

Dr. Iffat S. Dar

Iffat: You know my name?

Interviewer: Iffat Dar?

Iffat: Iffat S. Dar. The S is still written and it counts.

Interviewer: I want you to share the important incidents first. Incidents which are still fresh in your mind and you can recall them and then I will start asking questions afterwards.

Iffat: We have lived in Shimla and Delhi before the creation of Pakistan. I used to study in Centomus School in Shimla and we lived in an area named as “Kaithu”. It was just at the boundary of Shimla, round, deep and in the valley of mountains. It was called “Analdail”. Analdail was a round ground and there were bushes, fruits and all other stuff around that plain ground. Our games were also held there. I guess that was a football ground and the Race course too. Our school was far away and we had to climb mountains to reach our school. More than 3-4 miles. First, I was not aware of Pakistan or partition but I still remember when I came to know about it, I was in the 5th grade.

Interviewer: And what was this year?

Iffat: 1945! Quaid-e-Azam came to Shimla in 1945. He was there to attend some conference and we went there to see him. Our house was in the lower area and we went there to see Quaid. He came there in a Hand driven rikshaw and was wearing a hat. We cheered him up and he responded to our love. A big gathering of people went there to see Quaid. So that was my first experience with Quaid-e-Azam. After that we shifted to Delhi.

Interviewer: Befor partition?

Iffat: Yes, in December 1945. As Shimla was the summer capital and Delhi was the winter capital, we shifted to Delhi as my father was a government employee. We got admitted in a school (Very unclear audio). We could have gone to Centomus school but it did not matter as both schools were of same value. There was my cousin Zakia who is very ill these days. I used to collect money for the Muslim League in Delhi wherever we could go. We had divided the time and we used to ride the cycle. We used to collect money from all known people around us in Delhi. (Can you bring a glass of water?)

Interviewer: Yes, sure.

Iffat: We had already pointed out the house of Muslims and we had divided the work as there were a lot of Muslims living in Delhi at that time. We stopped our cycle at every house and then gave them a receipt too after taking the money. I don't remember who she was but we had to give all that money to a woman who was the representative of the Muslim League. She then gave

us a new receipt book when we finished our work daily. We kept doing this for 3-4 days. Some people used to give 1-rupee or even 50 paise. There were a very few ones who gave big amounts.

Another experience I want to share is that there was a college for Muslims, I can't remember its name, either it was Tibia college or something else I am forgetting. It had a very big hall and there was a big picture of Iqbal (Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal) in that hall. I guess Quaid was not that popular at that time, maybe he was and there was a picture of him too but I did not give attention to that hall. There was a function arranged in that hall where we all gathered too. Quaid -e-Azam came into that function too and we were children so we gave him Guard of Honor. Me and my cousin Zakia were the youngest ones so we got the opportunity to stand at the front. So, when he passed by, we started following him and I still remember this. It was a great function and people addressed there too. We also listened to a lot of slogans. There was a woman in Shimla who was very famous for her slogans. We attended a lot of functions in Shimla though we used to live in the low area but we often went in the higher area too. We used to follow that woman. So when we started collecting money for the Muslim League, our Hindu friends used to taunt us "Look at you! Collecting money for Muslim League", I used to say "Why don't you collect money for the Congress? Have we said anything to you?". They said, "Congress is not collecting any money" and we replied that "Probably they are sleeping and we are awake. So, we had this type of conversations. They were very close friends of mine. So, the function was held and we attended it.

One of Farooq's (Son of the interviewee) student went to Shimla just now and he told them that I had studied in that school. They got my contact number too. They called me and the name of the girl was Priyanik, she was probably an assistant or secretary. She asked me two things. "What was the most important value at that time when you used to study here?". I thought and said, "It was the truth which considered to be the most important." We had a teacher who was with me in grade 7 and her name was Miss. Sun Singh. She was Sikh by religion. She was very strict about telling the truth. She used to get angry if someone lied in front of her. But at the same time, she had a great appreciation and admiration for the trust. I still remember when I studied in grade 3, I had a sleeveless sweater. It was in fashion at that time. It was of some color. She asked me "Who has made this sweater? It's very beautiful!". I said, "I made it myself". "Do you know how to make it?" and I said "Yes!". She then asked me if I might teach her to make that sweater and I agreed. When we went to school, she brought the needles and the wool from someone. She said "Okay, make it now". I said it would be easy if you make the boundary and the blocks first as it was done by my mother. She made that boundary and I started knitting just as the one I was wearing. She asked me, "Who guided you afterwards?". I said, "My mother kept guiding me and I kept knitting". She then gathered the whole school and even the higher classes in the assembly and she told them the whole story. She appreciated me a lot.

So, as I told you that we reached Delhi from Shimla and we kept collecting funds for Muslim League. So, after Pakistan came into being, the government started Trains for carrying its employees. Those were special trains from Delhi to Karachi.

Interviewer: So, this happened after Pakistan came into being?

Iffat: Yes. My father was a Government Employee and he was in CBR which is now FBR. He was responsible for all the financial transactions and he had to shift all his work too. He had to record all the transactions and financial matters which were shifting from India to Pakistan. When he collected every record, and sent that to Pakistan, a bomb exploded in a train on 9 or 10 I guess. All that record got wasted. So, all that record which Pakistan had to share with India was destroyed. It was ordered that the CBR staff must stay in Delhi and they had to make all that record again and wait. They told us that they will send us by Air if trains will not be available. So, we all had to stay with him too. We came to know that there were some functions arranged by Hindus and Muslims separately. They were held at a place near General Head Quarters (GHQ). We could not have our function because very few people were left with us.

After a while, it was decided that we are neither going by air or by special train, but a normal train has been arranged for us.

Interviewer: What was this month?

Iffat: It was August (1947). We departed in the end of August. I guess we reached Pakistan by the end of August. There was a relative of my mother who forced my father to reserve his seat in the train on a Hindu name. His name was M.R. Shah but he reserved the seat on the name M.R. Sharma. My mother did not wear a Burka because we were pretending to be a Hindu family. When we reached Delhi railway station, the postal staff was very strict. They asked us, "Where are you going?". We told them that we were going to Karachi but they warned us about riots in Karachi. We told them that we had our property in Karachi and we are going to sell it. We were portraying as Hindus so we could not say anything else. My elder sister, Rifat Apa replied to them. She was spontaneous at times and it proved beneficial for us.

We had to change the train twice in our journey. I will later tell you the names of those places if I recall them. At our first stop, the common Hindus were so enthusiastic for us. They claimed to give their lives for us and asked us not to be worried. But we were afraid of them. After all, we somehow reached our destination. Our train also got late. We had to wait at a stop as we missed a train which was supposed to carry us to Hyderabad. We had to wait at that station. The people kept asking us, "Where are you going?". We kept the same stance that we were going to sell our property. Some of them also asked us to stay and let our father go. We had to wait for about 2-3 hours at that station. Then a second train arrived and we had to enter it without having pre- reserved seats. My father's cousin who had two little daughters were also with us now. I do not remember if they met us there or were with us from Delhi. When we reached in the Pakistani territory in Hyderabad, we saw our cousins and they were shouting, "Asalamoalaikum!". They also congratulated us on reaching Pakistan. So, when the train departed from Hyderabad, it left my father and a few other persons mistakenly. But we were not worried because it was Pakistani territory. So, all of them reached Karachi afterwards. We were overwhelmingly welcomed by volunteers at Karachi. We told them that a few persons of our family are left behind and they assured us that they would bring them too. There had arranged camps and we had to stay in them. We waited for our father and he joined us at the station. As we were not allotted houses yet, we had to stay in camps.

Interviewer: Where was this camp? In Hyderabad or in Karachi?

Iffat: In Karachi.

Interviewer: So, it means that you were in that camp at the end of August?

Iffat: And at the start of September. We got our camp. It was just a tent. We were welcomed in the camps and got food too. They assured us that this is Halal food and you don't have to worry about it. We really appreciated the welcome that we received there. I guess I have not received that type of welcome anywhere else in the world. (Laughs)

Interviewer: So how many people were living in that camp?

Iffat: Just my Family. All my siblings and my parents. We were 6 children. Two elder sisters and three younger brothers. The family of that cousin was also with us. He had two daughters along with his wife. We did not have to stay there for long as we were hopeful to get an allotted house for government servants.

Interviewer: Were these specified camps for the Gov. officers only?

Iffat: No. Anyone could come and stay. We were allotted camps in the area near an army hospital named "Shifa". There were railway track in front of us. The train in which we booked our belongings from Delhi was also supposed to come and stop at that point in Karachi. We used to look for the official number on trains. A few trains were burnt on the way. The circumstances were quite crucial. When we received our belongings, half of them had burnt. But we thanked God and received the other half. Me and my cousins used to go there and look for that train in which we sent our stuff. When we reached Pakistan, we got an official residence.

Interviewer: And when did you get it?

Iffat: A few days later.

Interviewer: So, did you have any interaction with someone in that camp?

Iffat: Yes, all of them were Pakistanis and we interacted with a lot of people.

Interviewer: I mean anyone during the journey?

Iffat: No, but in the camp, yes. I was telling you that they were all forcing us to send our father and stay with them. We told them that this cannot happen. So I would go to the Washroom.

Interviewer: No problem. I would pause.

(She asked me to carry the interview afterwards but got fever. It was not possible to carry the interview again as I could not stay for long in Islamabad and had to come back to Lahore)

