

Truth, Love and a Little Malice

India's famous Sardarji's, Khushwant Singh, forthcoming autobiography *Truth, Love and a Little Malice* which will hit stands in a few weeks' time is likely to spark some controversies. Following is an extract from the book.

I AM AMONGST THE FEW INDIANS FORTUNATE enough to have visited Pakistan many times. Only once did I sense hostility towards me. This happened to be soon after partition when feelings against Indians, particularly Sikhs, ran very high.

I was passing through Karachi on my way to London. I had a few hours to spare and hired a taxi to see the sights of the city I had never visited before. I asked the driver to take me to Mr Jinnah's grave. As soon as I stepped out of the cab, a crowd began to collect. I heard someone shout, "What business have these people to come to Pakistan?" The taxi driver took me by my arm, put me in his cab and drove away.

Anti-Sikh feelings had spread throughout the Muslim world, where wildly exaggerated stories of Sikhs massacring Muslims were circulated. I sensed this at Cairo when I stepped out of my hotel to take a stroll. I heard people shout "Sikh" and realising that they did not mean to be friendly, retraced my steps to the hotel.

I never experienced this animosity against Sikhs in Pakistan again. On my subsequent visits, I was singled out for a special welcome. Tongawallas and cab drivers refused to take money from me, shopkeepers gave away things freely, I had my tea and cold drinks. I recall my visit to Murree with Manzur Qadir, who was then Pakistan's Foreign Minister. We happened to pass by a shop selling walking sticks. Manzur wanted one for himself, though I would take one as a memento. After we had selected what we wanted, Manzur asked for their price. On being told, I remarked to Manzur in English that you could get them cheaper in Shimla. Manzur translated my remark to the shopkeeper. "Aap durust farmaatey hain (You must be right)," replied the shopkeeper. This one is a gift from me to our Sikh visitor, you pay me half for the other." I asked him if he knew who the person with me was. "I do," he replied. "I see his pictures in the papers. He is our Foreign Minister. He pays for what he buys; you don't pay for anything in Pakistan."

Besides the general good will Sikhs, whom they had once hated, educated Pakistanis also knew how often I had stuck my neck out in their support. For Jinnah's birth centenary celebrations they invited two Indians to read papers in their seminar. The other delegate failed to show up. I was the sole Indian amongst a galaxy of European and American schol-

ars on Indo-Pak affairs. When my turn came to speak, I referred to my father's friendship for their Qaid and his being the Chief Guest at my wedding. I went on to quote Jinnah's first speech as Governor general of Pakistan in which he assured Hindu and Sikh minorities of "equal treatment" and exhorted them to regard Pakistan as their motherland. He had never wanted the two-way migration of religious minorities. I stated categorically that Indians accepted the right of Pakistan to be a sovereign, independent state; what we did not, nor ever would accept, was the two-nation theory of Muslims being a nation apart from Hindus and Sikhs. My speech was applauded. But soon Pakistani delegates began to heckle me. "If you don't accept the two-nation theory, you don't accept Pakistan," they maintained. I stood my ground, argued that we conceded Pakistan because the majority of the population of the regions concerned wanted to have independent states of their own and not because they were Muslims. If we accepted the two-nation theory, what were we to do with the 90 million Muslims who remained in India? I got a second round of applause from college students in the audience. They invited me to their campus to speak to a selected number of stu-

'You have been saying nice things about Pakistan, now tell us the truth. Do you really think Pakistan is going the right way and is doing as well as India? they asked me. I told them 'Pakistan Standard Time is 30 minutes behind the Indian. You are 30 years behind us in development'

dents on Indo-Pak affairs. "You have been saying nice things about Pakistan, now tell us the truth. Do you really think Pakistan is going the right way and is doing as well as India? they asked me. I told them "Pakistan Standard Time is 30 minutes behind the Indian. You are 30 years behind us in development. I had seen a large number of fancy cars on the road, all imported from Japan, Germany, England or the United States - not one manufactured in Pakistan. In India foreign automobiles were a rare sight. "However, rat-khata our cars may be, they are made in India," I said with rat-khata pride. Even match boxes and the lavatory paper in my hotel room came from China. They were talking of having colour TV when they could not produce simple items like bicycles in their own country. "Why do you think this is so?" they asked.

"You can either build new mosques or make new cars," I replied. "You can't do both at the same time." I told them of the dozens of modern mosques I had seen going up in every new quarter in Islamabad. Of course, what I said was somewhat of an exaggeration, but they understood that I was doing so to drive my point home. And they knew I was a friend.

Once I happened to be in the Karachi International Hotel. I had been out for a late dinner and wanted a little sleep before catching the morning flight to Bombay. A tall, dark young man accosted me on my way to the elevator. "A Sardarji from nowhere," he said jocularly, grabbing my arm. "Come and have a drink with me." I protested that I had already had enough and wanted to retire. "You will have one with me before you go," he said as he dragged me into the bar. He was a powerful man. There was no escape. I ordered a Drambuie. You some kind of businessman? You from Iran or Afghanistan?" he asked. I explained I was from Bombay and was the editor of a paper. "In that case you have to have another," he insisted, and ordered a second Drambuie. I didn't know how to escape from his clutches. Every time I tried to get up he pulled me back on my chair. "You may be an editor or something bigger," he said aggressively. "I write the names of the likes of you on my l...a (penis). I couldn't resist asking him, 'Do you write them with a ball point pen?' He didn't catch the pun. Fortunately for me, his bladder was full and he had to go to the loo. "Don't you run away when I am emptying my bladder," he warned me as he staggered out. That is exactly what I did. Instead of taking the elevator, I ran up the stairs to the security of my room.

I have visited Pakistan almost every alternate year for the past several years. One visit was to attend the wedding of my friend MA Rahman's son, and another to deliver the Manzur Qadir Memorial Lecture. I wandered about freely and unescorted in the streets of Lahore. I made it a point to pay homage at the graves of my departed friends. Manzur Qadir, his uncle Saleem and Mohammad Anwar. My association was not restricted to the past; every time I went I made new friends, was invited to new homes, they came to mine when in Delhi. Amongst my latest acquaintances are the publisher-bookseller Najam Sethi and his moon-faced beauty of a wife who edits Friday, her cousin the poetess Hina Feisal Imam and her sister's husband Ajazuddin of the Hakeem family, three of whom were among Maharaja Ranjit Singh's closest advisers.

Many years later, I was invited to a media seminar in Islamabad on Indo-Pak relations. Amongst the other invitees were Prem Bhatia, editor of The Tribune, and Kuldip Nayyar. Despite the tension prevailing between the two countries, the atmosphere in the seminar was most cordial. I had no idea

that I was being treated as the leader of the Indian delegation till at a lunch hosted by their Foreign Secretary, Nawabzada Yakub Ali Khan. I found myself seated on his right. After lunch he delivered a long and lucid oration

of swigs of liquor And see the mosque shake on its own). The audience burst out in full-throated laughter. My host was most amused and took down the couplet. He then told me how fed up he was of the prevalent bigotry and religious fanaticism. "You know, they objected to our showing the Chinese women's table-tennis team playing in T-shirts and very short shorts. If they had their way, they would insist that our women's hockey team play in burgas."

I don't know how the Pakistani press reported my speech because I left Islamabad in the early hours of the morning for Lahore en route to Delhi. I had my last laugh at the expense of the Pakistanis at Lahore airport. After passing through customs and immigration, I had to face Security. The man ran his metal detector over my turban and body. As he was taking it over my middle, there was a loud beep of protest. He paused. What could I be hiding in the front of my middle? He tried again. Again a loud beep. "Janab, fauladi hai (Sir, it is made of steel)," I told him. It was my zip fastener which was made of steel, but he understood what I had alluded to and ran round telling his fellow security officers what I had said. They came beaming with smiles to shake my hand.

In my entire life I have never encountered another person as reckless in their generosity as Punjabi Muslims. The trait is not to be found in Punjabi Hindus or Sikhs, nor to the same extent in Pakistanis of the Frontier Provinces or Sindh. It is unique to the people living between the Indus and the Sutlej, down to the confluence of the Punjab's five rivers. They have other traits unique to them. They are not a humble people and share much of the pride common to most Punjabis. Being Muslim adds to their self-esteem. Their logic is simple: Punjabis are the world's elite; Islam is the best of all religions. Put the two together and you

get the best people in the world. When puritanical, they can be insufferably narrow-minded and fanatical. A call to jihad brings out all their macho, militant zeal to do or die. Then it is best to keep out of their way. I have a simple rule: avoid making friends with a Punjabi Pakistani who prays five times a day, who fasts during Ramadan - and does not drink.

Rahman used to be a healthy drinker; after developing a heart problem he occasionally takes half a peg of whiskey to keep others company. Our common friend, Ejaz Batalvi, has never been much of a drinker and will fondle his first glass of Scotch all evening. Their attitudes towards religion are also different. Rahman, though otherwise very liberal-minded conforms to the Spartan traditions of the Wahabis and has no use for Sufism and paying homage at the tombs of saints. Batalvi, on the other hand, believes that the true spirit of Islamic tolerance is best seen in the teachings of Sufi saints. My last afternoon in Lahore was reserved by him to visit the dargahs of Hazrat Mian Meer, who is believed by most Sikhs to have laid the foundation stone of their Hari-mandir in Amritsar and the tombs of Madho Lal Husain in Baghbanpura near the Sahli-mer Gardens. In the years when I lived in Lahore as a student and a lawyer, I had never visited these places.

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analysing Indo-Pak tensions and proposed a toast (in plain water) for future good relations. I was expected to respond. I insisted that Prem Bhatia, being the seniormost amongst us, should reply. I only had to raise my glass of water and wish Pakistan prosperity. Bhatia made as short, dry speech.

That evening there was a farewell banquet for us at the hotel where we were staying. Our host was Pakistan's Minister for Information and Broadcasting. The evening before I had seen him in a panel discussion on TV. He was being heckled by three Maulvi-looking types and a lady draped in a burqa with its flap thrown back to reveal her dour face. They complained that Pakistani electronic media was not doing enough to inform the people of the beauties of Islam and the validity of the two-nation theory. He was having a hard time convincing them that he was doing his best. I came to the banquet well-oiled with Scotch. At that time there was strict prohibition in Pakistan. Once again, I found myself seated on the right of the host. Bhatia told me, "Bachoo (son) this time you have to make your own speech." A printed copy of the minister's speech was handed over to us. I didn't have the foggiest notion of how to respond. It ruined my appetite for food and soured the whiskey inside me. When I stood up to speak, I referred to the minister being pilloried on TV the previous evening. I told the audience that, despite prohibition, I had my quota of Scotch and if they wanted to do anything about it they better do it fast because in a few hours I would be flying back to India. I said that before leaving Pakistan I would make an offering of an Urdu couplet to the minister, which might come in handy when he next faced the thekedars of Islam. It ran: Mullah, gar asar hai dua mein To masjid hila kar dikha Gar nahin, to do ghooht pee Aur masjid ko hilita deyhk (Mullah, if there is power in your prayer

Let me see you shake the mosque! If not, take a couple

of swigs of liquor And see the mosque shake on its own). The audience burst out in full-throated laughter. My host was most amused and took down the couplet. He then told me how fed up he was of the prevalent bigotry and religious fanaticism. "You know, they objected to our showing the Chinese women's table-tennis team playing in T-shirts and very short shorts. If they had their way, they would insist that our women's hockey team play in burgas."

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Khushwant Singh: Continuing to sell and sell

A strange, unearthly peace pervaded the enormous courtyard round the modest-sized mausoleum of Mian Meer. At the time I went there it was almost deserted. A cluster of women and children sat bunched together on a corner of the platform.

Two beggars sitting a distance from each other were chanting something I could not catch. Ejaz bought a leaf-bowl of rose petals to strew on the peers' tomb. A couple of old men were at prayer. Ejaz recited the Fateha, came out and gave money to the beggars. We drove through the bazaars of Baghbanpura and parked our car a good distance away from the mazaar of Madho Lal Husain. The lanes were narrow, winding and smelly. Once again I noticed hardly any women wearing burqas. We arrived at the mazaar. A man with bells round his ankles and on his hands was dancing and singing. A group of children followed him dancing in circles. Their mothers watched them. The mausoleum was not very impressive; just two tombs side by side. One was of the Muslim Husain, the other of the Hindu Madho Lal. They were poets who formed a corporate personality. Madho Lal Husain, Maharaja Ranjit Singh used to pay homage at their tombs every Basant Panchmi day, dressed in yellow silk accompanied by his bodyguard of Kashmir women, all likewise

dressed in yellow silks. To me more interesting than the mausoleum was the cemetery surrounding it. Amongst the graves was one of the Punjabi poet Chiragh Deen, better known as Ustaad Daaman. He had been put in jail by the Martial Law regime for reciting a poem:

Pakistan deeyan maiyaun ee maiyaun Chaaaray paasey faujan ee faujan
[Pakistan is having a wonderful time Which ever way you look there is the Army].
On a visit to Delhi he recited another poem regretting the Partition of the country:
Akhyaan dee laalee payle dasdee tusee uee roey ho, roey asser uee haau
[The redness in our eyes has no secret If you have cried, we too have wept].
Daaman died about 10 years ago and composed his own epitaph which is engraved on the marble headstone of his grave. Ejaz copied it out for me on a piece of paper:
Sarsaree nazar maaree Ja-haan andar Zindgi varg ut-thalya main
Daaman koee na milliya rafeeq mainoo Maar kafan dee bukkaal tay challya main
[I gave a cursory glance at the world, I turned a few pages of the book of my life. I Daaman, could find no companion - so I flung my shroud over my shoulder.
Courtesy: The Telegraph

Dipen: The Man behind the Musical Squad

Waheedul Haque

At a time when I was feeling terribly depressed in Calcutta. In the months following the March 1971 crackdown, Dipen Bandyopadhyay descended on me - a true godsend. And I was saved as I was sucked into a most worthwhile project which was all Dipen's devising.

At a restaurant he came up to me - that famous unforgettable presence. I was not taken aback by the three-and-half-foot midget rolling up in my direction. For I remembered seeing him in 1954 among the West Bengal delegation to the historic Furba Pakistan Sahitya Sammelan. Hardly past twenty, he had then impressed by his zest and mobility. Later he wrote in the best literary journal of the day *Natun Shatitya* so euphorically about his trip to Dhaka - bordering on the ludicrous it was in patches - that we could not ever forget about him. But what had he to do with me now - full 17 years later? And didn't even know me!

The writers and artists and professionals had formed a kind of Friends-of-Liberation-War Association soon after the news of genocide and subsequent resistance reached Calcutta. It was the biggest assemblage of the best people in West Bengal. Dipen Bandyopadhyay and Wren Chakraborty were elected its two secretaries. They had collected a fund to be made over to our war efforts. It was Dipen's bright idea that instead of letting their money get lost in the governmental maze, the association would help raise a musical squad of all musical people reaching Calcutta as refugees. This squad would

go round refugee camps as well as Mukti Bahini bases signing songs of rebellion and patriotism infusing hope and weaving dreams into the minds of the refugees and warriors alike. They were also to sing all over West Bengal to inspire people so they can take the suffering imposed by a 10-million strong influx of exiles.

I said I liked the idea, it was simply wonderful. And so? What was I supposed to do? He was all humility - could I take charge of the thing as its director? I didn't know if I was qualified for the job but there was no escaping the responsibility. Dipen was a very soft-spoken and persuasive type, with a hard gritty inner core.

Then on each day for eight months this impossible man suffering from all afflictions of the body excepting only cancer, came to our rehearsal room at 144 Lenin Sarani and sat supervising our proceedings. Each single person got an allowance of rs 100 a month and a couple rs 150 to sustain themselves for the country. Dipen gave the money and kept the accounts and mediated in all care conflicts breaking out every now and between the growing squad members. But it was not his fantastic feat of taking pains and toiling endlessly for the whole of that long day - eight months long - that everyone of our squad, the Bangladesh Mukti Sangrami Shilpi Sangstha, came to love him as more than a brother.

As the team grew to about a hundred Dr Sanjida Khatun was elected president and Mustafa Monwar was brought in as our art director.

Shahriar Kabir wrote a script weaving even as a garland some twenty patriotic songs - the *Rupantor Gaan*, and we asked Hasan Imam to do the narration. The squad performed in more than 200 outings to refugees camps and Freedom Fighter - FF - camps and to West Bengal town. We performed as well on the prestigious Rabindra Sadan on more than one occasion. On September 20 we sang as a delegation sent by our Provisional Government at the International Conference on Bangladesh, called G P Narain in New Delhi. I am very happy to say that for eight months ours was the best show in town - wherever we went.

Benu and Shaheen, who married in occupied Dhaka, lead the squad performances like some possessed ones. Love for our hapless country was there. But everyone knew it was Dipen's love for our Bangladesh, for us and for our war - his complete identification with our hopes and dreams and sufferings - was indeed driving us all.

Oh how we - all of us - Sanjida and Zahir, Hasan Imam and Mustafa Monwar, and I - loved him in return. We worshipped him. He was Liberation War personified. He did not live long after the victorious end of the war. He came to caution and save Zahir but failed. He went back and died.

The recently released documentary Mukti Gaan is a moving picture of a part of that musical squad. How would I have loved to see it dedicated to Dipen Bandyopadhyay - the human torch that lit our involvement in the Liberation War.

Muktir Gaan - Song of Freedom

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and till today remains a music teacher in Sheffield - teaching English men and women 'ragas'. Benu fled to Calcutta to enlist with the cultural activists he was destined to lead.

His wife Shahin Mahmood, from whom he is now divorced, also features prominently.

Naila has become Naila Khan, having married a freedom fighter (now businessman). Shahidullah Khan, Lubna now works for a foreign airlines and is married to an interior designer. Naila Khan is a now doctor. Their father Colonel Nuruzzaman was one of the valiant Sector Commanders of our War of Liberation. Their younger brother Nadim, about whom Lubna speaks with a lot of love and apprehension because of his restless nature, committed suicide a few years after the Independence of Bangladesh.

The artist who goes about furiously scribbling as he keeps squinting his eyes and face is Swapan Chowdhury - whose younger brother Tapan Chowdhury was the lead singer of the band SOULS. Bipul Bhattacharjee is perhaps one of the best known folk singer in Bangladesh today. Debabrata the percussionist, now lives and teaches music in London.

Tariq Ali is the narrator. In one poignant episode he is shown making a desperate plea to a Mukti Bahini commander to help him enlist as a guerrilla, his application having failed because of his bad eye sight. Benu is shown pleading on his behalf, actu-

Golden Globes

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Shepherd of *Cybill* - and Kelsey Grammer of *Fraser* - as the best actress and actor, respectively, in a musical or comedy series on American television.

Sean Connery won the Cecil B DeMille award for his distinguished career, spanning 40 years that included his origination of James Bond.

The foreign press associations picks have become a bittersweet for the Academy Awards. In the last three years, the Golden Globes have come very close to accurately mirroring the Oscars, which will be held this year on March 25.

Unlike the Academy Awards, the HEPA divides its best picture recognition into two categories, dramatic and musical/comedy and also recognizes television.

This year 90 members voted for the awards out of a total membership of 120. Despite their small numbers, the foreign press wield a heavy influence, with the Golden Globes attracting as many stars as the Oscars. The reasons:

As the first major awards of the year, they bring out the Academy Award hopefuls, no matter whether their chances are slim to nil, in an effort to build pre-Oscar momentum.

The Golden Globes offer a large number of nominees, not only in two categories for motion pictures, but in television as well.

The studios are cognizant of the growing importance of the foreign market, many films earning half or more of their revenue abroad.

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ally asking the Commander to see if Tariq Ali could be given a 'chance' to train with the Mukti Bahini and see if he could be of any use for the war efforts'. This having failed, Tariq Ali continues with the cultural troupe in an arena of warfare which was of no smaller significance. The war continues.

It is incredible to imagine that a group of eleven men and women could form a traveling band and move along the front-line, singing and inspiring our freedom fighters, the refugees and the sick in the hospital. And for the duration of the war, that little truck that took them about was home away from home.

I plead therefore to those reading this newspaper, specially those that are young: if ever the thought of wanting to know the history of your country in such distorted times has crossed your mind and disturbed and upset you - Mukti Gaan should be able to help you focus and ruminate. If you love Bangladesh which I am sure we all do - go watch Mukti Gaan - for if you deny yourself of this chance, don't forget that you are denying yourself an opportunity to learn HISTORY. Any nation that has forgotten its history is condemned to repeat it. We don't want a repeat of the foolishness and sheer insensitivity that our politicians have managed to bring about - this state of insecurity and fear, a quarter century after our nations birth! Please learn from his- tory. There is nothing political about Mukti Gaan. Yes the slogan JOY BANGLA keeps popping up every now

and then but JOY BANGLA was never a slogan of any political party (as it is now). It belongs to the people of Bangladesh, and you will get to see how this happened.

The movie caused serious heart burns for Tareque and Catherine Masud. I was with them continuously during the time the Censor Boards scrutiny was on. Four months of sheer hell, for an effort that is a contribution of a Bangladeshi film maker and his American wife in an adopted homeland - to their country - Bangladesh, on its 25th birthday! A contribution that otherwise cost nothing to the people or The Government of Bangladesh.

The screening of Mukti Gaan is on at the Public Library Auditorium, where three/four shows are screened daily. The entry tickets are Taka 20.00, and or available on a first cum first serve basis.

The movie is a must for children. There are puppet shows and there is an episode that shows a refugee family in the front-line handing over a parrot in cage (referred to as the refugee bird) to Tariq Ali. The parrot is shown a few more times; yet Lear Levin did not capture him on film anymore.

The question that most children ask Catherine at the Public Library (she is there all day) - whatever happened to the parrot? Of course our children have a right to know - did the parrot become a martyr for Bangladesh?

The writer is singer/songwriter for the band FEEDBACK.