

IN MEMORIAM

Nazmul Hussain (1927-2008)

Shortly before I started to write this piece on my father, I read an article in the *Gulf News* that caught my eye. It talked about how the older generation prefer to give their heirs their outlook on life rather than money. It reminded me of my father and how his outlook on life has been an influencing factor in my life, not just when he was alive, but even now that he has passed on.

Born into a respected family in Jorhat, Assam, India on 27 March 1927, Barrister Nazmul Hussain spent more than fifty years of his life in England before passing away peacefully on 11 April 2008 at Whipps Cross Hospital in London. He was laid to rest at the Garden of Peace Cemetery in Hainault the following afternoon. He was a man of real character with a dry, witty sense of humour. He was entertaining, lovable and very hardworking. He had uncompromising principles, was honest and possessed a great deal of integrity. Moreover, he was a kind and genuine person that cared for people and would go to the ends of the earth to help anybody and everybody.

Abbu (Dad) left Assam to pursue his higher education in the UK in 1954. He had already decided that he was going to leave India. The question was what was he going to study? He had two options in his mind; law or journalism. He decided on law and embarked on this trip which would change his life for ever. A year later he returned to India and married my mother, and they came back to the UK together. When my parents finally arrived in London, they had one suitcase and that was pretty much it. How different it was for me when I arrived in Dubai in 2005 with almost an entire household!

In 1963 he passed his exams and was called to the Bar, which was also the same year that I was born. Four years later, my sister Sameena came into this world. I believe that he had wanted to go back to Assam, but my sister, who had severe learning difficulties, required appropriate medical treatment and training which would not have been possible back home. Hence the decision to stay back in the UK was taken. I should state at this point, that the level of support that my mother received from him as a husband was remarkable. Despite the fact that my sister had many health-related problems, my parents were a team and very committed to her. Neither of them ever complained of the enormous task and responsibilities they had in order to ensure that she was well looked after. My sister's presence in the house brought about an element of peace to the household. In fact shortly before Abbu passed away, he told both my mother and myself that the departure of my sister had led to the erosion of the family unit.

Even though it was decided that the way forward was in the UK, Abbu kept a close watch on the goings-on in Assam. I am so proud of the fact that even in his 70s and 80s, he took the time to learn how to use the Internet so that he could email his friends back home and read the Indian newspapers. I know for a fact that he wanted to visit Assam again before he passed away. He mentioned this to me in January 2008

and said that he was hoping that both my parents would travel to India via Makkah in March or April 2008. Unfortunately, it was not meant to be.

My father had a wonderful life and I am truly honoured to be his daughter. It is more so now, after his departure, that I realise what a truly amazing person he was and what he meant to all those that knew him. His friend circle spanned the earth from the UK to the Asian subcontinent, North America and Canada, the Middle East and, through me, Australia.

When I look back on his life, what do I remember about him? As a child I was scared of him, as a teenager I argued with him, and as an adult I respected and loved him and discussed everything under the sun with him, so I communicated with him on one level or another. Many a Sunday afternoon as a child was spent at Hainault Forest playing football, whilst Sameena and Mummy would watch from afar and some afternoons and evenings were spent with Abbu teaching me how to draw patterns using this tool 'Spirograph'.

Abbu was not a strict father, but discipline was something that reigned in our household. He was a strong believer in 'doing the right thing', which included 'eating at the right time' and 'going to bed at the right time' and 'treating people with respect when we had visitors at home'. Our house was an 'open house', visitors walking in and out whatever their creed, religion or status in life. He never said no to anyone and would go to all lengths to help people.

He was not a traditionalist by any means. He was adventurous beyond imagination and encouraged me to be the same. The fact that I was a girl didn't matter. Being a woman wasn't a problem in his eyes and I firmly believe that he treated me the way he would have treated a son, if he had ever had one. He never felt disadvantaged by the fact that he had no son and believed in my capabilities as a woman. In fact he treated me as though I was a son, and any family-related decisions were made jointly by the three of us and not just by my parents.

Our sense of adventure was the same. I remember how envious he was when I came back from an unbelievable trip to Hunza and Gilgit in Pakistan, one that I took alone. He had always wanted to travel along the Karakoram Highway but alas he never managed to do it, despite taking several trips to Pakistan. We both loved travelling and it was something that he exposed me to from a very young age. By the age of 10, the three of us had already travelled around Europe. His attitude was that God had made this earth for us to see, and it was all well and good to go back home every year to Assam to visit the relatives, but there was much more in this world to see. He said that there is nothing that can take the place of what you learn when you travel and meet people of different cultures and races. He and my mother established a solid foundation for me, by providing me with a good education to avail the job opportunities that enabled me to travel and be by myself. Another one of his principles was that when I travelled, I was not to go and 'plant' myself at somebody's house because it was free lodgings. He insisted on my staying in hotels and travelling independently. It has been one of the best nuggets of advice that Abbu has given me because it helped me learn to be myself. Both my parents instilled the essence of humility in me as they are both humble by nature. Despite this simple attitude that was drilled into my head, Abbu also introduced me to the finer things in life and most important of all, the love of food.

We were a real 'foodie' family and found any occasion to celebrate. Whenever I was at home, our Sunday lunch would be roast chicken that Abbu would prepare in the rotisserie oven. It's something that reminds me of home and is symbolic of the family unit that we were. The last time we had a roast dinner as a family was on Christmas day in 2007, because when I returned to London in January, my sister had passed away and we were no longer a family of four. Most special occasions were marked with special meals of pulao or biryani and prepared either by myself or Mummy. Abbu's speciality was his 'bhuna lamb' which he would make whenever we had guests. He would proudly say that he learnt his cooking when he was a cub scout. I learnt to cook at a very young age and would ask him for marks out of ten on any meals that I would conjure up. Not only did he encourage me with my cooking, but also in my career.

I remember the card that he had sent me on my 21st birthday. It said that I should follow my dreams and that is precisely what I have done. Abbu would follow my career with great fervour. If ever he found information that he thought I would be interested in, he would cut them out of the newspaper and save them for me. I miss the fact that I can no longer discuss issues with him and ask his advice on professional matters. He was a great listener and provided solid, wise advice. Whether I chose to take his advice was another matter.

He always admired the fact that he had brought me up to be independent and just wanted me to be happy. I know for a fact that he faced criticism from outsiders for having allowed me to live on my own, but he was not one for listening to others. He had a stubborn streak in him which is something that I too possess. He taught me the difference between 'right' and 'wrong' primarily influenced by his religious beliefs. He was not a fundamentalist by any means, despite the fact that he associated with many conservative people. On the contrary, his views were rather radical for which I am truly appreciative. In any discussions that touched on religion, he would not impose his views but would listen and occasionally, if appropriate, would air his own opinions. He was extremely spiritual and when I asked him a day before he passed away, if he was scared of leaving this world, his reply was 'No' as he believed that he had not knowingly done any harm to anyone. To this day I believe that very few people realised how religious he was as he never showed it outwardly. He was first and foremost true to himself and the family.

Abbu's motto in life was that if he could help somebody, then he would do so; if he couldn't help them, then he would do the most to ensure that he did no harm to them either. His advice to us during the last few days of his life was to appreciate those people who had helped us, us meaning my mother and myself, and to be grateful for the help that they had given us. He mentioned these people by name and stated that they had been tremendously supportive during a very difficult time. They stood by us not only when my sister passed away on New Year's Day, but also when Abbu left us. They know who they are, as Abbu spoke to them individually before he departed. They have become an integral part of what is left of my family and I would like them to know how appreciative both my mother and I are for all the help and love they have given us. At the end of the day, my father and my sister cannot come back to us. We miss them terribly, but the pain of their loss has been eased by the support we have received.

In honour of my father, I will be compiling his biography. Abbu was a people's person. He thrived on being with people and helping them. Even on his last day, he

asked us to allow visitors in, despite the hospital staff telling us he needed rest. Hence I will include not only chronological events of his life, but would also like to include input from his friends and family on how their lives were influenced and shaped by him. If you believe that you have something that would contribute to this book, please do not hesitate to send your input to my email address: naziahussain@yahoo.com

Nazia Hussain

(Barrister Nazmul Hussain was a trustee of the Islamic Academy from 1983, when the Academy was established, until his death in 2008. His contribution to the Academy lives on after him. He was a great source of help and comfort to me at times of need. I will remember with affection how he used to advise and support me. I keenly feel the loss of his friendship. May his soul rest in peace. We are most grateful to his daughter Nazia for writing this article in memory of her father.—Editor)

Ghulam Nabi Saqeb (1929-2008):

The Muslim world has lost one of the well-known Muslim educationists, Professor Ghulam Nabi Saqeb, who was one of the members of the First World Conference on Muslim Education, held in Makkah al-Mukarramah in 1977. The Islamic Academy, Cambridge has also been deprived of the invaluable advice of one of its reputed advisors on Muslim education. Professor Saqeb passed away in Hammersmith Hospital, London on 19 May 2008, at the age of 79 years. He had been suffering from liver cancer. His *Namāz-e-Janāzah* was held at Regent's Park Central London Mosque & Islamic Cultural Centre, London and he was buried at Carpendar's Park Cemetery, Watford. A few months before his death, Professor Saqeb had joined the National University of Modern Languages, Pakistan as Head of the Department of Education.

Professor Saqeb was one of the members of the Muslim education movement which was founded by Professor Dr. Syed Ali Ashraf, the then Professor and Head of the Department of English, King Abdulaziz University, in Saudi Arabia in 1975 when the Saudi government decided to hold an international conference, the First World Conference on Muslim Education. Having education and training in the discipline of education, both from Pakistan and the United Kingdom, Professor Saqeb was appointed as the Assistant Secretary of the Organizing Committee of this historic World Conference on Muslim Education.

He continued to work as the Assistant Secretary of the Follow-up Committee of the Conference which was established to implement the recommendations of the 1977 Conference. The Follow-up Committee organized six subsequent World Conferences on Muslim Education, which were held at different capitals of Muslim countries: the Second World Conference on Muslim Education at Islamabad in 1980, the third at Dhaka in 1981, the fourth at Jakarta in 1983, the fifth at Cairo in 1985 and the sixth at Cape Town in 1996.

Dr. Saqeb was Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education, King Abdulaziz University since 1974. In 1984, Professor Saqeb joined the Muslim World League (Rābiṭah al-ʿĀlam al-Islāmī), Makkah, which seconded him to his Alma Mater, the University of London, Institute of Education to help Muslim

students from within the UK, and from Arab and Islamic countries, to obtain their higher degrees in Education from the University of London. There, Professor Saqeb set up the Centre for the Study of Problems of Education in Muslim countries, and to train Muslim educators.

Commenting on Professor Saqeb, Dr. Abdullah Omar Nasseef, former President of the King Abdulaziz University and former Secretary General of the Muslim World League, said, 'I feel sorry that his death has come. I appreciate his contribution to the field of Islamic education, and his work at King Abdulaziz University for many, many years and his cooperation in the Islamic education movement which Professor Dr. Syed Ali Ashraf led. Allah the Almighty will reward him and give him Paradise, Inshā' Allāh.'

While at the University of London, Professor Saqeb prepared a 'Course Book on Islamic Education in Muslim Countries' for External Studies. Professor Saqeb taught History and Philosophy of Islamic Education, Comparative Education within the Islamic Perspective, and Problems of Education in Muslim Countries at the Institute of Education. He supervised two PhD theses at the University of London during 1982-1987.

Professor Saqeb also helped Muslim organizations in the UK to promote Islamic education of British Muslim children in county schools, and to establish Muslim schools. From 1992-1994, he worked with Iqra Trust, London to help assess the textbooks used in British schools, colleges and universities, and remove their factual errors relating to Islam.

From 1994-1996, Professor Saqeb was a consultant to Yusuf Islam, formerly Cat Stevens, helping in his Islamic Schools Trust. It was a struggle at that time to obtain government funding for Muslim schools, just as it was for schools of other religious minorities, such as the Catholic and Jewish schools. He advised Muslim organizations in the country in their negotiations with the local education authorities (LEAs) and the Department of Education and Science.

Professor Saqeb then took part in nationwide negotiations and consultations that led to the enactment of the famous 1988 Education Reform Act that produced the National Curriculum and paved the way for the teaching of Islam as one of the five major faiths practised in England and Wales.

Professor Saqeb was selected as the Muslim member of the Central Westminster Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) to advise local education authorities to decide on exemption from compulsory teaching of Christianity as required under the 1988 Reform Act and to draw up agreed syllabuses on Islam.

Later, he organized two seminars, one in London and another in Cape Town, aimed at the rewriting of authentic textbooks on Islam in English for use in English-speaking countries. At the Cape Town Seminar, a six-year plan for the production of new textbooks was approved but, unfortunately, it could not take off the ground for want of the required funding.

In 1997, Professor Saqeb was offered a position in the Faculty of Education at the International Islamic University at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It may be remembered that as a result of the recommendations of the 1977 Makkah conference, four international Islamic universities were set up in 1983 at the following places: (1) Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; (2) Islamabad, Pakistan; (3) Kampala, Uganda and (4) Niamey,

Niger. However, the Universities of Kuala Lumpur and Islamabad are the only ones that have been functioning successfully, while the one in Kampala has just recently come out of its financial difficulties and has started working, and the one at Niamey has had to close. The International Islamic University of Malaysia is, in fact, a unique Muslim University where traditional Islamic education and modern sciences (or the Revealed and the Acquired Branches of Knowledge) are being successfully integrated.

Speaking about Dr. Saqeb, Dr. Syed Aziz Pasha, General Secretary of the Union of Muslim Organisations of UK & Eire, told me, 'Dr. Saqeb was teaching in colleges and universities, and we came in contact with him and then formed our National Muslim Education Council (NMEC) in UK in 1979. Dr. Saqeb was one of the Governors of the UMO's National Muslim Education Council (NMEC). Our eventual and ultimate goal was the Islamization of education, and the establishment of an Islamic university could be achieved with his background and with his knowledge of the functioning of the International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.'

'As a scholar, as a person, as a co-member of the Board of Governors in all areas that I knew him, I think he was a very impressive man. We also participated in some seminars at the Islamic Academy, Cambridge. It's a pity that we lost him. Allah bless his soul,' said Dr. Pasha.

Professor Saqeb was deeply concerned about the problems created by the decline of traditional Islamic education, and about the educational dualism that emerged in Muslim countries, particularly in Pakistan, as a result of the introduction of modern western education there. His MPhil thesis was entitled, 'The Impact of the Creation of Pakistan on Muslim Education in Pakistan,' and his PhD thesis was on the 'Modernization of Muslim Education in Egypt, Pakistan and Turkey since their Independence from the Colonial Rule'. The latter has been published and is being used widely in Muslim countries, especially in Malaysia.

Professor Saqeb was appointed as chief external examiner for Masters and PhD students in various universities in the UK such as London, Oxford, Durham, Glasgow, Hull, and Manchester, and in Pakistan, at the Universities of Karachi, the Hamdard University and the Aga Khan University.

Professor Saqeb published several books, the most well-known being *Modernization of Muslim Education in Egypt, Pakistan and Turkey*. He attended some 50 international conferences on Muslim education and on comparative and international education, and presented papers on various topics. He published some 40 articles in renowned journals.

In 2007, he moved from Dallas to Pakistan to join the esteemed National University of Modern Languages as Head of the Department of Education. He was keen to learn much from his countrymen and women, seniors, colleagues, students and others, and to serve his beloved homeland, Pakistan.

Born into a respectable family of Gujranwala (British India), now Pakistan, on 17 May, 1929, Saqeb obtained his BA, BEd and MA degrees from the University of the Punjab, Lahore. After two years of experience in teaching, he travelled to England to join the University of London Institute of Education from where he obtained the Advanced Diploma in Education in 1962, MPhil in Education in 1965 and PhD in Education in 1973.

Prof. Saqeb leaves behind his wife, Rehana Nasreen Saqeb, and two daughters, Shahnaz and Iram, an accountant in London, and four sons: Zaheer, who has his own accountancy practice in Manchester; Nauman, director of a telecommunications company in London; Rehan, who works in a property firm in London, and Salman, a sales executive for a media corporation in the USA.

Mozammel Haque

(Professor Saqeb was the Associate Editor of this journal. Despite his busy teaching and research commitments, he used to contact authors, collect articles and edit them before handing them to me. We started to edit jointly a book on Islamic education, but sadly, the project was never completed as a result of his death. I have benefited enormously from his invaluable advice on various educational matters and activities of the Islamic Academy. I have lost a great friend and a sincere supporter. May Allah grant him peace in *Jannah*.—Editor)