

Sometimes one comes across events which are unexpected and sudden. It takes time to absorb them. One then starts to reflect and ponder. Rationale for the event may not be readily available. But that really does not matter. In this recollection I want to write about one such event in my life. In 1968/69 I was posted as an assistant commissioner in Makli Hills subdivision of Thatta district in Pakistan. The country was under martial law. All of what was then West Pakistan constituted one province under the so called "one unit". The new military ruler Yahya Khan had just set up a commission to review the status of old provinces like the Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, etc. A retired president of the country was the chairman of the commission with many other members. Sind was fighting hard to regain its old status as a province and there were strong popu-

on the revival of Sind as a province of Pakistan. I became like his research assistant! In Dhaka University, Qudrat was a happy go lucky type of student. He was very good as a student but gave the impression of a casual one. He laughed and joked most of the time on campus and was friendly to all. But here I found an altogether different personality. Serious, committed and fully driven by the task assigned to him by the Sind political leadership. It was a testimony to his honesty and integrity that such an important

Qudrat called me and explained the importance of the event. "Samad, we must not let them down" he said. "You have to treat this as our own problem and be prepared to answer supplementary questions. I will of course do the main presentation."

So be it I thought. I did not have too much to do. I simply noted that Mohammad bin Quasem had landed in Thatta and that was the beginning of Islamic rule in the subcontinent. Also the largest graveyard of the world was in Sonda nearby. I put on

over in 45 minutes. The Chair thanked all and closed the meeting around 1 p.m.

The Sindhi leaders were euphoric and took Qudrat on their shoulders:

Qudrat Sahib, aap ne kamalkiya. Marhaba and Shukria. (Mr Qudrat you have done a miracle. Bravo and thanks a million). I had some work in Thatta so I begged leave of Qudrat and went back to Makli Hills. But I was also so impressed by the whole show that it left an indelible imprint in my mind.

A Rare Honour

SYED ABDUS SAMAD

lar movements for this. Qudrat-e-Elahi Choudhury a CSP officer of the 1964 batch was the additional deputy commissioner of Hyderabad which used to be the capital of the old Sind province. Hyderabad became the epicentre of the movement for the restoration of Sind as a separate province. Qudrat was a very conscientious person. At first he politely declined to take this responsibility. But the Sindhi leaders were insistent and would not listen to his objections. Finally they could persuade him to take the task.

I got a call from Qudrat and he asked me to assist him in preparing a draft on the subject. He made sure that I give some time during the weekend and do the research with him in his official residence in Hyderabad which was 60 miles from Makli Hills, my residence. I had an easy job at Makli Hills and started going to Qudrat's house at regular intervals. I discovered a new Qudrat altogether. He became so deeply engrossed in the subject and started devoting so much time in going through old records, district manuals, gazetteers etc. as if his entire life depended



Overview of Makli Hills.

issue was now his responsibility— a Bengali, non Sindhi speaking and belonging to an all Pakistan service, the CSP. A Sindhi politician, academic or activist would have been, ordinarily, a natural choice. Qudrat more than lived up to the trust and confidence reposed in him. After a month's work he finally put together a draft on "Why Sind should be a province" and shared it with the leaders—Ayub Khuhro, Pir of Pagaro, Pir of Hala, Jam Sadeq Ali, et al. They endorsed the draft and informed him that next week the full Commission headed by a former president of Pakistan Fazal Elahi will come for the final hearing and Qudrat would have to make the presentation. The meeting would take place at the One Unit building in Hyderabad.

a good suit and drove to Hyderabad on the appointed date. Qudrat was ready and we went to the One Unit building ahead of time.

The full commission was there and a clerk asked for the presentation of the case of Sind. When Qudrat went to the stage, the members looked a little perplexed. They naturally had expected a Sindhi leader to do the job. But lo and behold, a young Bengali civil servant!!

Qudrat was fully prepared for this big day and made a brilliant presentation of his painstaking research in about half an hour's time. His arguments, supported by documents and history, were so irrefutable that there were no questions. The whole thing for which Qudrat had prepared for three months was

In the evening as I was playing tennis at the club I heard an announcement in the radio about the decision to recommend revival of Sind as a province of Pakistan! Wow... instant success! I called Qudrat and congratulated him on the success of his crowning efforts.

In life things happen which may seem trivial but actually carry profound significance. The choice of Qudrat-e-Elahi Choudhury for presenting Sind's case can perhaps be cited as one. He was a CSP officer of the 1964 batch. He had no adversaries and he had a smiling face. I was privileged to know him closely and would miss him for ever.

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