

## My memories of Lyallpur



**Jatinder Sethi**

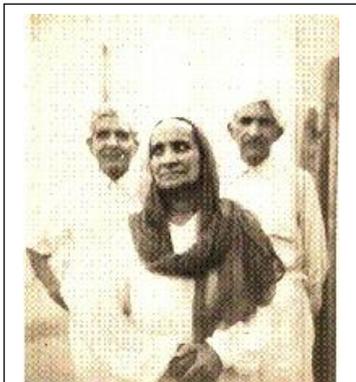
Jatinder was born in Lyallpur, now Faislabad, in pre-Independence India. He finished his M.A. (English) from Delhi University in 1956, and went off to London to study Advertising in 1958. He passed his Membership Exam of The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (M.I.P.A) in 1965, and joined Rallis India in Bombay. Later, for over 20 years, he worked for the advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather. Now retired, he helps his son in his ad agency in Delhi.

*Editor's note: Another version of this article first appeared as TRIGGERS THAT SUDDENLY AWAKEN THE OLD, LONG FORGOTTEN, MEMORIES, which is available at <http://apnaorg.com/articles/jatinder-sethi/>*

### Move to Lyallpur

My father, Chaudhury Jai Ram Das Sethi, was the second of three brothers who were all born in Jhang, Pakistan. All the three brothers were practicing lawyers. My father was the only one to move out to Lyallpur (now Faislabad). It must be around 1909 when he moved to Lyallpur after his wedding. The oldest brother, Tayaji, Chaudhury Jinda Ram, and the youngest, Chaudhury Jagjiwan Ram, continued to live and practice at Jhang. These brothers also managed the huge agriculture land – almost 500 acres – that my family owned.

The Sethis were quite well-known in Jhang, especially, Tayaji's son, Harish Sethi and his wife (my Bhabi). Harish *bhaji* (we called our older brothers and cousins as *bhaji*) was a very successful lawyer in Jhang. His wife, a tall lady in her salwar kameez was the most modern woman in town. She had her own Tonga with a handsome horse, which she used to ride herself in the whole of Jhang. After Partition, they moved to Hissar.



*Centre, my mother (Biji);  
behind, my father (Pitaji),  
and his brother.*

His younger brother, Professor Vidya Sagar Sethi, was a Professor of Physics in Government College, Lyallpur. He was a frequent visitor to our house as he lived nearby. After Partition, he worked at the Government College, Ludhiana.

I think my mother (Biji) and father (Pitaji) were the favourites of all their relations. May be it had something to do with them being “Mod” and living in the new modern town of Lyallpur? Biji was also a good host.

### Lyallpur

My siblings and I – eight children – were all born before 1931 in Lyallpur. With not a whiff of family planning in those days, my parents produced eight children with almost an exact gap of two years between each child! And they sent each one – girls and boys – to study in school

and college.

That was the unique thing about Lyallpur. Most of the settlers to this new township came from other older places like Jhang (my father's place), Sargodha (my mother's place) Multan, Shikarpur, etc., and were all educated, liberal, modern people. Like the new City of Lyallpur, which at that time was considered the

most modern and planned township. And truly it was. I have no qualms in acknowledging the positive influence of British.

It is well documented that the architectural plan of the Lyallpur city and its famous eight bazaars was a replica of the Union Jack, as a tribute to the Queen of England. A rectangle containing a Cross and two Diagonals. All the eight bazaars started from the Ghanta Ghar (clock tower), which was the focal point of the town. Four of the eight bazaars were perpendicular, and you could see the full face of the Ghanta Ghar. The other four bazaars were diagonal to the Ghanta Ghar; from these bazaars, you could only see the diagonal face of the tower. In fact, you could tell which bazaar you were in by looking at the angle of the tower. All the eight bazaars were inter-connected with the Gole Bazaar.

The names of the bazaars indicated the direction they led to. Katchery Bazaar led you to the courts. Jhang, Chiniot and Montgomery Bazaars led you to those destinations. Karkhana (workshop) Bazaar took you to all the factory areas. To go to the railway station, you had to take Rail Bazaar.

I am not quite certain where Aminpur and Bhawana Bazaars led to.

Aminpur Bazaar was the place where most of the stationary and bookshops were located. I remember we used to rush to sell our class books after the exam results were declared, and buy books of the new class. We were not allowed to buy new books, if there were good second-hand books available, which normally they were. Money was scarce then (it always has been). Moreover, these second-hand books had notes jotted down by the earlier owners, which were quite helpful. We used to sell our old books at the same time.

We always went to the same shop. It used to be on the corner of a lane, the right hand side of the road from Ghanta Ghar. I think it used to be the biggest bookshop on that road. Being a small town, the owners knew most of the regular children and their parents. More like family friends. Miss that personal touch now!

Bhawana bazaar was full of shops selling *baans* (बांस, bamboo) and other such material. If I remember correctly, it also led to the festival grounds where the annual Dassera festival used to take place. The annual Mandi Fair – farmers bringing cows, buffaloes, calves, wheat, etc. for sale – also took place here. It used to be a very popular affair.

The Primary Arya School was also located around there. Was it Douglaspura? I think so. Because that's where we used to go after having finished *Kutchi* (lower) class nursery school, and before going to the High School at *Mai-Di-Jhuggi*. All the Arya Samaj – my parents were Arya Samajis – annual functions also used to take place in this school building.

The other school was M.B. School, where the children of non-Arya Samaji families went. One of my childhood friends from that school Ravi belonged to the first batch of Cadets from the Dehradun Academy to join the Indian Navy of independent India. He retired as a Vice-Admiral. His father was also a lawyer, and lived in the first big house in the left side lane after Gole Bazaar, towards the courts. He was a tall man, and always wore a *pagri* and smoked a hookah.

Now, come to think of it, most of my father's friends had same age children as us. May be they all came to settle in Lyallpur at the same time, immediately after their marriage. Another friend was Dharam Malik. His family owned a cloth shop in Katchery Bazaar, near the Upkari Cycle shop. He became an architect, did his Landscape architecture from Harvard, and settled down in Toronto. Was Lyallpur the Eldorado of that time?

### **My family**

I was the youngest of eight siblings – six brothers and two sisters. All born in Lyallpur. All studied in Arya School – both boys and girls. My oldest brother, now ninety-six years old, graduated from



*My mother (Biji) and my father (Pitaji), with their children. 1934.*



*Front: Jatinder (6 years old) holding first child, Shashi, of his older sister, Prem Behniji (back left). Others at back: my mother, my sister Santosh, and my younger brother, Satinder.*

Government College, Lyallpur. Now, after his retirement, he looks after our agriculture land near Sonapat, (Haryana), which we got in lieu of the land my father lost in Pakistan.

My elder sister, the second child in the family, who passed away last year at the age of ninety-four, was also a student of Government College Lyallpur. Imagine, a girl, in a co-educational college, sometime in the 1930s! She passed her FA before getting married, and going off to Sargodha.

I think I was just about four when my sister got married. But I vividly remember waiting for her *baraat* (marriage party) at the Gumati Fountain, at the end of Rail Bazaar, from where the *Janji* (groom's party) were to turn back into Rail Bazaar, and go to *Janj Ghar* (banquet hall,) where they were put up for the night. The Brass Band Bajas were there even then. They played film songs sung by Yamla Jatt, and about the Jagga dacoit of Lyallpur *Jagga Jamya Lyalpur unthe*. Jagga was a dreaded dacoit, who was born in Lyallpur, and was featured in a number of hit songs on those days.

My Nath bhaji, third oldest, also graduated (around 1939) from Government College, Lyallpur. Since he was unable to find any job in Lyallpur, he went off to J J School of Arts, Bombay, to do a five-year course in Fine Arts. He used to have an Agfa Box Camera and did wonders with that. I still have a few pictures of the 1930s; the youngest kid in them is me. Later on, he started his own Art Studio in Connaught Place, New Delhi, which was his office-cum residence. (This became our first refuge for some time after partition, before moving on to

Lake Square, Patel Nagar and finally to Nizamuddin.) He was a pretty tall and handsome young man. Whenever he came to Lyallpur from Bombay during vacations, he always slept on the large white marble slab (I forget the Punjabi name for it) we had on the big terrace of second floor under the open sky.

Except for my eldest brother and eldest sister, who were married in Lyallpur and had arranged marriages, the rest of us eventually all had love marriages, with the blessings of our great mother. May be it (the love affairs) had to do something with our ancestral DNA connection with Heer, of Heer-Ranjha fame. Heer belonged to Jhang, and she, according to the fable, is supposed to have just disappeared into the land, while running away. Her *Kuber* (grave) is built on that spot. My father showed it to me, since it was on our land at Jhang. Whether the romance by Waris Shah is a fiction or not, they have now built a big mausoleum on her grave. One had to ride on horseback, from the bus stop at the roadside much before Meghiana, the city of Jhang, to go to our land. My father had once taken me with him when I was just a kid. And I never forgot the top-open grave of Heer.

Prem bhaji, the fourth oldest, never married. He did his MSc from the Agriculture College, Lyallpur, and joined the irrigation department near Lyallpur. He was, right from early days, more spiritually inclined than any of us.

During the annual functions of Arya Samaj, a line of Tongas, carrying various participating swamis used to go round the Lyallpur city, singing bhajans, playing harmonium, promoting the function. No Hindu-Muslim problem at that time!

One of the swamis, Swami Satya Nand ji Maharaj, had a big influence on Prem bhaji, who became Swamiji's *chela* (disciple). After Partition, Swamiji turned away from Arya Samaj, became a Ram Bhagat, and started Shri Ram Shernam in Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi. Prem bhaji, who was then working in the Central Water Power Commission, continued to be tied-up with Swamiji, who became very close to my parents and family. Many years later, when Swamiji passed away, Prem bhaji became the Maharaj of Shri Ram Shernam.

It was Prem bhaji who taught us swimming in the Chenab Canal, which ran near Lyallpur. My father, who was a very keen swimmer, also helped, if Prem bhaji was not there. To jump in the gushing waters of the canal from top of the lock *bund* was sheer joy.

Another thing Prem bhaji taught us was yoga. A well-known Bhappaji, who lived in one of the inside streets of Katchery Bazaar, used to conduct daily yoga exercises for large number of his followers. This was a huge, green lawn, bigger than a hockey field, with a well, past the Company Bagh, and near the Jail, I think. I think it belonged to Bhai Bal Mukandji, who was a very well-known person. Every morning all of us used to go and do all the *asanas*, right from Mauyar *asan* to Sarwang *asan*. Then we used to have a bath with the well water – even in winter. This place was about a mile or so away from our house, and I used to go on a cycle with Prem bhaji every morning, before going to school.

Ved, called VEDI by my mother, was the next one to graduate from Government College, Lyallpur. He found a job with Karam Chand Thapar, in Delhi, after partition. Later on, he went on to work for UNO and retired from there. Now he also lives in Delhi. All his children and grandchildren live abroad.

That leaves the younger three of us. While I was in school, my brother Satinder, finished his FSc from Government College, Lyallpur, and managed to get admission (with full scholarship) in the prestigious Maclagan Engineering College, Mughalpura, near Lahore. He was the youngest boy to ever get into that college.

One can gauge the kind of respect that college commanded from an incident he narrated to us. Once while traveling back to Lyallpur from Lahore for holidays, all the co-passengers in the rail compartment stood up to pay their respect, when they came to know that he is a student of Maclagan!

He had to leave that institution after the Partition. Luckily, later on he got into Roorkee, and went on to the Imperial College of Engineering, London. He retired from the Central Water Power Commission, and lives in Patpatganj, Delhi.

My other sister and I had luckily left Lyallpur before the serious riots started and tried to continue our studies. My sister, after doing social service at Kurukeshtra (started by Lady Mountbatten), got into Delhi University. She completed her MA in Social Sciences, and married a colleague from London School of Economics. Unfortunately, her husband, Sikander, a brilliant man, died young while he was the Director of Coromandel Fertilizers, Hyderabad. She brought up her three daughters all by herself, while teaching in a school in Delhi.

I finished my studies from Delhi University, and then wasted a little time, without a meaningful job. Like T S Eliot, part of my life was spent over cups of coffee in the India Coffee House, Jan Path, during the 1950s. While doing my MA from Delhi University, I met a contemporary in the University Coffee House; she was doing her MA from Indraprastha College. We got married, and went off to London for further studies and work. She was a regular visitor to my mother before our wedding.

## Our home and family life in Lyallpur

Our house was located in the Gole Bazaar between Katchery and Chiniot Bazaar. The first building on the left side as you entered the Gole Bazaar was the Meat Market run by the butchers, most of them known as *Kanjars*, who also ran the red-light area. Our house was the fourth house on the left side while going towards Chiniot Bazaar.

You had to climb three steep steps to enter the house, a two-story building. The house had a veranda that was about 20 feet long. The veranda had three doors. The door on the extreme left side opened into a drawing room, (the main entrance was from inside the hall) meant only for the family and friends. The other two doors opened up the big long room, which was my father's office. It was stacked with law books and "briefs" in big khaki envelopes printed with his name: Chaudhury Jai Ram Das Sethi, B.A. LL.B. Pleader!

Besides a big table and chairs, for clients, it had a low divan on the extreme left corner for the *munshi* (scribe) to sit and write all the briefs. All court work was done in Urdu. There was also a room with a hand-pulled *pankha* (fan) on the ceiling, for which there was a special man to pull the cord.

My father always came home for lunch from the courts, as they were hardly ten minutes away. He would have his lunch meal in the veranda, where a table and two chairs were laid before his arrival. My mother would make fresh hot fluffy *phulkas* with lot of homemade butter melting on top of it. I vividly remember that, as a small kid and the youngest in the family, I always had bites of hot *phulka* soaked with butter, while my father enjoyed *Gobi-ki-bhaji* (cauliflower) with butter. Was always with butter. I picked up this indulgence as a small kid while looking at my father enjoying Gobi vegetable with butter. Some childhood habits, even silly, ones live with you forever. The family was vegetarian. Even onions were not allowed in the house.

In the evening, a table, few chairs and a *charpoy* (cot) was placed on the roadside, after the *mashqui* (person with a *mashaq* – a leather container for water) had watered the ground to cool the ground. This was the time for meeting the friends for a chat.

Unlike most of his friends, Pitaji never smoked a hookah or cigarette. He was a very gentle soul, modern, liberal, well read, and not all concerned with money. Frankly, I don't know how Biji, my mother ever ran the house. I had never ever seen my father asking money from his clients. Yet, he used to pack his hold-all, and go off to Kashmir every year when the courts closed for two months for summer. May be it was the job of the *munshi* to collect the fees.

My father was a civil (not criminal) lawyer. The civil cases of his upcountry, village clients went on and on. In the meanwhile, the clients stayed on in our house for weeks. Luckily, my mother didn't have to cook to feed them; their food used to come from the tandoor run by a big woman, just three buildings away from our house. At night, these clients slept on cots, which we had kept for this purpose. In winter, they slept in the veranda.

Most of the residential houses on both side of the bazaar extended right up to the back lane. For instance, our house extended right up to the back lane, running parallel to the Gole Bazaar, next to the Jama Masjid. The main door was carved, and had two knockers. It opened to a small alcove.

On the left hand side, there was a staircase that took you to the first floor, which had a huge open L-shaped terrace, and two large rooms overlooking the bazaar. It also had a *tatti* (toilet) which was cleaned every day by a woman known as *jamadarni* or *bhangan*.

In those days, homes did not have WCs and flush system for bathrooms. In fact, nobody had even a washbasin for washing hands.

At the back of the terrace, there was another staircase, which led you the second floor, where Nath bhaji used to sleep in summer. Another staircase went down to the veranda on the Gole Bazaar side.

After entering the house from the main gate on the *galli*-side, the left side took you to the main living quarters. There was huge open courtyard, with a big long marble platform along the wall facing the Jama Masjid lane. On the extreme left corner, there was a tandoor for making tandoori-rotis. On the right hand corner of the slab was a *Hamam* (with a bucket underneath) for washing hands with Lifebuoy soap.

Next to the tandoor, there was a large arch type opening, without any gate, that took you down two steps to a very big barn, which held our three buffalos, and a cow with a newly born calf. Here was another room inside the barn for keeping hay, oil-seeds, etc. for feeding the animals. A Gujjar would come every morning to milk the cow and the buffalos. Buckets full of milk every morning!

As a kid, I sometimes used to milk the cow myself, after the back legs were tied by the Gujjar, and at the same time drink the milk directly from the full udders. Satinder or I used to prepare feed and feed the cattle, if there was no servant, which was the case quite often!

The barn had a separate entrance from the *galli*, where the cattle were tied during the day, close to the main door to the house.

Beside two big bedrooms, there was a small room next to the courtyard. This was like a bank vault. All the winter stuff, like quilts, blankets, woollen clothes and *kangris* (firepots used to keep warm) were kept there. Perhaps some valuable also as it was always kept locked.

## **Biji**

On the left hand side of the courtyard, when you entered the house, there was a long, but not very wide, bathroom. Next to it was my mother's kitchen, about 15 feet by 15 feet. There was no door to it. The double *chulha* (cookstove) was very common in those days – there were no electric or gas cooking ranges. The fuel was dried-up cow dung and wood, which was plentiful.

Churning the butter and making lassi was daily morning affair, as we had plenty of milk. My mother had a big *Medhani* just outside the kitchen for this purpose.

After finishing her early bath, my mother would read her *Gutka* (small book) of Japji Sahib, before doing all the other work. After taking the butter and lassi out, what was left in the cloth strainer was called *poen*, which made a very tasty dish.

On school days, Biji would make salted *parathas*, with lot of white butter, and a big steel glass full of thick lassi (what was then known as *Adherica* or *Matha*) for us. We always had all our meals in the kitchen. There were no tables and chairs, but only small low *chowkis* (stools), on which we sat. Biji kept making chapattis, and serving each one of us with *garma-garam* (piping hot) *phulkas*. In winter, it used to be tandoori parantha instead phulkas. I don't think our family as a whole ever sat together for meals or chitchat. Maybe I don't remember, being a kid. My elder sister with her two children would often come from Sargodha, and would help Biji.

Biji, used to do all the housework herself, as there were no help, least not in our house. She used to wash the family clothes also. I think, by the time I became aware of things, I noticed that her fingers had almost doubled-up because of arthritis. Obviously, she had been working for almost 15 or more years, giving birth to eight children, bringing them up, sewing and knitting their clothes, cooking food, doing all other house work.

Yet, she never ever said a word of complaint. She still had a lot of time to keep my head in her lap and stroke my hair with love. She was a great favourite of her sister's children. She was a very liberal big-hearted lady.

“This lady who gave birth to a son like Premji Maharaj,” so said Swami Satya Nand Ji. Just as I was the youngest and *ladla* (darling) of my family, my mother was similarly the youngest of her family. We were six brothers and two sisters; my mother was the youngest of eight siblings – six sisters and two brothers. Her father was a Civil Surgeon, a prestigious occupation. Her older brother, who arranged her match with

my father, was a well-known High Court criminal lawyer. It was said in Punjab that if you have murdered someone, just manage to reach Ahuja Sahib's *kothi* (her father's house) in Sargodha, and you will be saved.

I remember her father's house was very big bungalow with almost 20 rooms, and lawns as big as the football ground, with three convertible cars in the porch. He was a very close friend of the famous Sir Sikander Heyat Khan and Sir Firoze Khan Noon. I was hardly in 4th class when he passed away.

Biji's other brother became the Indian Trade Commissioner in Toronto, and, later Counsel-General in San Francisco, during the Second World War.

Her sisters were all married to big zamindars of Sargodha and Khushab. They had to leave everything behind in Pakistan, and resettled in Ambala after the Partition.

Biji's kitchen was the nerve centre of the house. From there, a corridor with rooms on both side connected to Pitaji's office, and the Gole Bazaar side veranda. One of the rooms on the right hand-side was used exclusively for storing jute sacks full of wheat and other produce, which used to come from our farmland in Jhang.

(One of our family's rules was that the first five sacks of new wheat must go to the *Yatim-khanna* (orphanage) of the Arya School, which was headed by the Head Master Shri Ram Lal Sapra, under whom we all studied.)

In the same room, there were three big Ali-Baba type *murtban* (ceramic jars). One jar contained *meetha achaar* (sweet pickles) of vegetables – *gobi* (cauliflower), *gaajar* (carrot) and *shalgam* (turnip). A great favourite of Nath bhaji and myself.

The second jar had *Aam Ka Achaar* (mango pickle with berries). The third jar had *Gajar Ka Murabba* (carrot jam).

It was an yearly routine of my mother to prepare what these jars held. She would also dry these winter vegetables for use in summer.

All that work, with crooked fingers, yet happy that her children enjoyed her food!

Moreover, Biji, being a regular Gurudwara goer, also used to be a volunteer for making tandoor roti on the *Langar* day, especially on Guru Nanak's birthday. On that day, we all used to go and eat lunch at the *Langar*, with hundreds of other people.

I believe she missed her *Kar Sewa* (voluntary service) only on the day I was born because that happened to be Guru Nanak's birthday that year. She continued to do her work, even after partition.

After Partition, she helped her sons and daughter to marry their own friends. No issues, no tantrums.

### **Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs**

Our house actually was in a Muslim area though quite a few Hindus and Sikhs were also there. Our main door in the back *galli* was right opposite the Jama Masjid, next to the house of Hakim Sahib. All of us were sober, gentle and good friends. In fact, two brothers, also living next to the Masjid, were great pals of Nath and Prem Bhaji. Asherf, the elder one was in Government College, and Asgar, who became the head of the local library, was in the Agriculture College. These two colleges had great rivalry while playing hockey matches.

I still remember the slogan shouting during the match to boo the opponents. Government college boys would shout "*Hul Panchal, Hai Hai*" while the opponents taunted the life style of Government college team by shouting "*Kanghi Shisha Hai Hai*" (comb & mirror users).

I don't recall much of Khalsa College.

Asgar bhai once came to our home to show us his new nine-gear bicycle bought from Lahore. It was such a thrill to ride it. We never had that kind of money to buy such stuff. In fact, we didn't even own a radio, which some of our neighbours had. Big sets with lighted tubes inside –were they Pye or Marconi brands?

In our house, like many others, we used to fetch water for drinking from a Masjid. Just outside the Katchery Bazaar, before the Courts, you turn right along the small running canal, and come to a *Maseet* (*Masjid*, mosque), which had a well inside. And the water from there was not only crystal clear but icy cold. We used to take a *Ghagar* (big pot), fill up with water and store it in our home.

Further up the Maseet lived the Pandhis and Jhingans. All lawyer families – with children of our age. Pandhis were a tennis playing family, like the Vermas.

At that time, there was no Hindu and Muslim problem – not in my small world. If Jama Masjid was next to our house, so was the main Gurudwara, which was in the street just across the road (Katchery Bazaar) where my mother went every morning. That street had large houses, and, if I recollect, there were Verma Brothers – both lawyers, with children the same age as ours. Their house with big gate was on the left side of the lane, which continued to Rail Bazaar.

The lady of the house there was good friend of my mother. I don't know how far it is true, but our mother used to tell us about her that she used to wear a wristwatch even though she couldn't tell the time and had to ask others to check the time. Their house was just next to the big Gurudwara, which was a fully Hindu area.

Later on, our family took a refuge in their house for the night after the panic started on finding a murdered Hindu near the garden. First murder of a Hindu.

This gurudwara *galli* merged with Katchery bazaar, on one side and forked to Rail bazaar. At that junction, there was another big house with two big gates (shape of a horseshoe) and a stable for the Tonga. Belonged to another lawyer. My mother knew most of these residents –the regulars to Ladies Park and Gurudwara – and got together for happy or sad occasions of friends.

These two lanes – ours, on the left hand side of Katchery Bazaar (if you were coming from Ghanta Ghar) in the Jama Masjid lane, and the opposite Gurudwara lane of Verma brothers – got divided as Muslim and Hindu zones. And we were caught in the Muslim zone, when the real trouble started. My second sister and myself (kids at that time) used to get scared when the Muslim crowd from our lane shouted “Allah Hoo Akbar.” And the Hindu reply echoed “Jo Bole, So Nihal”.

That's the time our father dispatched my sister and me to Delhi. The rest of the family managed to get a police escort to drive them to airport, and flew out in the last over loaded plane that left Lyallpur. Prem bhaji just managed to get into a running plane. My older sister's family in Sargodha had problems in escaping to India, but they managed safely.

At that time, when we were in primary school, the Hindu Muslim problem was not acute because both Hindus and Muslims were united in the Independence Movement.

Imagine, in my Arya school, after the daily *hawan*, we sang Allama Iqbal's [poem](#) in the Assembly

*Lub pay aae hai Dua bun kay tamana meri,  
zindgi shamaa ki soorat ho khudyah meri  
dooor duniya ka mere dum say andhera ho jaaye  
her Jagga mere chamkney say ujalla ho haay  
ho mere dum say yunhi mere watan ki zeenat  
jis terha phool say hoti hai chaman ki zeenat.*

Is this the Allama Iqbal, who is supposed to have been called the father of Islamic State idea? How could there be Hindu Muslim riots? Arya School and Allama Iqbal! Can we dream of this One Brotherhood again? Doubts persist in my mind,

### **Family life**

During the *Sawan* month (rainy season), the whole family used to go for picnic at the Chenab (one of the five rivers of Punjab) canal, which was not very far. It was a beautiful place with huge trees, which shielded you from the hot sun, and which we used for putting up the *jhoola*.

We would take mangoes, milk, sugar salt, ice and our hand-cranked ice-cream making machine, since there were no readymade ice cream bricks. (We also used to get our biscuit made from the nearby bakery, which was located between the local Jama Masjid and the Ghanta Ghar. I remember my mother would give atta, sugar, ghee, milk, etc., which I would take to the bakery. I would sit in the bakery near the big oven and select the shapes of biscuit to be baked. The available shapes included playing card designs – hearts, diamonds, clubs, and spades. I remember the fresh, hot, *khasta* (flaky) biscuits that came out.)

While we all went for the swim in the canal, the mangoes were left in a bucket full of water to cool them. It was great fun to jump from top of the lock-*bund* into the gushing water, again and again. After the swim, it used to be plenty of paranthas with pickle or mangoes. And, of course, fresh handmade ice cream. We would return home in the evening.

Having older brothers and sister added to few additional happy moments. My father used to celebrate the passing of exams of each child. (Eight of them!) The celebration (my granddaughter laughs at it) consisted of making *Kutchi Lassi* that was half milk and half water in a big tub, with lot of ice. Plus, lemonade bottles with *bantas* (a small round marble that acted like a cork) at the top, which we opened with our thumbs. There was a shop in Katchery Bazaar, just before Ghana Ghar, on the left side while going from Gole Bazaar, which used to have the hand-cranked bottle filling machines. It was the only shop I remember which used to sell lemonade, ice, and flavoured water.

Anyway, these celebrations were good fun celebrating a happy moment. My mother loved it, and would make *kheer* (rice pudding) or *Halwa* for the night meal.

I still can't recollect how these purchases were paid for. I never saw any money. But, obviously money was there, and people were paid (there was no barter with our land produce). Even the *mochi* (cobbler), who used to make shoes for all of us, never asked me for the money.

While entering the Katchery Bazaar from the courts, this mochi had his shop on the left hand side. We would go there, and give our foot measurement. He would make perfect fitting shoes. He was a family mochi, like the family barber. Handmade shoes were then a necessity and cheap, though there was a shoe shop next to cycle shop in Katchery Bazaar.

The world in those days was small, simple, uncomplicated and full of helpful souls in Lyallpur till the volcano of madness erupted. Along with that vanished, at least in urban areas, some good souls who were great help to the housewives there.

I recall the services of three most welcome and trusted ladies in Hindu homes, at least, in Lyallpur. One was the *naian*, the wife the family barber, who used to come home every morning to shave my father. The *naian* was the forerunner of the present so-called social networking sites, such as Facebook. She would carry messages from one home to other, offering various services. She was called upon by mothers to help in finding husbands for their daughters. Total secrecy was maintained by these *naians*, who were very trustworthy. Nain was an institution in Lyallpur, which has disappeared now.

The second lady was the *panditain*, (a Brahmin) who was as the wife/daughter of the Pandit. She would visit a number of homes in the morning, and collect rotis. My mother used to wait for her, and make special rotis every day. Like the *naian*, the *panditain* was useful (in combination with the *naian*) for organizing religious functions, such as *mundan*, thread ceremony, *Naam-Karan* (naming ceremony), etc.

Whereas these two ladies were regular daily visitors, the third one was required, perhaps, once in a year. I am referring to the old institution of *daiee* (mid-wife). There was one regular *daiee* who helped my mother in the childbirth of all her eight children. She became like a sister to my father, and we used to call her *Bhua* (father's sister).

That was Lyallpur. Lyallpur where we six brothers and two sisters were born.

### **Epilogue**

The Sethi clan of Lyallpur and Jhang expanded in Independent India. Our children and grandchildren were born in Delhi, without the remorse or feelings of hatred towards other religions. In fact, in their own ways, some of the younger Sethis are trying to re-construct the bridges destroyed by hatred and distrust. For instance, Nath bhaji's youngest son, now in Seattle, married a Muslim girl from Pakistan. The daughter of my other brother, Satinder, married a Muslim boy in Delhi. Satinder's son married a Catholic girl. My sister's daughter (a graduate of JNU) married a Parsi colleague! Is that the left over effect of secular, modern Lyallpur in the family blood?

Our family has never been very expressive and big talkers, but that doesn't mean that the bonds of emotional affection were also missing. On the contrary, they were and are very strong but in a silent way. I, being the youngest, had affection, love and help from all the elders – not only in Lyallpur but even right up to today. I also had the good fortune to get advice from everybody in the family.

This post is my way to *Salaam* everyone in my family. As Bulle Shah says in one of [his well-known songs](#), sung by famous Pakistani Sufi singer, Abida Parveen,

*I am neither a Maulvi nor a pandit, nor do I run to the holy place.*

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