *Ahl-e-Bayt* (People of the House), wives of the Prophet, Usman (RZA) and other blessed companions as well as martyrs are buried. This graveyard is surrounded by very strong walls and females are not allowed. They pray while standing outside the walls. At some distance from Madina, there is Uhud Mountain. In its lap, within walls, lies the burial chamber of Ameer Hamza (RZA), the king of martyrs. He was the Prophet's uncle and died in the battle of Uhud. North of it, there is a joint grave of many martyrs of Uhud. It is said that there were 70 martyrs in which 64 were *ansaar* (local residents of Madina) and 6 were *muhajir* (migrators from Makkah). I and Abdul Qayum spent the night in a weak house whereas the rest slept beside the bus on bedsheets.

16th April, 1964 was also spent in Madina. After performing *Salat* in Prophet's Mosque, we went to *Jannat-ul-Baqi*. Then we visited the market which had

things mostly from India, Egypt, France, Italy, Japan etc. Besides herbs, dates and carpets, other things were mostly from Indo-Iranian countries. I bought a small carpet, few prayer-beads and a handkerchief. We ate from a Pakistani restaurant. During this time, Ghulam Rasool and Muhammad Yunus also reached Madina along with their companions. Since we had made an agreement with the bus owner to reach Makkah, we had to travel with him in compliance. The second night was also spent in same place. Next day, it was Friday, 17th April. After *juma* prayers, we were supposed to head towards Makkah but, due to some reason, our program had to be changed.

“MADINA TO MAKKAH”

On 18th April, 1964, at 11 AM, we headed towards Makkah on bus. Outside Madina, we performed ablution on a place called *Beer Ali* (RZA). We wore *ihram* and offered 2 *rakaat* optional *Salat*. This location is *meqaat* (place for wearing *ihram*) for anyone going for pilgrimage (major or minor) from Madina. Then we again departed. Although the heat was strong but due to cool air, we didn't feel that hot. Meanwhile, we passed through mountains and valleys. Few times, we also saw an oasis. All passengers kept reciting *talbia*. At 5 PM, we reached a village called Rabakh. We ate food and resumed travelling. The road was even; speedy cars and taxis with lights on would rush by. Near the road, skeletons of cars and buses were sometimes seen upside down which were proof of fatal accidents. On seeing them, we became even more frightened and started reciting *durood* along with the conductor. The journey from Rabakh to Jeddah spanned around 90 minutes. Going through mountains and valleys, the bus took us to the famous Saudi port-city of Jeddah at 8 PM. It is 40 miles away from Makkah. We finally reached Makkah which is also known as Bakka and Umm-al-Qura. This is the place where Prophet Ibrahim and his son, Prophet Ismail built the Holy Kaaba on orders from Allah. Since, due to too many cars, the traffic was stagnant, our driver parked the bus beside the road and we laid down.

On 19th April, we woke up very early and offered the morning *Salat* in a nearby mosque. On bus, we reached the instructor, Asad Nasir's pavilion which is in Muhalla Jiyad. It was near Al Haram Mosque. After placing our belongings, we reached Holy Kaaba for circumambulations. The first extension of Al Haram took place during Umar (RZA)'s rule in 17th Hijri whereas the current one is taking place under Shah Saud Ibn Abdul Aziz in which marble and steel are being mostly used. Within the vicinity of Al Haram, there is Holy Kaaba which is made of huge stones. On its Eastern side, at a height of 4 feet, there is a golden door. Near it, on the corner, in a silver frame, there is “The Black Stone” (*hajra-e-aswad*).

Connected with Holy Kaaba on the northern side, there is a meter tall semicircular wall. The area inside it is known as *hateem*. 8-10 meters away from Kaaba on the eastern side, there is a cottage of web in which that stone is placed which is known as *maqam-e-Ibrahim*. After circumambulations, it is important to offer 2 *rakaat* optional *Salat*. Standing on this stone, Prophet Ibrahim used to erect the walls of Kaaba. Further on the eastern side, there is a well of *zamzam* water which has a motor, a pulley and a container. On all sides of Kaaba, there are marble tiles; above the circle of tiles, till the veranda, a grit is spread.

The round veranda of Al Haram is held by many pillars. Some pillars have names of those famous individuals who had sat there worshipping or serving Islam. Every year, Kaaba is covered by a big cloth which mostly comes from Egypt. On it, there are Quranic verses written through stitched golden thread. The current cloth is grey colored. In Al Haram, there are expensive carpets and rugs. Countless electric fans are running and many lights are shining. The circumambulation starts from the black stone's side. While reciting *talbia*, going around Kaaba and again reaching the stone completes one circumambulation. We have to do this at least 7 times in total. When one reaches the stone, he/she kisses or touches it. If there is too much crowd, one can, facing the stone, tilt both palms towards it and kiss them. Pushing and shoving people and bothering them is not the right way at all.

Here, innumerable people were busy in circumambulation whereas some people indulged in *zikr*, non-obligatory *salat* and recitation of Quran. Every now and then, servants would come in groups and would clean the floor with long brooms. The quantity of people around Kaaba was so high that we used to do circumambulation while holding each other's hands. Weak people or females used to walk from between us to avoid being pushed. Despite this, when African brothers stormed in, we would get separated. Afterwards, we would unite and then they would exert themselves again causing our separation.

There were so many people around the black stone that it was difficult to get near it let alone kissing it. Some unwise people, in a state of emotions, would push aside weaker people to kiss it which is not right. That is why whenever Africans would be near it, weaker people would move away. Unwell or old people do circumambulation in a wheel-chair and pay their helpers. Some people were busy in circumambulation whereas some were crying with their hands and foreheads on Kaaba's walls. Some people were seen tying threads after inserting nails in the slits between Kaaba's stones. One old woman was taking out the dust from slits and putting it in her scarf's fringe while looking here and there to avoid the police. If Saudi government wasn't strict, ignorant people would have forcefully pulled out Kaaba's stones and taken to their homes for blessings.

New groups of people were entering Al Haram and the previous ones were leaving. From the 2nd or 3rd floor, it seemed as if honey-bees were roaming around their hives or moth were going around their flame in obsession. Among these pilgrims, there were people from Indonesia, America, Canada of different colors, races and ages including men, women, children and old ones who were weeping and asking Allah for forgiveness of sins. The sounds of *Labaik Allahuma Labaik* were echoing all in the air. After offering 2 *rakaat* optional *Salat* at *maqam-e-Ibrahim*, people were quickly moving towards *zamam* waters.

Some were drinking water from containers, some from taps, some from bottles and some were wetting their *ihram*'s shawls. Some young ones were carrying clay vessels for offering water to pilgrims and earning as well.

“ZAMZAM WATER”

Zamzam means “too much water”, “hearing the sound of humming from far away”, “gathering scattered things”, “protecting” and “mixing sweet and salty water”. According to the researcher, Abdul Haleem Asar Afghani, it means “stay” in Pashto language (zama zamza). In 2000 BC, this fount started flowing when angel Jibrael’s wings touched the ground and Prophet Ismail, who was a baby, struck his feet. From that day till today, it has been feeding the children of Tauheed (oneness of Allah). It is highly pure, wonderful in taste, extremely digestible and full of blessings and spiritual gifts; it has precedence and superiority over any other water on earth. According to Holy Prophet (SAW), it has cure for every disease. In the current scientific age, its chemical composition was analyzed by laboratory tests and experimentation. It was found to contain the following:-

1. Magnesium Sulphate: ejects body’s phlegm; cure for dehydration, nausea and headache.
2. Sodium Sulphate: cure for constipation, diabetes, diarrhea with blood, kidney stone and dehydration.
3. Calcium Carbonate: Aids digestion and treats kidney stone.
4. Sodium Chloride: Does inner purification, maintains body’s equilibrium, removes stomach ache, works as anti-poison and is known as the salt in food.
5. Potassium Nitrate: removes lethargy and cure for asthma.
6. Hydrogen Sulfide: cure for skin diseases, extreme flu, germs, cholera, digestion problems, memory loss, hemorrhoid etc.

After drinking zamzam heavily, we performed *sai* between Safa & Marwa mountains and after getting our heads shaved, we reached the instructor’s pavilion. We removed the *ihram* and wore normal clothes. Since there had been too much crowd of people around Kaaba, I had been extremely fortunate to have touched it and the black stone. In the pavilion, we discovered that our companion from Lahore, Muhammad Aslam had lost 85 pounds from his wallet due to theft and some other small losses occurred as well. It is said that most of the stealing is done by bad people from Yemen. May Allah keep us on the right path. We were all extremely saddened to know it. Indeed, this is the reason behind Muslims’ downfall.

After changing clothes, we had food in an Indian Muslim’s small restaurant in Muhalla Jiyad which was of our taste meaning salt and spices were taken care of. Whenever we had opportunity, we would go on car to *meqaat* which is 3 miles away from Makkah. It is also called *tan-ayeem*. With an intent for lesser

pilgrimage, we would come to Al Haram on wagon. This way, all of us had the privilege and honor of performing it repeatedly.

“PERFORMANCE OF OBLIGATORY PILGRIMAGE”

In the early morning of 19th April, 1964, we headed towards Mina on foot. Since there were too many cars on road, they were moving very slowly. The road was very spacious and there were modern buildings constructed alongside as well. Mina is 3 miles away from Makkah, situated in a mountainous area. It is a very small city. Wherever we looked around in the valley, tents were seen. They had flags of different colors on them which had names of concerned instructors. Far away from the heat, we found our instructor, Asad Nasir’s tent. These tents were affiliated to different plots. Between them, there were roads passing.

The pilgrims of Turkey, Egypt and Iran had their flags waving on their tents. Everywhere, there were taps and accesses of water. Shopkeepers had placed their stalls all around and many restaurants were there as well. A police station was seen too. There are two mosques in Mina; the bigger one is Khayf. After offering all 5 prayers in Mina, we stayed the night there. A dispensary formed by the government of Pakistan was there too which provided free medicine to pilgrims. Anjuman Khudaam-ud-deen’s dispensary was also there which granted cold water and medication for free.

In the morning of 20th April, 1964, we headed on bus to Arafat plain which is 4 miles away from Mina. It took us an hour to reach there. It is a vast plain of sand. In its vicinity, there is a mountain known as Jabal Rehmat where Prophet Adam and his wife met and they recognized each other. That is why it is known as Arafat which, in Arabic, means “to recognize”.

Nearby, there is Nimra Mosque where the lecture is given via loudspeakers. All around, you see a city of tents. Pilgrims were all gathered in this plain and within tents, they were passionately weeping and praying to Allah. Some others were praying while standing on Jabal Rehmat. Due to intense heat, there were many blisters on my shoulders and they pained me. After *zuhr* and *asar* Salat in Arafat, before sunset, we headed to Muzdalfa on foot. It was like an ominous sea of pilgrims moving towards Muzdalfa. We reached there at *isha* timings. Pilgrims offered both *maghrib* and *isha* combined at the mosque known as Mashar Al Haram.

Here as well, a small city got populated. Pilgrims spent the entire night in *zikr*. After morning prayers of Thursday, 21st April, 1964, we gathered many small pebbles for *rami* in fringes and headed to Mina. After crossing some distance, we reached a point where it was ordered to pass quickly. This is Muhassar valley where, on orders of Allah, *ababeel* birds had shot pebbles at the army of Yemen’s leader, Ibra and destroyed it.

On reaching Mina, we pelted Satan with pebbles. Then, I and Abdul Qayum went into the lap of a nearby mountain where sacrificial animals were being sold. We bought 3 goats for 120 riyal. When we were about to cut their throats, someone stopped us. He insisted on being given 5 riyal although we begged him not to do so. When he went away, we paid the butcher 3 riyal and went ahead with the sacrifice. That man came back running but the goats had been butchered. In this area, many goats and fat-tailed sheep had undergone the same fate. The pilgrims left the dead bodies there but, as per need, some would cut the meat and take it with them.

Abdul Qayum had also removed one thigh from a goat which was cooked in our tent and enjoyed by everyone. Afterwards, we got our heads shaved, took off *ihram* and wore normal clothes. Suddenly, the prices had gone very high in Mina; 1 bottle of water costed 1 riyal; tea without milk was 1 riyal per cup; the cost of 1 plate of meat cooked in lipid was extremely high as well. Similarly, the price of getting bald was 2 riyal.

Almost all pilgrims reached Mina from Arafat. There was so much crowd that the traffic order went mad. Taxi and bus drivers were pressing horn buttons at full blast. Non-Arab pilgrims were facing too much difficulty because the police couldn't understand their language. There was a big crowd of people eager to hit Satan with pebbles; after hitting, they would move backwards. Since it was too hard to go near the target, some people were throwing from a distance which would, instead, hit pilgrims.

In an excessive crowd of people, it was very tough to enter and hit pebbles; some unwise pilgrims opted for stones instead of small pebbles; some felt happy in aiming at the police guards nearby because they said that these were the real devils. One unique man even started hitting Satan with slippers but ran away on being struck with pebbles. From Makkah to Mina and Arafat, there are very spacious roads built. Thus, outside cities, we didn't face any traffic problem. Besides these roads, trees were planted as well. In Mina, except other things, prayer-beads, handkerchief, clothes, prayer-mats, carpets, rugs, dates and Japanese or European or Chinese toys were present in abundance.

On 23rd April's morning, we hit all 3 devils and mostly remained in the tent. Next day, after hitting all devils again, we reached Makkah on bus. In normal clothes, we did circumambulations around Kaaba. For some time, we roamed around in city and reached the pavilion. Makkah is an ancient city around which mountains reside. Besides old constructions, modern multi-story buildings are being built as well; there are houses built on mountains too; roads are wide; market is filled with all sorts of items; even in narrow streets, shops are opened which include things like radio, tape recorder and AC as well; zamzam water is

being sold in bottles of different sizes; some pilgrims were filling it in big canisters and sealing them. All around the city, water-taps were present where people were lined in rows waiting for their turns.

The location where Holy Prophet (SAW) was born has been converted into a *madressah*. Near Al Haram, there is an ancient graveyard known as *Jannat-ul-Mala* where many Prophet's companions and eminent imams are buried. Timings in Saudi Arabia are unique; the clock strikes 12 at both sunset and sunrise.

After breakfast on 25th April, 1964, I wore *ihram* and with intentions for lesser pilgrimage, went to *maqam tameem* on taxi. After performing 2 *rakat* Salat, I reached Al Haram on taxi. After circumambulations, I did *sai*, got my head shaved and removed *ihram* in the pavilion. Most of my and Abdul Qayum's time was spent in Al Haram. At night, we would lie down on the 2nd floor and would fall asleep while in *zikr*. From there, Kaaba would present a special scene. The moth around Tauheed (oneness of Allah)'s flame would move in circles fanatically expressing their devotion and conviction. They were seen and heard with loud and moving chants of *Labaik*. Zamzam well also attracted too many people but after waiting, they did get water. For blessings, some would get themselves wet with it; others would get their bottles or containers filled with it. Arab boys would sell it while shouting at the top of their voices. Two small bottles of it were sold for 1 riyal. As soon as pilgrims would start leaving, the hype of things would also fade away.

“ABOUT OTHER COMPANIONS IN THE JOURNEY”

After few days had passed, I was informed through Muhammad Yunus’s letter that Ghulam Rasool and his travel companion had reached Sialkot, safe and sound. The companion of Fazal Daad and Mehboob, who had travelled from Baghdad to Makkah/Madinah on bus, had also reached his village with ease. I was told this by Fazal Daad when he reached my village. Tordhayr village (Swabi district)’s Sahibzada Zahoor Baacha and Attock district’s Muhammad Iqbal Khan (resident of Ghaurghashti) both of whom had travelled on car from Bradford for pilgrimage had reached their homes comfortably as well. I met Zahoor in Madinah where he told me that his car, tied with a truck, had been dragged and dragged in the desert on its way to Tabook; thus, it was damaged a lot. The truck driver had received money for it as well.

After few days, I went to Lahore due to some engagements and met Muhammad Yunus in his factory where tents were prepared. After that, since I never went to UK, I never had any contact with anyone. I sent few letters to Abdul Qayum, resident of Hadali in Sargodha but never received a reply. So I sent 1 more letter and especially mentioned on its envelope that I needed information on his whereabouts as soon as possible. On this, I received a letter from his brother giving the tragic news that although Abdul had reached home safely, he had turned ill for few days and, eventually, met his Creator.

Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un ('Indeed we only belong to God and to Him, shall we return') – Quran (2:156)

May Allah forgive him – what a man he was.

“You are granted opportunity for vice or virtue in this world
Whatever you must do, do it now
In the next realm, this festival won’t ever be held” - Hazrat Abdur Rahman
Baba (RHT)

Wa’Salaam

Sikandar Khan

Vesa Village, Chach Valley, Attock District, Pakistan

30th June, 1964