

# Memories

By

Saleha Lakdawala



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**This book is dedicated to**

**My grand children:**

**Sarah Aliya Sachak**

**Adam Ali Abdabhai**

**Alisha Samira Abdabhai**

**Zayn Soheli Sachak**

**By**

**Your loving grandmother**

**Saleha Lakdawala**

## **Part 1**

### **Life in India**



**My photograph**





## **HYDERABAD: "The City of Pearls, Lakes and Gardens..."**

I have attached a map of Hyderabad city here. This is the city where I was born, and lived and spent twenty wonderful years of my life. Hyderabad is also known as "The city of Nizams", as this was the seat of the Nizams of Hyderabad.

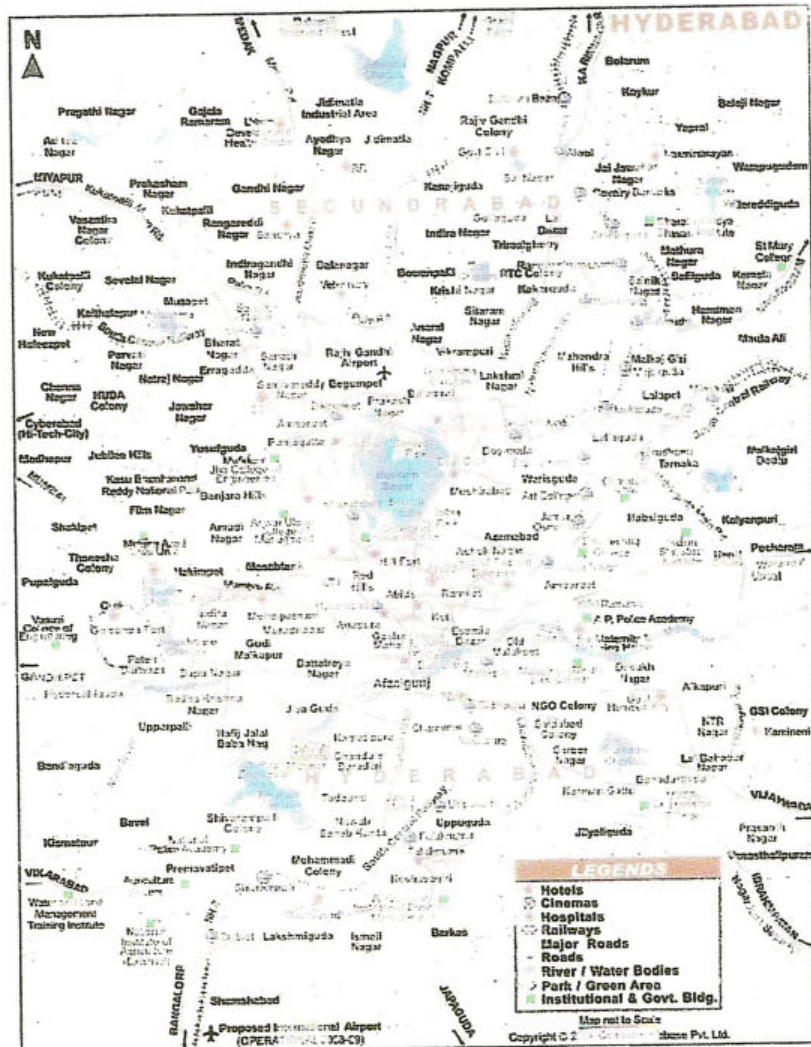
The 400 year old city was founded in 1590 by Mohammed Quli Qutub Shah, the fourth of the Qutub Shahi kings on the banks of Musi River. It sits on top of the plateau Deccan Plateau, 1776 feet, above sea level, and spreads over 260 square kms. Hyderabad consists of two towns, Hyderabad and Secunderabad. It is often called "twin cities". Hyderabad is the fifth largest cities of India with a population of 5.2 million.

The main languages spoken here are Urdu, Hindi, Telugu, and English. It is located in the west central part of Andhra Pradesh.

Best time to visit Hyderabad is from October-March. Summers are hot and dry, winter days are warm and sunny, but the nights are colder. June to September is the monsoon season.

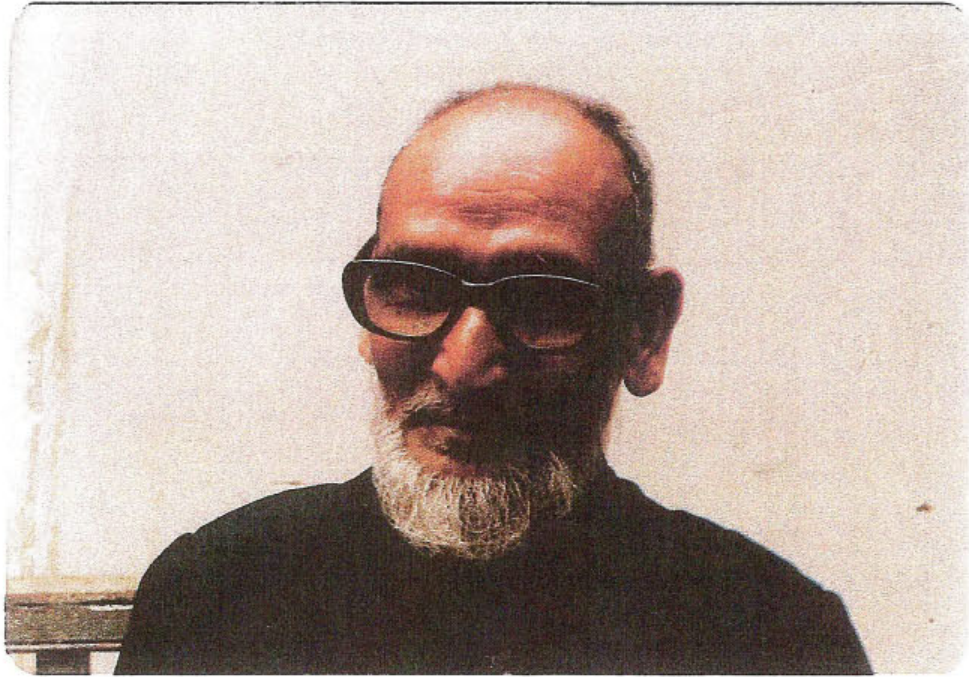
Hussain Sagar Lake, Formerly known as "Tank Bund" was built on River Musi's tributary, by Hussain Shah Wahi. This lake connects the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. In the center of the lake stands the gigantic statue of Lord Buddha.

## The map of Hyderabad

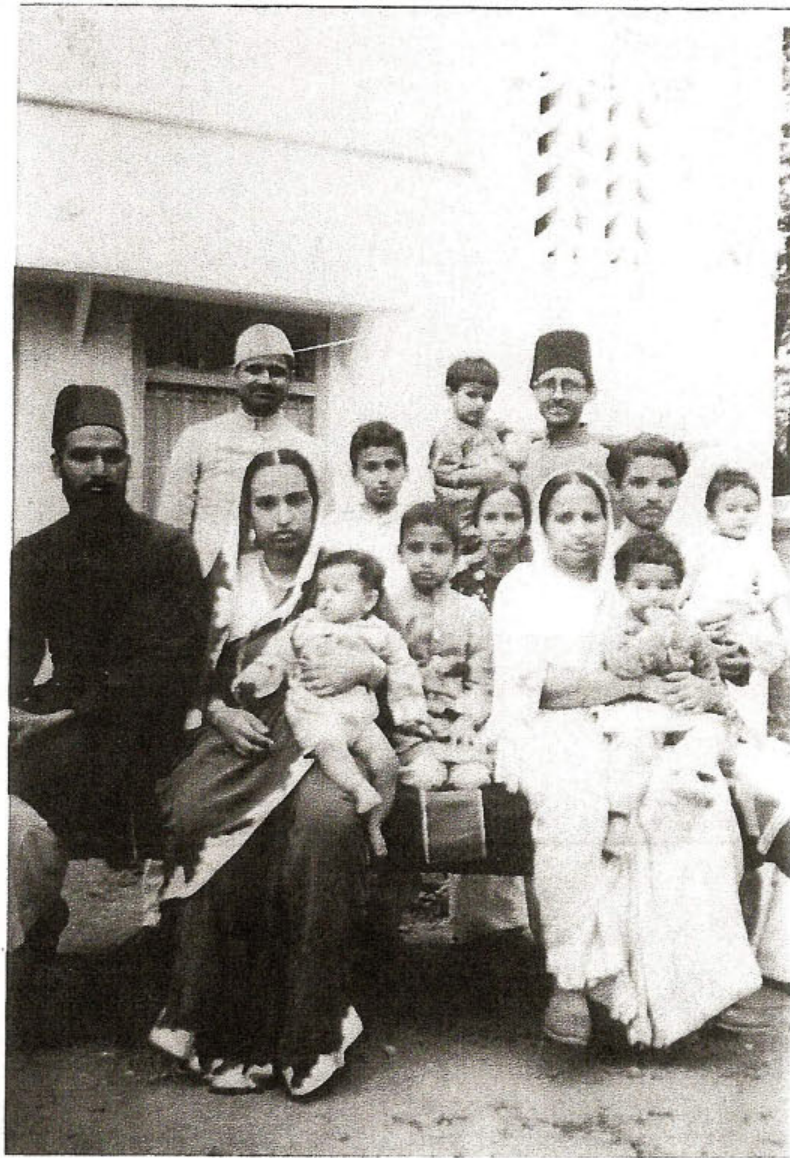




**My parents**



**My family family members  
I am in my mothers lap.**





## **MY CHILDHOOD:**

The photograph you saw right in the beginning is of my parents.

I called my father, “baba” and my mother, “amma”.

The photo you saw on the next page is my family. I am sitting in my mother’s lap. I must be one year old there. This is our new house at Red Hills.

I was born in Katalmundi, (Now called “exhibition grounds”) Hyderabad on Tuesday, September 5, 1939 at 8:30 am. (22<sup>nd</sup> of Rajab, 1358 Hijri) My mom always said, “Saleha, you were born on a very auspicious day.” This day is very auspicious, because on this day everybody makes “kheer puri” and has special prayers. It is believed that people’s wishes come true if you make ‘kheer-puri’ and make ‘duas’ on this day. Actually because of this the whole month is holy month. People do “Kunday” and invite other friends.

This story is from olden times. There was a man who had gone looking for a job and had not returned for a very long time. In those days mode of travel was either walking or horse riding. There were no planes, trains, buses, or cars. The wife of this man was very worried, so someone told her to make rice pudding and “puris” and pray through Maulana Jaffar-us-sadiq. She did this and her husband at that time was digging and hit on a treasure box and came home with a lot of money for their survival. So People consider 22<sup>nd</sup> of Rajab as very sacred day. This is the day I was born.

I was taken out with a forceps; it was hard delivery for my mom. “Sorry Mom”. The doctors present were, my uncle, Dr. Khursheed Husain Arastu and Dr. Kanga. The midwife was Radha-ma.

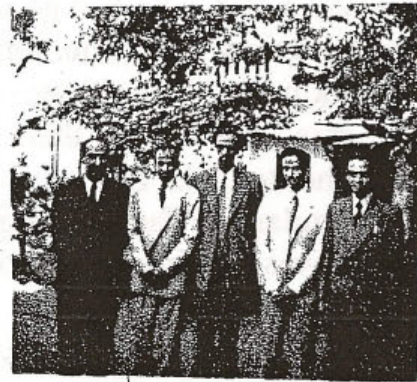
On the 7<sup>th</sup> day I was named “Saleha Begum”, “Saleha” is an Arabic word, meaning, “Noble lady” according to the custom called “Chatti” the naming ceremony. According to tradition,



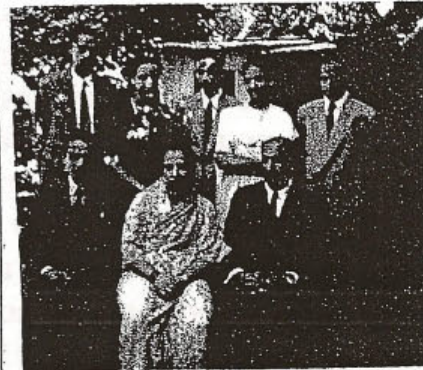
on "Chatti", seven names were said in the right ear of the baby, and then they announce the "Calling Name" will be "Saleha". I don't really know what names were given to me. The naming ceremony was performed by my aunt, Azizunnissa Begum, (my favorite aunt), my father's sister.

I was the last one of my brothers and sisters. My family called me the "left over" or "khurchun". (khurchun is the rice that sticks at the bottom of the pot if over-cooked.) I was born a healthy baby, weighing nine pounds, with black curly hair and black eyes.

I am from a family of eight. My eldest brother: is Riazath Husain then Razia Begum, Surfraz Husain, Masoom Husain, Hatim Husain, Sajida Begum, Arif Husain, and me. As I write this Riazath Husain, Razia Begum, Masoom Husain, and Sajida Begum, has expired. I am left with three brothers. Here are the photographs of my brothers, and all of us. These were taken on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1957.



1<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1957



1<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1957

My pet name was "Sallu Matallu Ghi Ki Tatallu". It really does not mean anything. I guess, because I was the youngest.

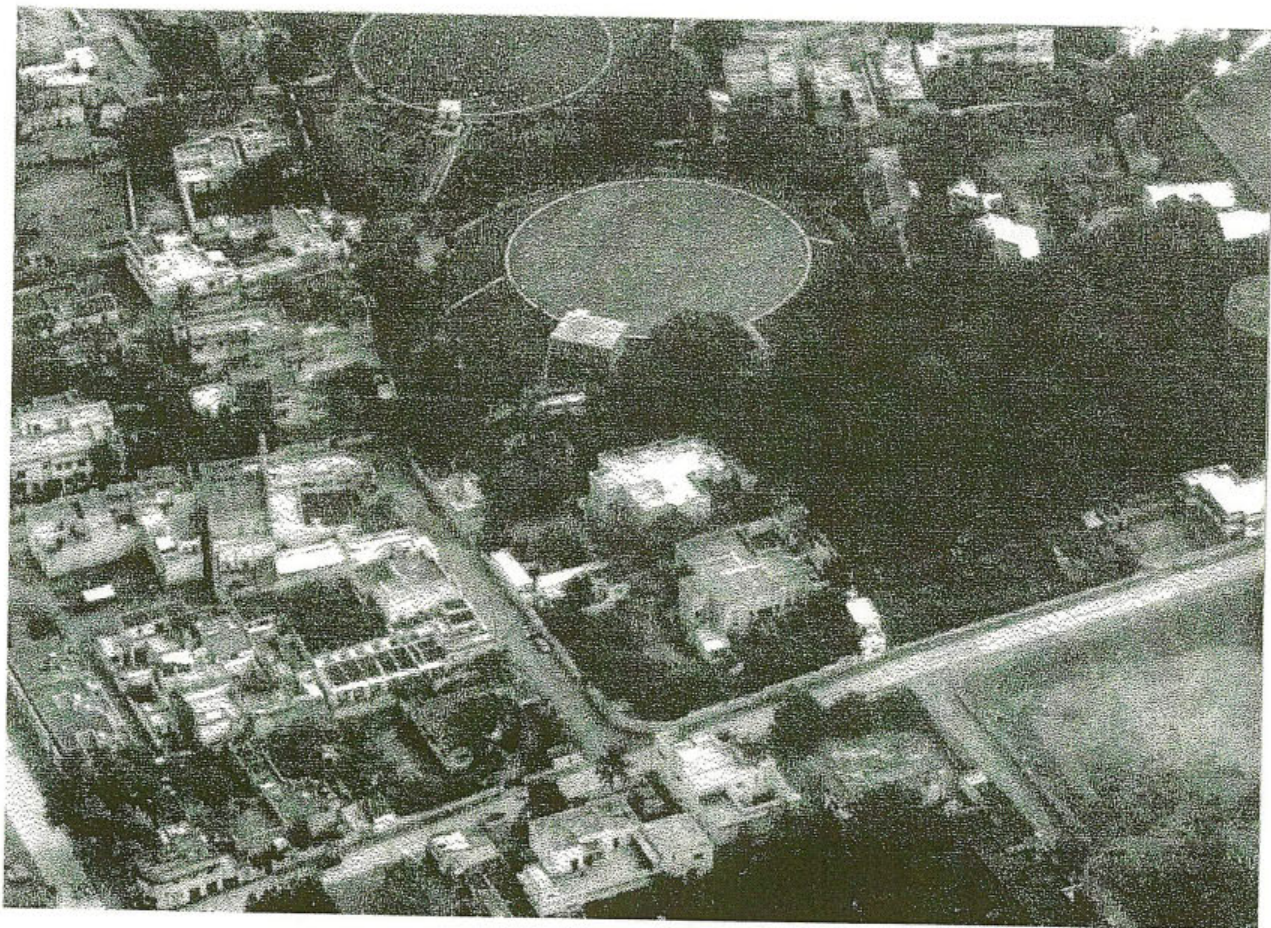
I have attached a couple of photographs of my brothers and sisters. These were taken on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1957. This was taken in our house at Red Hills. The tree behind us is a red guava tree. This tree was my favorite place to study, eat and take siestas. I have spent a lot of time on that tree. The pink colored guavas this tree produced were sweet and juicy. Under this tree is a tin roof so it is safe if one falls from the tree.

My family moved to Red Hills eleven months after my birth. This is about 3-4 miles away from our old house in "Katalmundi." My grand-father had bought the Red Hills and had built houses for all his children. This came to be known as "Arastu Colony" later.

The photo attached shows the aerial view of Red Hills.



## **The aerial view of Red Hills**





When my parent's house was ready we moved in. The houses then were very airy and big. Living quarters were on one side of the property and kitchen, dining, and servant's quarters were on the other side of the house, with a garden in between. There was a covered pathway which led to the kitchen. The house had two entrances, one for gentlemen, called "Mardani" and the other for women, "Zanani". When men guests came to visit they came from the men's side and sat in "Mardani-Kamra", which was a living room for men. Women came from the "Zanani" side and sat in the "Zanani-Kamra". This was there because the "Pardah", (ladies didn't come in front of strange men) system was there when I was growing up.

My grand-father (my dad's father) lived in Husaini-alam, in old city, about 5-6 miles from Red Hills. However, my grand-father passed away when I was 2 months old. My grand-mother still lived there after his death.

I remember, there were 4 guards always at my grand-father's gate. They had this thick curtain which was held with two poles on either side. When a "shakram", with ladies came to the gate, two guards stood at the entrance, while the other two ran to the vehicle so the ladies could get out and pass from in between the curtains and get to the door. (Shakram is a horse driven buggy for traveling)

This system slowly gave way to requesting men to turn the other way while ladies were passing. I remember, once, my mischievous nephew once told the man to turn saying my aunt has already gone inside when she was still half way. That was so funny. The "pardah" system slowly vanished all together when I was in my teens.

My mother was forty-one years old and my dad was forty-five when they had me. I was already an aunt at birth, you know, because my two nieces, My eldest brother, Riazath Husain's daughter, Afsar, and my eldest sister, Razia Begum's daughter Rafia, were already born before me. Afsar is 6 months older than Rafia and Rafia is 2 months older than me. It must have

been embarrassing for my mother to have me so late in life, I guess. Just think about it – Mother, mother-in-law, having a baby at the same time as her daughter and daughter-in-law! It was beneficial in one way, because, at one time I was crying with hunger while my mother was having a bath, and my sister breast fed me instead of waiting to keep me quiet!

My father was the son of: are you ready for this? Here it comes.....

Dr. Sheikh Abdul Husain, Moinul Hukmah Jaliluddin, Nawab Arastu Yar Jung Bahadur. The Sheikh and Moinul Hukmah Jaliluddin title was given to him by Dr. Syedna Taher Saifuddin, the Spiritual Leader of Bohras. Mir Mahbub Ali Khan, the 6<sup>th</sup> Nizam of Hyderabad gave him the title of Nawab Arastu Yar Jung Bahaddur. After the death of the 6<sup>th</sup> Nizam, Mir Osman Ali Khan, the 7<sup>th</sup> Nizam took charge of Hyderabad.

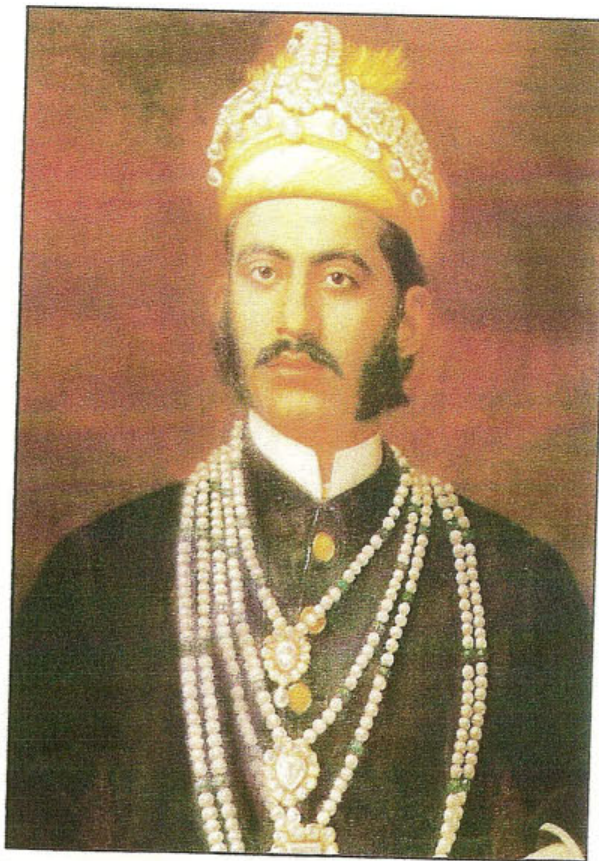
Photos attached:



Mir Mahbub Ali Khan – The 6<sup>th</sup> Nizam of Hyderabad.



7. Mir Mahbub Ali Khan with jewellery. (Mujeeb)



8. Nizam VI wearing Jewellery of various types. (S.J.M.)

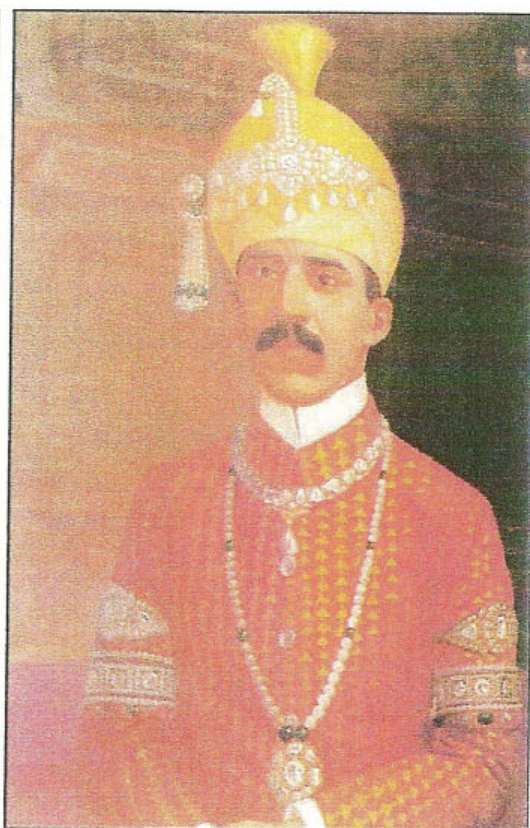


Mir Osman Ali Khan – The 7<sup>th</sup> Nizam of Hyderabad.

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9. The Nizam VII with various types of jewellery. (Mujeeb)





After Mehbub Ali Pasha, his son, Osman Ali Pasha became the king and that was the last king Hyderabad ever saw. The title **Arastu** comes from the Greek philosopher's name, Aristotle. My grandfather became famous in Hyderabad as the first surgeon of Hyderabad. People thought he was some kind of saint, as he healed people in various ways. There is whole book about him, "Masihey Deccan", Dr. Arastu Yar Junj Bahaddur written by his youngest daughter, Bilkis Abid Ali.

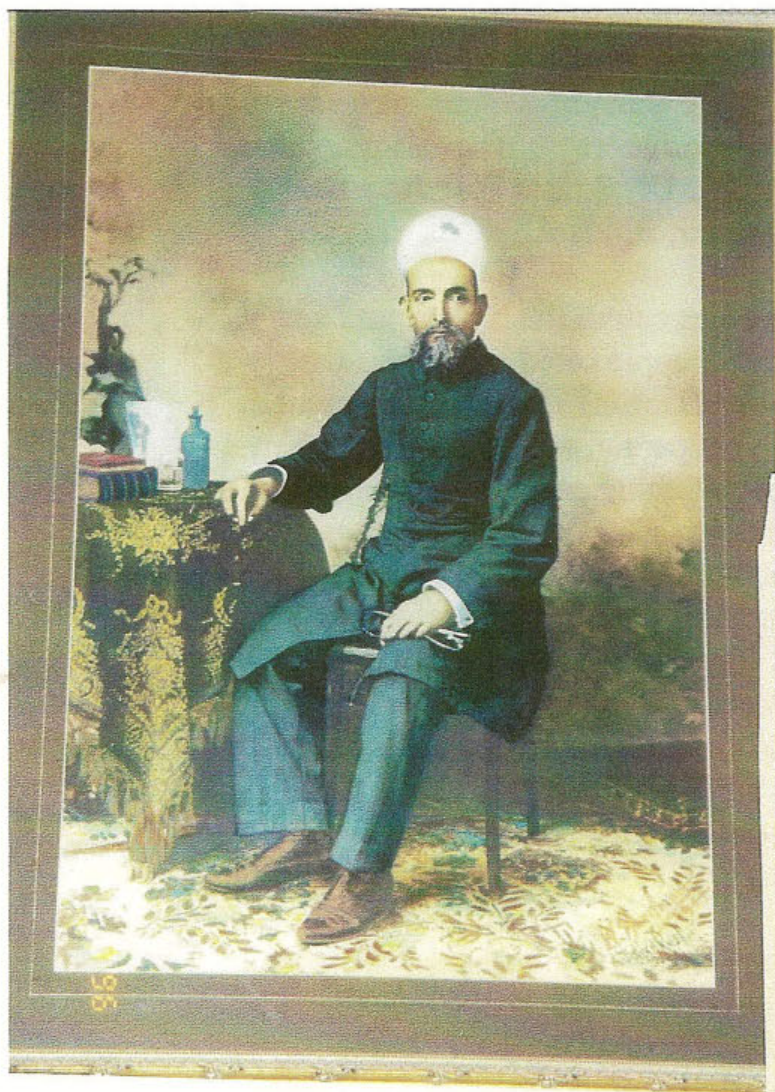
My grandfather was the first surgeon of the Nizam, and was loved by one and all. Actually people often called him the **healer of Deccan** (Hyderabad Deccan). His teachers wanted him to become an engineer; his parent, especially his mother, was discouraging him from becoming a doctor, because he will have to read really fat big books. She thought he, will become sick reading those heavy books. Little did she know her son would become such an important and famous doctor who will heal so many people! She would always stop him from reading those books so he would wait till the parents were asleep and then he would take his books outside and study under the street lights. In those days there was no electricity, so they used kerosene oil lamps, which did not give much light. However, that is how he studied.

When he was 19 years of age, and in his third year of medical college, he was married to a 16 year- old- girl, by the name of Amtul Khayum Begum, daughter of a very well known Hyderabad by the name of Sheik-ul-afzal Murad Ali. They both had nine siblings. The eldest was a daughter, then came another daughter, Ammul Qayum (baba was very close to her), then Dr. Khursheed Husain, Fida Husain, Mazhar Husain, Asgar Husain, (my dad), Aziziunnissa Begum, Tajamul Husain, and Dr. Feroze Husain. When my grandmother, (dadijaan) died, my grandfather married again. Then they together had three more siblings, Kaneez Fatima Begum, Bilquis Fatima Begum, and Dr. Fakhruddin Husain.

My grand father's photos are attached, one showing him in his usual attire, and the other one in the king's court attire.



Photos of my grand father



میرزا حکیم قاسم علی اکبر حسین جلیل الدین نواب ارسطویا جنگ بہادر



At the age of 22 he became a doctor. After many good years of service to mankind, he passed away on 26<sup>th</sup> March, 1940, at the age of 84 years. When he was on his death bed, all his children were all around him praying Quran and Yasin, he called his eldest son, Dr. Khursheed Husain, and told him his time had come. "I want to tell you my last wish, and I want this last wish to be followed after I am gone."

### **My Grand Father's Last Wish.**

- 1. Always keep praying "salawath" and be in a state of "wazoo" Ready for prayers.**
- 2. He asked people who did not pray to leave the room, then he asked those who do not pray "shukrana Namaz" ie. (A prayer for thanks) to leave the room; he said, Not praying is like being ungrateful to God. Angels don't come to people who do not say their prayers.**
- 3. Educate children." (He said this three times)**

Then at 3:00 in the early morning he passed away. Thus, the healer of Deccan, true lover of mankind, caretaker of widows and orphans, and an excellent doctor, left this world.

My grandfather died, but left a legacy behind so he is still remembered. In Hyderabad, they celebrate "Arastu Day," where they talk about him and his deeds at a gathering every year.

He had also started the "Arastu Talimi Trust" This was property whose income was just for children's education. This way he made sure all Arastu children will be educated. The idea was when one gets educated in the field of his/her choice and starts making money, he/she should pay the dues back into the fund so that other children can benefit from this, and the



cycle of education continues. I paid my dues when I was able  
to make a living.  
Attached is my receipt. I paid my dues.  
Original Arastu Talimi Trust receipt

ORIGINAL

## ARASTU TALIMI TRUST

11-5-298, ARASTU COLONY, RED HILLS, HYDERABAD-4.

Date 3-6-1993

### RECEIPT

Reg. No.

Received with thanks a sum of Rs. 45.00 Rupees forty five us.

Dollars  
by Cash/Cheque from M/s. Saleha Lakdawala

No. 021202337 D/- 21/4/93 B/o Mr. Agar Husain

towards returned of educational loan by part payment / full payment / ins-  
talment given to him / her by the trust on \_\_\_\_\_

Balance due Nil



In  
Secretary  
ARASTU TALIMI TRUST

It is interesting to see how little money an elite private school cost in those days. I paid \$45.00. At that time it was a lot of money. Nearly all Arastu children benefited from this fund. However, as the time went by some Arastu members started misusing these funds, thus causing some friction within the family. It's very sad. Sigh.....

There are many interesting stories about grandfather which are unbelievable. Here are some of the stories.

My father was studying in Aligarh, and so was living in a hostel. At one time during his school year, my father's nose started bleeding and did not stop bleeding. All sorts of doctors were called but no one could stop the bleeding. They finally called my grandfather, who came into the room where my dad was and took a cotton swab, put it to his son's nose and told his son, why are you making all these excuses, nothing is wrong with you -- and the bleeding stopped right away. Everybody in the room was shocked to see this. There are many such incidences we heard as we were growing up.

It was fun to visit grandmother for all special occasions. The whole Arastu family would gather in her house and we children would all play together. My cousins and I were stealing crystal pieces from the crystal glass curtains she had so we could look at the beautiful colors through the prisms in light. We also stole her "churan", which was this sweet and sour stuff that was supposed to be good for digestion. I don't know about that, all I know was, it was very tasty.

My ears were pierced on the day of "Ashura" that is the 10<sup>th</sup> of Moharrum, on 12<sup>th</sup> January, 1942. In those days, they used to do such things as ear piercing on Ashura Day. I have no idea why. At the age of 15, the circumcision was performed on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April, 1954, by Maryam-bu. I still remember her face very well and I never liked that woman after what she did! This barbaric act if now performed would hold my parents responsible for doing injustice to a child because of their own peace of mind. They cut out the tip of the clitoris. This curbs any sexual desire in the life of the individual.

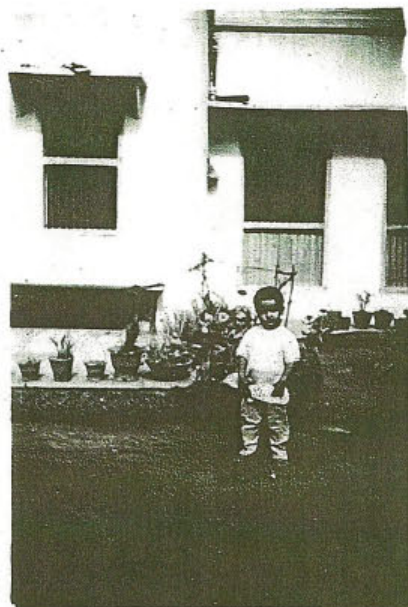


My first photograph taken was when I was 9 months old, 16<sup>th</sup> June, 1940. (Photo attached) This was taken at Kattelmundi, where I was born. It's a group photograph with Rafia, Sajida Apa, Arif Bhai and me. The other photo is of Rafia and me. (Maybe, there were some photographs but these were what I have).





Various photographs of my childhood



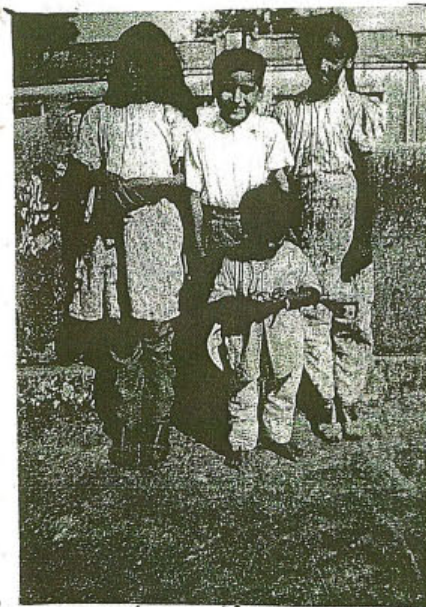
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صالحه بیگم

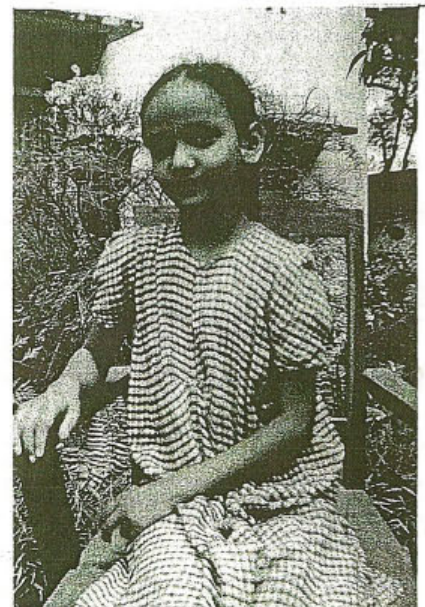


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صالحه امینو بیگم



صالحه - نامر - فخر - رفیع ۱۹۴۱-۱۱-۲۰





# Various photographs of my childhood



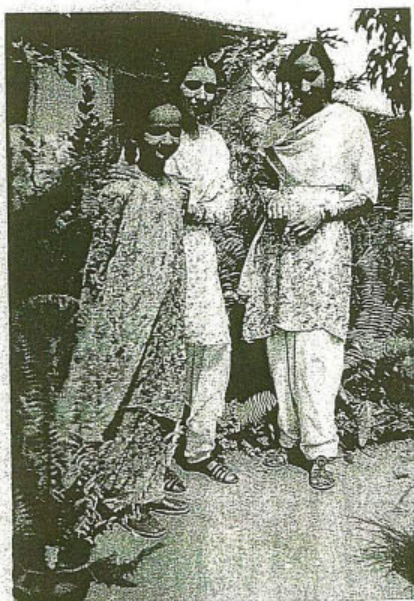
ماثر - رابع - محم - ناصر - نورا - 11-1-77



نورا - احمد - ربيع - صالي - نورا - افر - رابع - قيس - 8-2-78



SALENA 12-12-79



I was two years and three months when I traveled in a train to Aligarh with my parents to see my brother, Surfraz. This was not a fun trip. We went because my brother, Surfraz, had typhoid and was very sick. I have some photographs of Aligarh here.

I was teased by Fakhruddin Chicha, Nayer Bhai, Iqbal Bhai (Shabbir Chicha's) who were attending school with Surfraz Bhai at the time. They would say to me, "Katty", which meant, I am not talking to you. That would make me very sad and made me cry. My brother would say, "Don't cry, say, 'katty tho katty sabun ki batty.'" This doesn't really mean anything, but at least I had something to say back to them.

In Aligarh they used to have "Yakkas", a pony driven cart where two people could easily sit. This was the mode of communication in Aligarh. (Photos attached)



Photos taken at Aligarh – the baby is me.





The Aligarh photos continued..





You know what is so funny. My brother, Riazath Bhai, and my sister, Razia Apa were already married and had one child each when I was born, so I didn't see them get married. My nieces are older than me. That is, I was born an aunt!

Then June, 1945 Surfraz Bhai married Maryam Bhabi. That's when I met Zainub Husain (then she was Zainab Hakim Sahib's daughter), Bhabi's sister. We are still good friends today. We were six years old then. Zainab was always at our house so I tease her saying she came with Maryam bhabi's Trousseau. This is the only photo of Surfraz Bhai's wedding, which was taken five days after they were married. Nobody owned a camera in those days. Only Abde Ali Bhai had a camera because he had just returned from America after completing his studies.



My mother's mother, Amtulla Boo, my Nani, died on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, 1947 when I was 8 years old. She was living with us at the time of her death. She was very old and could not stand up at all. She walked sitting down. I have never seen her stand up straight. She had problem with her bones or muscles I think. I remember she used to live in "Bare Baug" which means "Big Garden". My grandfather owned a garden. It was called "Big Garden" because it was big I suppose. However, my maternal Grandmother lived in this garden, in one small room, all by herself. She did her own cooking and everything. My mother couldn't see her living like that and brought her back home to live with us. She was a strong headed woman. She was very fond of Arif Bhai. She refused to eat unless Arif Bhai brought her food.



## Arif Institute

Before I joined the real school, I used to attend my brother's school at home, called The Arif Institute. This school opened when the main schools closed down for the summer. This school was free. My brother was in high school when he opened this school. Other students who attended this school regularly with me were Rafia, Durreshewar, Afsar, Zafar, Safdar, Nasima, Shameem, Gazanfer, Nilofer, Fareeda, Ajmal, and others. Arif Bhai had helpers to teach. They were Nooru Apa, and Hyder Karim Bhai. Hyder Bhai taught maths, and all the other subjects were taught by Arif Bhai and Nooru Apa.

This was just like a regular school, where attendance was taken. Time was crucial knowing Arif Bhai, (Arif Bhai was so punctual that people use to set their watches according to his schedule.) When his room lights turn off, it must be 8:00 PM. It is time for Arif to go for dinner. It is true.

At Arif Institute we had to be on guard at all the time, that is, if you wanted to collect pennies. If we prayed all five times, if we brushed our teeth morning and night, then parents signed a sheet saying that we did all that. We would then get one penny. We were so proud to earn that one penny. Arif Bhai had no money. Older people gave the donations. Abde Ali Bhai gave him two rupees which is equal to \$2.00. Two dollars worth of pennies took care of the pennies we used to get.

At Arif Institute, I remember, the first prize for coming first in a race was a pencil with the eraser attached. Second place was a pencil without the eraser. Third place was half a pencil with the eraser attached; fourth prize was half a pencil without the eraser. Championship was a cup made with the silver foil. However, we worked very hard for this.

Arif Bhai himself was quite small at the time. There was a comment at the back of my report card which read like this: "Saleha is poor in the subjects that are underlined with red. If she doesn't work hard then the subjects underlined with red will

also fail.” Isn’t that funny? When I grew up I used to tease him about that.

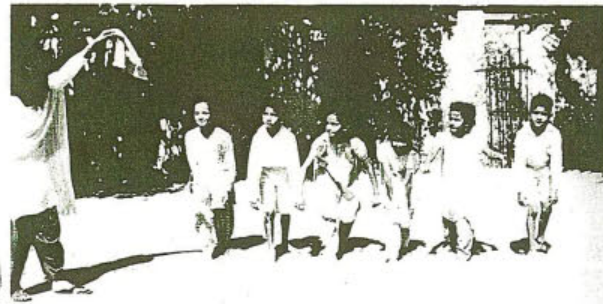
At the institute, we had regular daily classes, exams, sports day, and last day of school. Last day of school at the institute meant the regular school is about to start. We never had a vacation as such!

All the students at Arif Institute were divided into four groups, blue, green, yellow, and red. I was in the blue group. We finally had a Senior Cambridge Exam. I am glad I was one of the four who passed the “Arif Institute Senior Cambridge Exam”. The other three who passed were Rafia, Dureshewar, and Nasima. Three had failed. This was in 1953. In 1954 the school closed for good because Arif Bhai was doing B.Com and had no time.

Arif Institute Photos:



Arif Institute photos



### **A typical day in my life during the school days:**

I would be woken-up by my dad with a song. This song was about how the birds and the sun and all are up and doing the things they are suppose to do, which meant I should be getting up too. So I was up at 5:00am after washing up, say my morning prayers.

Then I would sit down with my father to read Quran with meaning. Then he would tell me all kinds of stories with some lesson in each one. This was until breakfast time.

Breakfast was always served at 8:00 AM sharp. Everyone had to be there on time. My mother would say, "I have other things to do, if you are not here on time everything else will be delayed." It is true we had a big family so mom had to start preparing for lunch at 1:00.

After breakfast, we all gathered at my father's brother, Mazher Husain uncle's house where a van took us all kids to school. The same van brought us back from school. If we had to wait for something or the other we walked home.

After coming home from school at about 4:00PM we had tea with some fruit or a cookie or something like that. Then we all gathered to play ping pong, ( table tennis, or "jhar – bunder, or "gulli dunda", or something else that we invented) We didn't have toys as such, so we played with a stray tennis ball one of us would find, or a rope, or a tree branch. We had fun playing hide and seek, as we could find many nice places to hide in all the places in big houses.

At the sound of Magrib Azan we just left everything and went either to mosque or home to pray. We had our own mosque in the midst of our houses. My Uncle had built this mosque when we moved to Red Hills. This was very convenient.



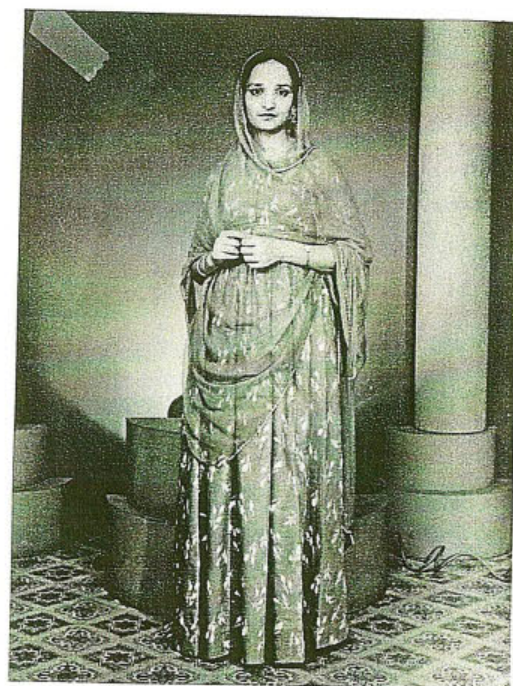
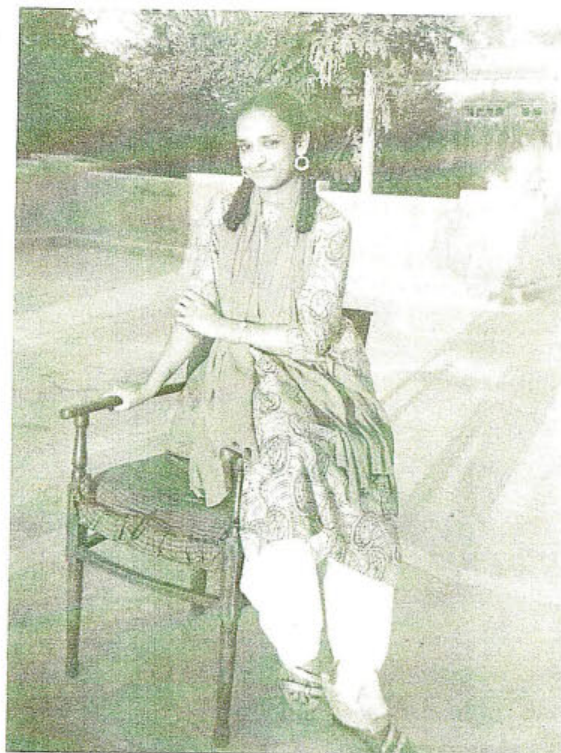
After magrib prayers my mother would sit with me to teach me prayers and verses from Quran. Then we had dinner at 8:00 PM. After dinner, complete homework, and then go to bed at 9:00 PM. This was a typical day.

Weekends were another story. I was very fond of climbing trees, jumping from high places on to a concrete floor. I pretended I was "Jhansi-ki-rani", a famous woman who was a warrior of her times. I used to get very tired and sometimes I would go under my parents' bed and sleep for hours at a time. Under the bed was nice and cool. My mother would look for me in the whole of Red Hills but never bothered to look under the bed! Nobody sleeps under the bed, except me! When I did get up she was mad at me for going away without telling her. I told her I was sleeping under the bed she would laugh and keep quiet.

I always loved dressing up: Attached here are some photographs of me.

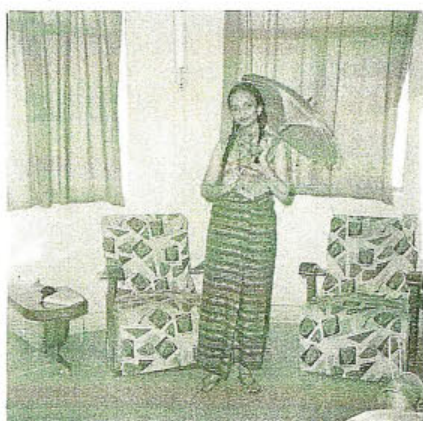
(The photos where I am wearing the shalwar, the saree, and the ghara were mailed to Sharaf in Bombay. After our wedding I stayed in Bombay for 15 days and went back to Hyderabad to complete my studies. Sharaf had written that he wants some photos of me. On 12<sup>th</sup> March 1960 I had mailed these photos.)

Here I am dressed in a saree, Gharara, Shalwar-kurtha, and Bohri lady





I am dressed up as a Burmese, Hunter, Village girl, and in a skirt.





Dressed up as a, Tribal lady (Lambaran, and an 18<sup>th</sup> century lady with  
Brenda





### Arastu Science Club.

My Brother Arif Bhai, was the founder of Arastu Club. The membership was very nominal 25 cents. Arif Bhai was the most active member too. At this club we went for picnics, played games like, table tennis, badminton, volleyball, carrom. Then we had all kinds of competitions.

When Akthar Bhai returned from America after completing his studies, he affiliated the Arastu Club to American Science Club and thus Arastu Club became Arastu Science Club. Now, with this affiliation a documentary film show was arranged at my aunt's house once a week. A man from the American Library in Hyderabad would bring educational films for us. All Arastu family members used to gather for this.

We had regular annual meetings, accounts presented, new office bearers elected etc. I was the social secretary of this club one time. Photo of office bearers attached taken on 24<sup>th</sup> October, 1984.

Sitting L-R: Shamshad Husain(G.Sec.),Iqubal Husain(V.Pres.)  
Arif Husain(Pres.),Rafia Sultana(Sec.)  
Standing L-R: Safdar Husain(Asst. Sec.)Akthar Husain(Sp.  
Mem.),Saleha Begum(Soc. Sec.),Sarfraz Husain  
(Treasurer),Baquir Husain(Sports Sec.)



We had annual tournaments held and prizes given. We used to have a fair on Uncle Fida Husain's terrace every year. We could put up a stall and sell things, and half the profit we made went to the club. We also had fancy dress competitions. I won a prize for dressing up as a "sadhu" and a "pathan".

Photos attached:

Nooru Apa used to write plays. She would direct and then we would perform in front of our parents. They were very good plays. Photos attached. All this was during the summer vacations



Here I am dressed as (Sadhu), Aliya (blind man), Sayeda apa (negro)  
In the play I am the bride; then I am a doctor in a play, "Eye Doctor."



We used to go away for picnics for a couple of days to places like Himayath Sagar, Mir Alam Ka Talab, Osman Sagar, Gumbadane-Shahi. People go here for sight-seeing. Most of these are lakes with big bungalows with all kinds of facilities. We used to rent a bus or "lorry," where all the members of our club could fit. (Photos attached) This was a lot of fun, since we sang songs as we went to our destination. This was only twelve miles from home, but in those days the roads were not very good and we felt it took forever getting there. Here in US we go 25-30 miles every day for work!

At these long picnics, some boys were always trying to steal desserts and boiled eggs before dinner time. It was fun hiding desserts from those boys. We fooled them by putting look alike desserts in the refrigerator. Everyone enjoyed these pranks.

There was never a dull moment in our big family; there was always something going on. Every now and then we had competitions: kite flying competitions, grape growing competitions, designing a house competitions, pickle making competitions, "roti" making competitions, and so on. This was our uncle Dr. Khursheed Husain's idea.

We used to have Annual Tournaments also. I have attached two samples of Sports Certificates I was awarded for Table Tennis Singles.

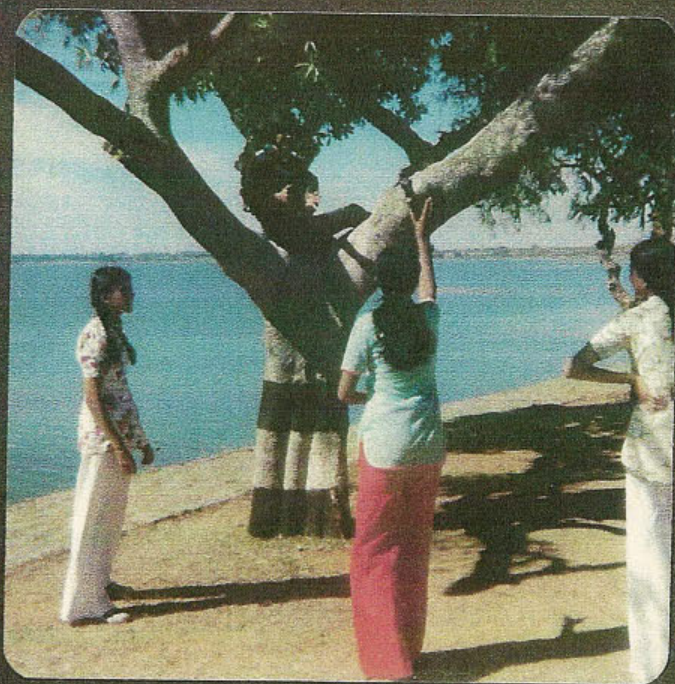
Then a day was fixed when our family gathered together to hear uncle Dr. Khursheed Husain discuss some basic body functions and how to keep ourselves healthy and common ailments and how to take care of them. The whole family took part in everything.

Arastu Science Club Photos attached:











Sample of Arastu Science Club Award Certificate

ARASTU SCIENCE CLUB



This is to certify that Saleha Asgar Husain  
was the winner of the First place in Ping Pong Singles - Ladies  
at the Annual Sports held in the year 1957

Date 25 January 1957.

Red Hills,  
Hyderabad-Dn.

Arastu  
Sports Secretary.

Arif Hussain  
President.

Another sample of Arastu Science Club award certificate.

# ARASTU SCIENCE CLUB



This is to certify that SALEHA ASGAR HUSAIN  
was the winner of the FIRST place in TABLE TENNIS SINGLES  
at the SPORTS TOURNAMENTS held in the year October, 1960.

Date 1st January 1961 .

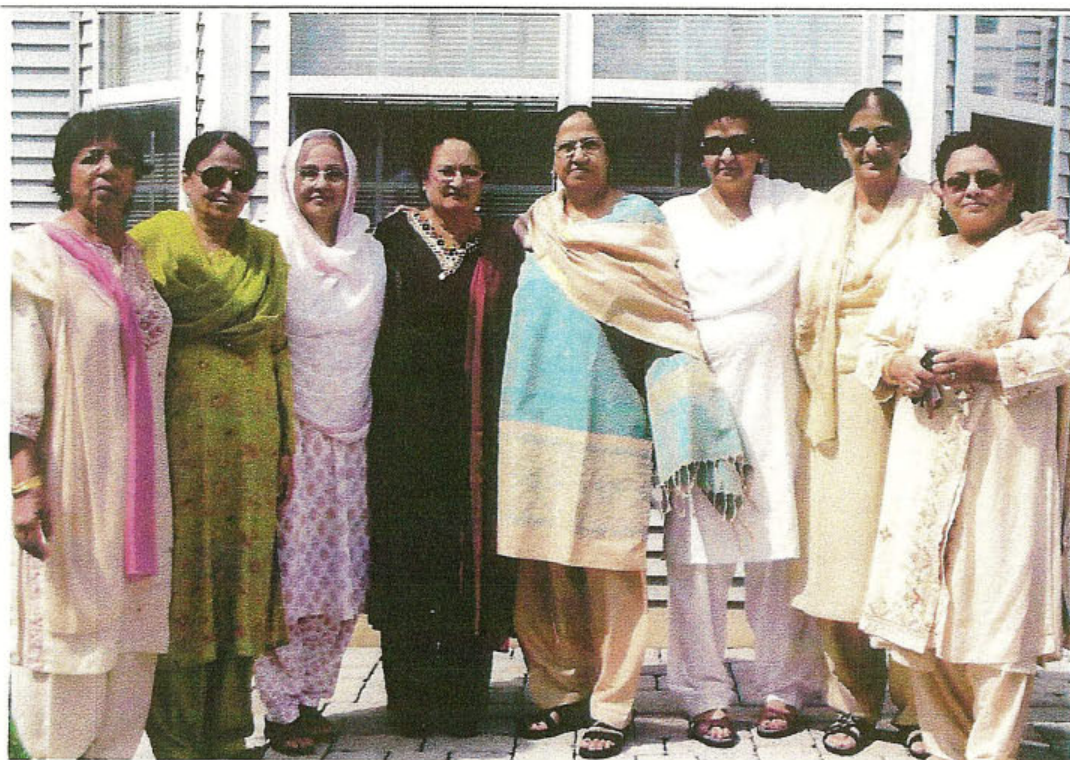
Red Hills,  
Hyderabad-Dn.

Noorul Husain  
General Secretary.

Bader Husain  
President.



Photograph of my friends then (1960) and now in June, 2006





Some more photographs of my friends in June, 2006





## St. Georges Grammar School

This was a private school, a very elite school on Abid Road, known as St. Georges Grammar School. St. Georges Grammar School was a Protestant school, which was run by missionaries from Australia. There were about three hundred students in the girls' school alone. The church was in the center, surrounded by Primary School, Girls School, Boys School, and the Sports Field where all three schools held their Sports Day. The majority of Arastu family children attended this school.

In 1945, my sister, Sajida Apa enrolled me in Saint George's Primary School. I cried a lot and didn't want to leave Sajida Apa. It took me a couple of days to settle down in school. There were two naughty boys in my class, Saifuddin and Salahuddin, who used to seal my lips with glue, but when I cried they used to say that they would take me to the principal's office. I used to cry inside me and had a very hard time. I met Naveed Reza (then she was, Naveed Amir Ali) in this class and we still are friends. (Naveed's photo attached)



I was not a very bright student; I was more interested in sports than studies. I always got some prize or the other in sports, never in studies. The names of teachers in primary school were Miss Admons, the principal, Miss Samuel, Miss Burton, and Mrs. Edwards.

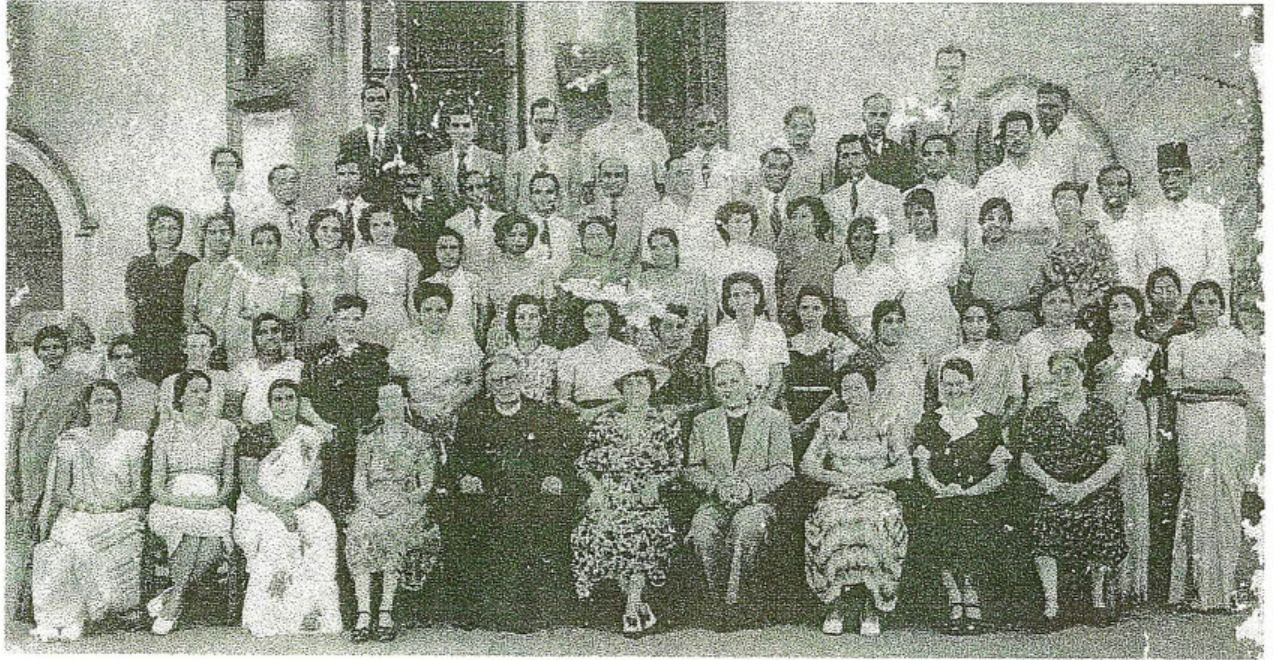
In 1949 I was graduated to St. Georges Girls' Grammar School. Here I was in grade two. Mrs. D'Costa was my teacher. She was very nice. The best part of this move was that boys and girls were separated, so I didn't have to be frightened by those two boys anymore. They were now in St. Georges Boys' Grammar School.

Life here was more interesting. There were Inter-School Sports Days, where all Hyderabad schools competed in races of all kinds of team sports. I was still not much interested in studies.

The teachers here were: Mrs. Hayes (principal) Mrs. D'Costa, Miss Greg, Mrs. Mogni Tabasum (Urdu teacher) Mrs. Jacks, Mrs. Paul, Mrs. Gwyne, Mrs. Mani, Mrs. Jacob, Miss DeSquire, Mrs. George, Mrs. Dutt (music teacher) Miss Culshaw, Miss Verma, Mrs. Furlong, Miss Rao, Mrs. Pothan, Mrs. Venkatranga, and Mrs. Naidu.  
School Teachers' photo attached:



St. Georges Grammar School Staff from all three schools,  
Primary, girls, and boys.



At age 10 I wrote this poem about my eldest uncle, Dr.  
Khurheed Husain Arastu and gave it to him. I had forgotten  
about this but his grandson sent it to me recently. Here it is:



Dr. Khursheed Husain Arastu's poem I wrote

**My Dear Uncle Dr. Khursheed Husain Arastu**

I had a grandfather of mine  
Who is known as Arastu of our time  
Whose sons are all so kind  
Whom you in the Red Hills find

Now I will tell you about the eldest  
Who you all know is the mildest  
He is the doctor you see  
Who don't take our fee

He is very happy in all his life  
Even as happy as his wife  
Rich will come to him as well as poor  
And all are quickly cured

He can cure any kind of disease  
So many from their disease are released  
He is the righteous man of god  
Who would pray and thank the lord

Oh, he is very lucky to see the holy places  
And everywhere he saw different dresses  
He even cured the people there as he used to do here  
That even the strange ones wanted him near

He shines like Khursheed  
The name he received  
I pray that he will always shine  
In his life long line

By Saleha Lakdawala  
8<sup>th</sup> December 1950

I had many extra-curricular activities while in school. I loved them all, but not studies. I was very much interested in collecting things, like postage stamps, photographs of babies, Match-box labels, and printed foils (these were sheets of printed foil, mainly used for wrapping candies.) Some certificates I was awarded are attached.

My eldest brother, Riazath Husain, was a very well known hobbyist, and a very well known stamp collector. He had a most magnificent collection of stamps from The Osman Shahi Dynasty (the dynasty in rule at the time) He had won a gold medal for this collection. He had other hobbies too, like coins, cigarette carton covers, first-day covers, to name a few. He was responsible for getting me interested in having hobbies. He used to hold exhibitions where anyone could display their collections. At one such exhibition in 1949 I displayed my collection. I was very proud when I was awarded two certificates, one for stamp collection and the other for matchbox labels in the Junior Section. This encouraged me a great deal, because I started collecting post-cards, candy covers, greeting cards, babies' photographs and so on.



Hobby Exhibition Award Certificate



HYDERABAD HOBBY ENTERPRISER'S

HOBBY EXHIBITION

1949

JUNIOR

~~1ST CLASS~~

~~2ND CLASS~~

CERTIFICATE

AWARDED TO

Miss. Salaha Begum

Age \_\_\_\_\_ For the Exhibits \_\_\_\_\_

Postage stamps & Match labels (Special Prize)  
displayed at the

HOBBY EXHIBITION

Issued this day 5<sup>th</sup> June 1949

RED HILLS.

Chairman

Abdullah

Committee of Awards



ASSOCIATION OF HOBBYISTS  
ANDHRA PRADESH  
HYDERABAD

Educational Hobbies Exhibition  
1956

CERTIFICATE

Awarded to

*Miss Saleha Begum*  
For the Exhibits *Babies Album*

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Issued this day *26<sup>th</sup>* December 1956

ST. GEORGE'S GYMNASIUM HALL,  
ABID ROAD, HYDERABAD.

*R. Hussain*  
Secretary

*N. Durgiah*  
N. DURGIAH, I.A.S.  
Chairman

EDUCATIONAL HOBBIES EXHIBITION  
COMMITTEE



When I was in grammar school the Seventh Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Osman Ali Khan, actually the last, was still alive. He passed by our school often. Our school was close to his "King Kothi" , (king's palace) There were whistles blown and a lot of noise, and we would run to the gate to see our king passing. All traffic stopped at this time. He was the 3<sup>rd</sup> richest man in the world, yet he was a very simple man. He was not a shia but respected many shia traditions. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of Moharram, he was clad in black "sherwani" white "pyjama" (pants made with soft white cotton), and tire slippers. His head was uncovered as a mark of respect for Imam Husain. I actually saw him this way on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Moharram, at the place where "Bi Bi Ka Alam" meaning Bibi's standard,(respect for Bibi Fatema Zohra, whose son and family were brutally martyred at Karbala) which was carried on an elephant. This elephant was trained to do salaam to the Nizam as he came in sight. This is done every year on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Moharram.

February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1967 was the saddest day in the history of Hyderabad, when our beloved king died at his "King Kothi". The whole city came together and mourned for their king. His body was lying at King Kothi for public to pay their last respects to their beloved king. The next day was his funeral and the crowd was unbelievable, people from all religions were there, as the procession started from King Kothi to Mecca Masjid in down town Hyderabad. The roof tops and roads were packed with people wearing black to have a look at their hero. It took a long long time for the body to reach Mecca Masjid for Namaze-janaza. His body was brought back to Jodi Mosque, near King Kothi, and was buried beside his mother. My brother, Arif Bhai took part in the funeral procession with my cousin Noor Bhai.

At the start, I was a very shy and quiet girl in Girls' School. In grade two, I won the Junior Sports Championship for the year. Nothing special about grade 3, but in grade 4, I won the Junior Sports Championship again. Then I was promoted to grade 5. Here I started opening up, and was not that shy and quiet girl anymore. I started enjoying school life and got involved in everything that went on in the school. I really enjoyed competing with other schools in the Inter School Sports. Every year I was chosen to take part in them. I have attached two certificates of many that I was awarded, one in 1953 and one in 1957.

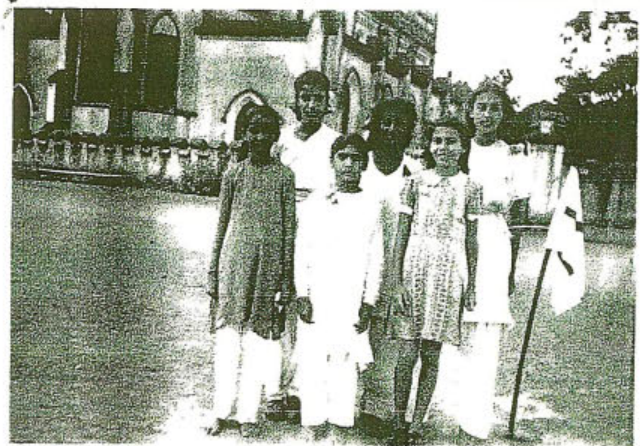
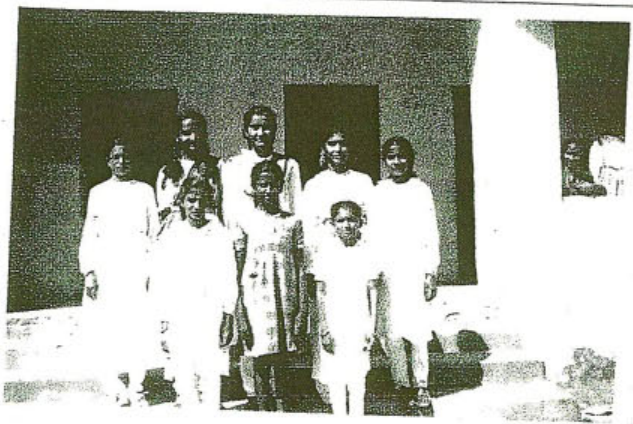
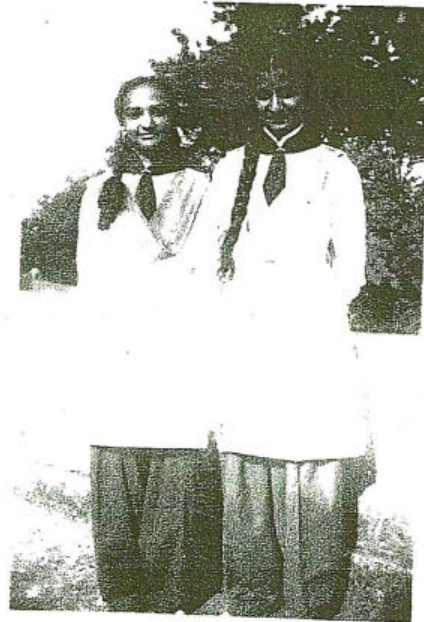
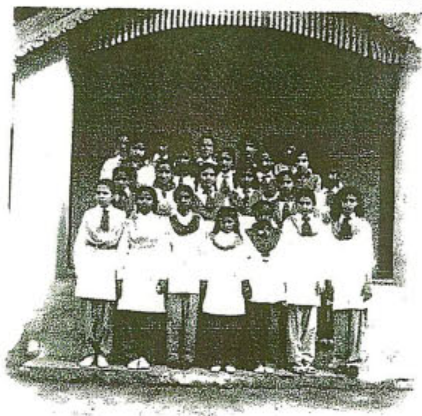
I won the middle school championships every year. I played pingpong, and won the championship for three years consecutively (7th-10<sup>th</sup> grades)

It was grade 7, when I joined the Girl Guides and I loved learning all the skills I was being taught. I won the best guide award. I also started writing poems, taking part in fancy dress competitions, acting in plays. Life was great for me and I enjoyed every moment of it.

Girl Guide uniform photographs attached:



Group photo of Girl Guides in uniform, Rafia and me in our uniforms  
Other two photos are of Sports Championship winners.



Inter School Sports Award Certificate for skipping rope race

Aided Schools' Women Teachers' Association

HYDERABAD-Dn.

INTER SCHOOL SPORTS

Certificate

Awarded to Salaha.

Of St. Georges Girls Grammar School.

For 1<sup>st</sup> Place In A. Division

Event Skipping Race.

Date 20<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1953.

M. Johnson.  
Convener.

Constance R. Hayes  
President.

C. P. Ltd.



Inter School Sports Award Certificate for Table Tennis

**Aided Schools' Women Teachers' Association**

**HYDERABAD-DN.**

**INTER-SCHOOL SPORTS**

**Certificate**

*Awarded to* Saleha

*Of* Sr. George's Grammar School for Girls

*For* I *Place* *In* A *Division*

*Event* Table - Tennis

*Date* 18. 10. 1957

*H. D'mello.*  
Convener.

*A. Raghuram*  
President.

SHYAM P. W.

I met Patricia Cole, (now Patricia DeVaux), an American girl who joined our school in grade 7. We soon became great friends (we still are good friends and still keep in touch). It was Pat's dad who asked my father if they could call me "Sally". Ever since my other name for people who find it difficult to pronounce my name is "Sally". Patricia now lives in the outskirts of Boston, MA. We get together often and remember our past, our good old days. After a couple of years at our school she left for States but we continued our friendship through letter writing.  
Our photo attached:





All the students of the school were divided into three groups at random. Each group had a name, blue team was called "Davidson", green team was called "Williams" and yellow team was called "Smith". I belonged to the blue team. Every team had a team captain. Captains were chosen every year by the student body. I was chosen the captain for Davidson's team. This was a great honor, because the captain led the whole team with the Davidson's flag in hand at special occasions. It was a great responsibility as well, because how well the team does becomes your responsibility. So you had to make the right decisions all the time. For all competitions the right girls had to be chosen so we did well as a team.

A couple of photos where I am showing my awards are shown here. Our Sports uniform was white tops and red skirts (combination of skirts and shorts) are shown here.



When I was in ninth grade we used to have school meetings every Saturday. This is when one of the girl's would read what someone has written about another girl. All the other girls had to guess the person about whom it was written. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of Feb. 1956 Chitra Krishnaswamy wrote about me and asked Naveed Amir Ali to read.

"The girl whom I am going to describe is rather tall, taller than most girls of her class and age. She has a smooth round brown face. She has very curly hair, black and rather short, a bit out of proportion to her long limbs. Her arms are also long with sleek and skillful fingers. She has a good physique and is healthy. It is an old adage which says that a friend in need is a friend indeed. The girl whom I am describing fits exactly into this. She is a very helpful and responsible girl who is prepared to undertake great duties and throughout her school career she has played a good part in the extra curricular activities of the school. She is good at sports and it is no wonder as she has a lithe agile body which is able to exert itself easily. She is perhaps the best long distance runner of our school. She is very interested in sports and often practices at one game or the other in her spare time. She is not a dull student but a hardworking one. She is ever ready to learn and sometimes goes to the extent to find out or check something of which she doubtful. I have always felt that she will do very well in the latter part of her life and might have a successful career.

Faithful, loyal and dutiful, it is not often that one finds her taking part in the quarrels and quibbles of a common school girls' life. A quiet girl by nature and not to take offence easily, she spends her time either arranging or working at something. She is on friendly terms with all the girls. She has a pleasant, easy-going manner which appeals to everyone. She is not a long suffering person, but a frank and jovial one, who does not think much of questioning other girls about such faults as back biting and foolish quarrelling.



She dresses neatly, observes the school rules in an average manner and does not wear satin and silk and finery even for important occasions at school. She has rather unusual tastes in hobbies for a girl of fifteen.

So, my friend and classmate is that sort of happy-go-lucky girl, who has a good deal of fun out of life. She is seldom out of humor. She is a person of who can be justly said that a friend in need is a friend indeed.

In ninth grade I was also elected the class prefect, Girl Guide leader, House Captain for Davidson's, and I signed up as a library helper. This made my day very busy and I enjoyed it. I won the Bhargova Cup for leadership and sporting spirit. I still took active part in Inter School Sports. I won the annual sports senior championship award. It was a very good year.

At age sixteen, I attended the First Andhra Pradesh Jamboree in 1958. Attached is the certificate. It was a great experience for me. I just couldn't stand the smell of the outdoor toilets so did not go to the bathroom at the Jamboree. I ended up in the hospital with severe constipation. On the whole it was a good learning experience.

The First Andhra Pradesh Jamboree Certificate

Bharat Scouts & Guides, Andhra Pradesh



The First Andhra Pradesh Jamboree

This is to certify that

Scout/Guide Saleha  
of St. Georges Grammar School  
Group/Company Volunt. patrol  
District Chadarghat No. 11  
attended the First Andhra Pradesh  
Jamboree held at Secunderabad Race  
Course Grounds, from 8th to 14th  
January 1958.

J. R. Ranji  
State Commissioner ( )

M. K. S. Rao  
State Chief Commissioner

Dated January 13, 1958



Before starting grade ten, I started tutoring a student from Stanley School for 20 rupees per month. Slowly the number of students increased to three. This made for good pocket money.

In December 1957, Mr. and Mrs. Hayes left for Australia and Ms. K. H. Culshaw replaced Mrs. Hayes as the headmistress of St. Georges Girls Grammar School. I was very upset about Mrs. Hayes leaving, because she was my friend more than the principal. We promised to keep in touch. We did keep in touch until she passed away. Mrs. Hayes was Ms. Isom before she got married. She married Mr. Hayes, from St. Georges Boys Grammar School in 1952. We gave her Indian clothes as a gift, which she wore.

Our school had five prefects to check if all the girls were following the school rules. I was one of the five prefects.

In grade ten I was elected as the school captain. School captain or head girl is selected from the five prefects. I was thrilled to receive this honor. I was to hoist our national flag, give speeches, plant a tree, and, on our Annual Sports Day my mother was honored, by making her the chief guest, and she was asked to give away the prizes. She did come and did the honors and was happy to do so. It was funny, and everyone cheered as she gave me quite a few of those prizes and the championship.

I always carried the Girl Guides banner for our school. At the end of the year I received the Bilgrami Guide Award, which was awarded to the best guide. I also got the School Captain's award, (our school emblem carved in ivory). I passed my Senior Cambridge and left my dear school for good. Our high school certificate was a Cambridge Examination Certificate from England. Papers were sent to England for correction.

I passed Overseas Senior Cambridge Examinations in 1957. I joined Women's college to do PUC. This is short for Pre-University Course. Later went to Nizam College to complete PPC. This is short for Pre-professional Course. Since I chose dentistry I moved to Saifabad College where dentistry was offered. The plan was to get into Dentistry and then on to do MBBS. I always wanted to be a doctor. In Saifabad Science College of Hyderabad I won the Table-Tennis Mixed Doubles award. Certificate is attached. However, the plans to become a doctor failed when I got married and moved to Bombay.



Certificate from Saifabad Science College for table tennis

**SAIFABAD SCIENCE COLLEGE  
HYDERABAD**

**Games & Sports**

1959-60

This is to Certify that MISS SALEHA ASGHAR HUSAIN

Student of B.D.S. class has been awarded WINNER'S

Prize in TABLE-TENNIS MIXED DOUBLES

Date June 17, 1960

Michael  
Physical Instructor

W. K. L. un  
Principal

My neice, Rafia, was getting married to Abdul Husain from Bhopal. Sharaf Ali Lakdawala came for the wedding as his friend. Sharaf Ali had his own business in Bhopal. He had an agency to sell fans. He was very impressed with the Arastu family, and decided he will marry a girl from this family. He came back to Hyderabad to see me, as my brother-in-law, Hassan Abid Ali, who was also from Bhopal, suggested. When Sharaf came a picnic was arranged so we could get to know each other. There were other people there too. At the picnic he offered me a coconut, which I refused, because I already had one in my hand. He took that as a "No" from my side. I was just being practical. He told me this later. However, when he was leaving, my mischievous nephew, Zafar, cut a rose from my garden and gave it to Sharaf, saying I sent it. This was not true, because I didn't know about the rose till after our marriage. Sharaf, believed that I sent it and saved it. He saved it in an envelope which said, "It started with a rose" Many years later; I found the rose and asked about it. He said, "That was the rose you sent with Zafar when I was leaving Hyderabad". We had a good laugh.

Then his family sent a telegram saying they are coming to Hyderabad. They showed up one morning from Bombay. Sharaf was not with them. I was all ready to go to college with my friend, Nasima Abde Ali. I was told I was getting engaged so I couldn't go to school. I was very upset because that day we were going to dissect a "Ranatigrina", that is the Zoological name for a big frog-- easy to dissect. That was it. I was engaged to a man I hardly knew just saw a couple of times. Fifteen days later comes a telegram, which read, "We are coming for the wedding, Get ready."

Fifteen days later, on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1960 I was married to Sharaf Ali Mohammedibhai Lakdawala. Up until the day of my wedding I had no idea what marriage was all about. When Shireen Rangoonwalla told me what happens on the wedding night, I refused to get married. She was very stern and said I will have to get married because all the invitations have already been sent and all the people are already coming for the



wedding. I cried and had no choice but to get married. I had no idea who I was marrying, having hardly met him except for a couple of times.

Sharaf was very handsome, tall, and had a wheat-colored complexion. He was very fond of reading and he would pick up a sheet of fallen paper from the street to read. He was very knowledgeable and could talk to you on any topic. He loved to be with people and enjoyed his life in Canada. He had started writing a novel that was never completed. He was very good in mathematics. Another fascination he had was maps. Give him a globe and he would spend hours looking at it and measuring distances from one place to another. He did not like swimming or putting his head in water. My friends use to call him "Gregory Peck", and "Black Devanand", who were famous movie stars at the time.

Sharaf was 12 years older than me and very mature compared to me, then twenty and very immature. Sharaf was born on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, in 1928. Somebody had his birth date mixed up when registering and his official date became, September 1, 1930. He loved the "Urdu" language and spoke it well in spite of his mother tongue being "Gujrathi". He wanted his children to speak Urdu. He was a happy go lucky man, enjoyed life, and he was well loved by everyone. Sharaf used to call me "Sillu" and wanted me to call him "Sheru". (We called each other these names till he passed away.)

Sharaf had been saving a dried pressed rose in an envelop. On the envelop it said, "It started with a rose". I asked him about the rose. He said that was the rose I had given him when he left Hyderabad after the picnic we had been to together. I said I never sent that rose. Sharaf said Zafar gave it to him saying Saleha sent this for you. We had a good laugh over that. This is the rose he saved. (Attached rose and the envelop)

Sharaf's photograph, our wedding certificate, and our wedding photographs are attached:

It started with a rose.....



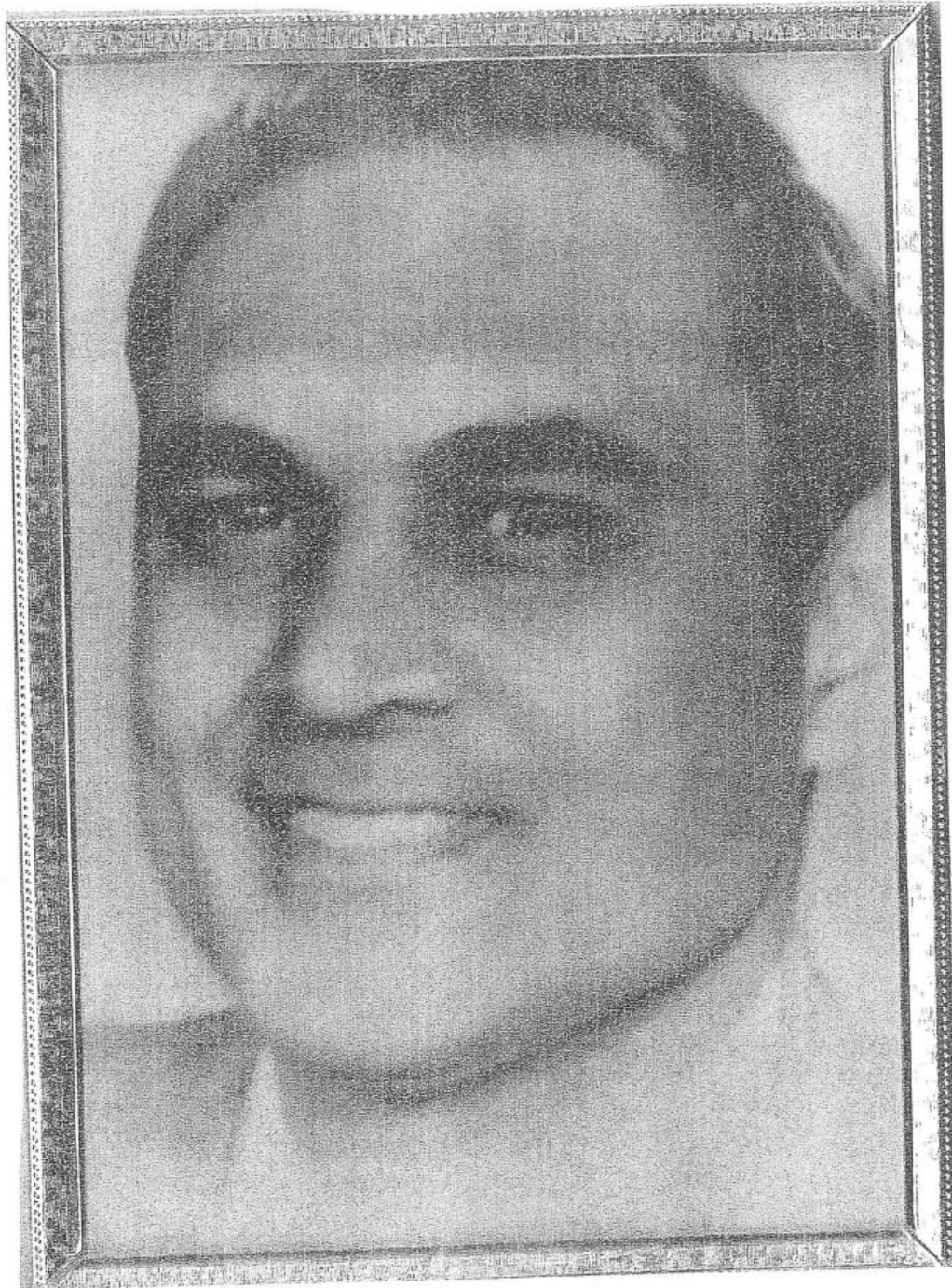
*It started with a rose.*



*July 1958*



Sharaf's photograph

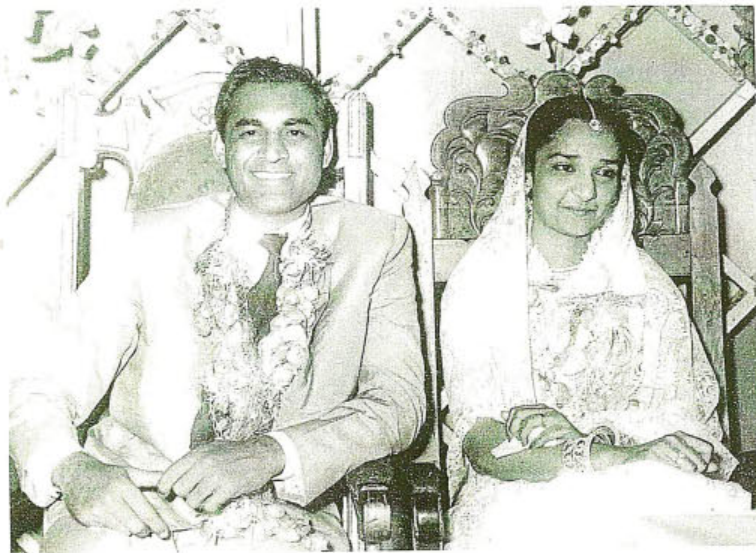


## Our wedding certificate

اُفارم دولہن نے اپوا واسطے اہنا ولی نے اپوئے



Our wedding photograph taken in Hyderabad.  
Our wedding reception at Bombay, with Fatema's



Two days after the wedding we left for Bombay. I was going to Bombay by train, with this whole gang who had come for my wedding. It was the first time in my life I was going to be away from my whole family, especially my parents, and that was hurting me a lot. In those days it was not that easy to stay in touch. We had no phones at both ends so we kept in touch by writing letters. Letters took days. I was going to be here for 15 days and then go back to Hyderabad to complete my studies.

## **BOMBAY---MARRIED LIFE**

When I went to Bombay, I found I had two mothers-in-law living in the same house with their respective families. My mother-law, Sharaf's mom, had one son and four daughters, of whom the eldest was already married and lived in Sri Lanka. The second got married at the time of my wedding reception in Bombay. Two sisters were left who lived at home. The other mother-in-law had three sons and one daughter living at home. The husband of course, lived there too. Now I was added to the already big family!

My real mother-in-law, Sharaf's mom, was the only child of her very rich parents. She was the only one who survived out of the few other children her parents had. The problem was every time her mother delivered a baby; the baby would live for a while and die before age seven. This was happening constantly. When my mother-in-law was born, her parents named her, "Allahrakhi Bai" which, in Urdu language, means "May Allah Keep Her." Her parents took an oath that if this girl lived for seven years they would weigh her in silver and distribute the equal amount of money among the poor and needy people. She did survive and the promise was kept.

However, when Allahrakhi Bai was still very young both the parents passed away, leaving this little girl with a large fortune. Allahrakhi Bai had seven aunts. All seven wanted to take care of her because of the money. However, one of them was given this honor. We will call her Aunt K. Aunt K, who already had a family of her own, now started using the money allotted



for Allahrakhi Bai for her own children, depriving the real owner, Allahrakhi Bai. However, Allahrakhi Bai grew up and got married to a fine gentleman, by the name of Mohamadibhai Lakdawala. They had four children, Sharaf and four girls. Allahrakhi bai's husband was a big business man, a timber merchant, "Lakdawala". However, he had a lot of health problems.

An employee at Mr. Lakdawala's company was a fellow by the name of Mr. Darbar. Mr. Darbar was a very clever and shrewd man. He had his eyes on Allahrakhi Bai. He knew that if he married Allahrakhi Bai after her husband's death he could be a rich man. So he started writing her letters of how much he cared for her and such. Soon Allahrakhi Bai's husband passed away, leaving small children. Sharaf, my husband, the eldest child, was then only ten years old.

The road for Darbar was now cleared. He told Allahrakhi Bai that if she married him he would take good care of her young children. She agreed to the offer he made and married him. He moved into Allahrakhi Bai's house with his whole family. Darbar's family was illiterate. Darbar's original wife, we will call her wife #1, was so afraid of Darbar that when she saw him coming home she used to hide under the bed. Darbar's children had lice in their hair and were dirty when they came to live with Allahrakhi Bai and her own children in her house.

She cleaned them up made new clothes for them and sent them to the local school with her own children. Darbar was always drunk. I never saw him sober. I saw him drunk in the morning, afternoon, and night. The two wives constantly fought and so did the children. What else do you expect!

When I got married and came to live in this household, I got a culture shock. What a different life style compared to where I was coming from. There was constant fighting, which I wasn't used to at all. Two families living together! Where did I end up, I was thinking.

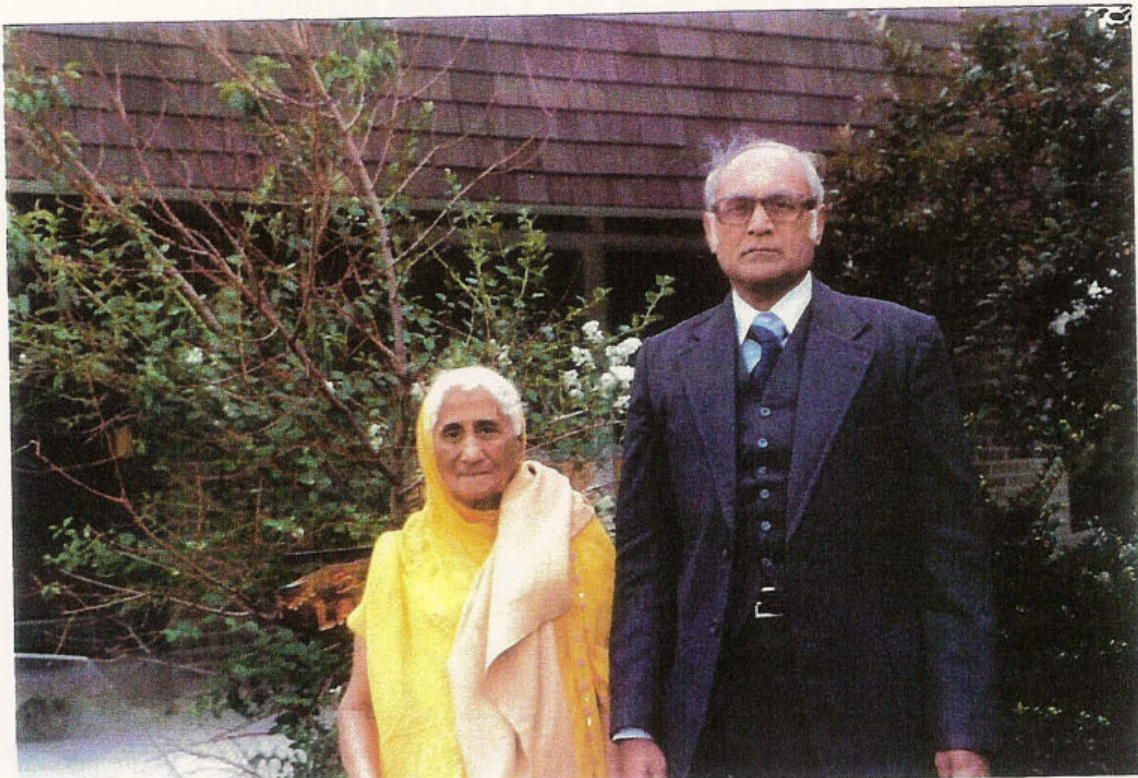
Life in Bombay was an awful period of my life. Sorry to say that, but it's true. It was very different kind of life than I was used to. I did not know a word of Gujarathi, the language my in-laws spoke. My mother tongue was Urdu. I was the youngest in their house, married to the eldest son. I just could not get use to the hustle and bustle of life in Bombay. I must say that in Bombay, people did everything for show. They had a different mentality from what I was used to. For my wedding, they had even rented my bedroom furniture for show. When I went back to Bombay after completing my school year, there was just a bed, and a cupboard in my room. I asked what happened to all the furniture in my room. I was told they had rented it for the wedding. I couldn't believe it.

That was the worst time of my married life. My life changed drastically and I cried every night in bed. I got terrible headaches all the time. I kept it to myself and suffered within. Many incidents happened. Once, my mother sent "halwa sahn ki tikki" (it is a dessert that I loved) for me with someone who was visiting from Hyderabad. My father-in-law distributed them to the servants instead of giving me the box, right in front of my eyes. I was heart broken and told my mother not to send anything any more. I told my mom I don't really care for those sweets any more. It still hurts when I think about it. However, let us not talk about how I suffered anymore. I survived it all.

Allahrakhi Bai's photo attached.



Mrs. Allahrakhi Bai, Mrs. Allahrakhi Bai with Sharafali



In March. 1961, at 21 years of age, I went to Hyderabad for my first delivery. It was customary for the girl to have the first delivery at her parent's house. Thank God for that!

We had a delivery room at our house in Hyderabad, which was always set up for deliveries. I was to deliver my baby there as well. When the time came I went in the delivery room and gave birth to a lovely daughter, Salima Begum, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April, 1961 at 5:20 PM. I missed the April fool's Day or else nobody would believe Salima's birth! Actually when a telegram was sent to my husband in Bombay which went like this..."boy oh boy! You are now a father." My in-laws in excitement thought it was a boy. It did cause quite a stir in Bombay.

I really wanted to name my daughter, "Sabrina" but my mother-in-law wanted to name her "Salima". I had to obey my mother-in-law according to tradition.

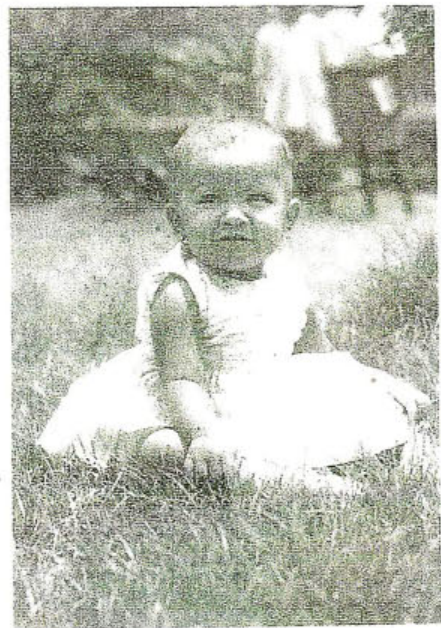
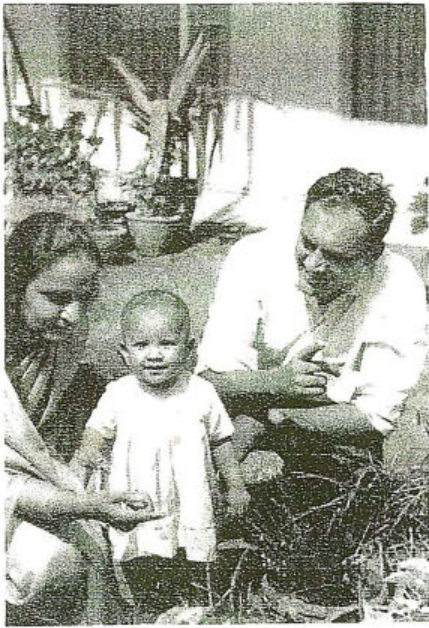
Salima's photos attached:



Salima's photos as a baby



More photos of Salima





Now that I had delivered, I was not allowed to step out of my house for forty days! Tradition again! That, was too much for me, a tom-boy, so one day I ran away to my eldest sister's house across the street without telling anybody. My sister was not very happy and told my mother about it and sent me back. I was scolded for that! Can you believe that?

On the 40<sup>th</sup> day, I was given this special bath, with Neam Tree leaves and certain herbs in hot water to kill all the germs from delivery. Neam Tree, (I do not know the botanical name for it) is used as an antiseptic for many things in India. I remember, as a kid I hated to wear earrings so my mother put Neam Tree sticks in my pierced ears to keep my holes from closing. I wore Neam Tree sticks for a long time. My mom always said, "You should have been born a boy, God should have put a bit of meat in the right place." And she would laugh at herself.

Salima was the first child in my husband's household after twenty-five years, with the result I hardly got to hold my baby. I am so glad I was feeding her or else I would never get to hold her in my arms. I used to cry a lot because I couldn't get to see her enough. Everyone in the house wanted to do everything for her. Salima was quite spoilt with lots of attention. We also had a nanny (ayah) for her who took care of her, bathed her, cleaned her, took her to a park in front of our house etc.

Every summer I used to look forward to go to Hyderabad and spend some time with my own family. One summer when Salima was one year old, I did the stupidest thing. There was a short cut to go to my friend's house. The short cut to my friend's house was to climb a tree and go over a wall and jump to the other side. So, I took Salima and made her sit on the wall. I climbed the tree but got caught on a branch and hurt myself. My clothes were torn and my back was bleeding. So, I had to return home. My mother was furious when she found out that I made a one year old baby sit on the wall.

My second grand-mother, paternal grand-mother passed away in 1965.

In 1965, four years after Salima's birth, I gave birth to another lovely girl, Suhaila. I had a miscarriage in between the two girls. Suhaila was born in Breach Candy Hospital, in Bombay, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March, 1965. I remember it was evening when she was born.

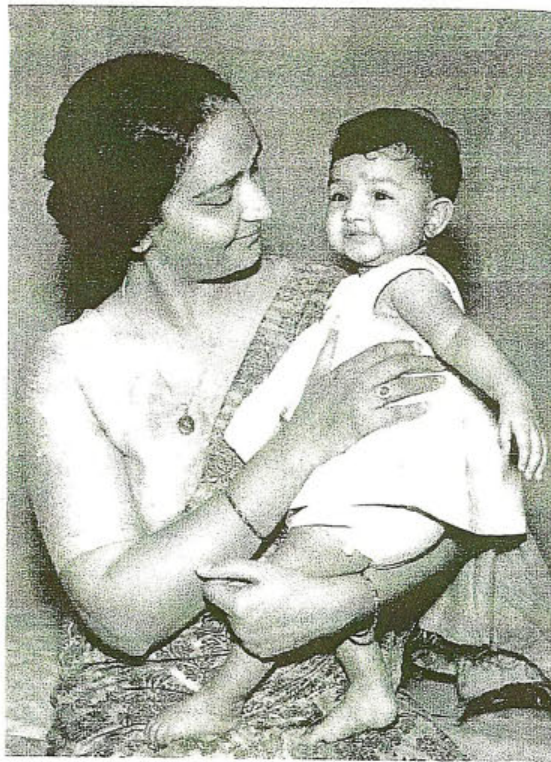
Actually, I was so sure I was going to give birth to a boy, so I had made all boys clothes and we had planned to call the baby Suhail. I was so shocked to see a girl. However, When I looked at her I was so happy to see this cute little baby girl looking at me with these big black eyes. I had no problem with Suhaila. She ate well, slept a lot and was easy to take care. My second baby, so I guess I was now more relaxed and experienced.

Suhaila used to sleep a lot. When she went to KG with her nanny, Celine, she used to go to sleep at school. Her teacher used to say she is "soela" "one who sleeps" not Suhaila.

Photos attached:



Suhaila's baby photos



Suhaila's photographs as a kid





Every summer I went back to Hyderabad. I used to look forward to this and I dreaded it when I had to go back to Bombay. It was hard living in a family where there were two mothers-in-laws who were constantly fighting, their children always fighting, Father-in-law was always drunk, and all these people lived in four rooms! There were 10 adults in that apartment! So you see there was a lot of commotion. I never told my own parents or my family how unhappy I was and pretended that all was fine. I did not want them to worry about anything in their old age. Nothing could be done about it anyway.

I had to get busy or rot away. I started taking brownies at St. Mary's School after school. There I met Ms. Tehmina Barma, who did a lot of social work. She has passed away since. May god bless her. She introduced me to SEC Day school for Crippled Children, short for, The Society for the Education of the Crippled (Child & Adult) in collaboration with The Bombay Municipal Corporation. This school was run by Mrs. Fatima Ismail who was the president. She started the school when her daughter had polio. I worked here for a couple of years as a voluntary teacher for handicrafts. Then in July 1967 I left to start my own business as an Interior Decorator.  
Letter attached from the school.

It was this school where I met my dear friend Brenda Kite. We both were working together. We have been very dear friends ever since.

Brenda's photograph attached:

Brenda Kite Norman Kite





S.E.C. Day School letter

S. E. C. DAY SCHOOL FOR CRIPPLED CHILDREN

Conducted by  
The Society for the Education of the Crippled (Child & Adult)  
in collaboration with  
The Bombay Municipal Corporation.

TELEPHONE: 373810

President	
MRS. FATHEMA ISMAIL	Tel. : 364178 371550
Vice-President	
MRS. ARJUMUND WAHABUDDIN AHMED	Tel. : 211229
Hon. Treasurers	
MRS. ALLOO B. KOTHAVALA	Tel. : 242612
MRS. KHORSHED KHESHVALA	Tel. : 366046
Hon. Gen. Secretary	
MISS TEHMINA BARMA	Tel. : 363066
Assoc. Hon. Gen. Secretary	
MRS. REHMUT FAZALEHOY	Tel. : 453010

Agripada Municipal School Bldg.  
MOTLIBAI STREET.  
BOMBAY-II.

Date July 24, 1967

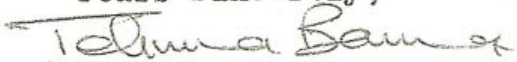
Dear Saleha:

On behalf of Mrs. Fathema Ismail and the Executive Committee of the Society for the Education of the Crippled (Child & Adult) I would like to convey our sincere thanks to you for having worked as a Voluntary Teacher for Handicraft in the S.E.C. Day School for Crippled Children.

We have all very much appreciated the time you have spared and the interest you have taken in your work. The children will certainly miss you. We do hope that whenever you have time, you will come and visit them.

Many thanks once again and wishing you all the best in your work,

Yours sincerely,

  
(Miss) Tehmina Barma  
Hon. Secretary

Mrs. Lakdawalla,  
Jasdanwalla Building  
(2nd Floor)  
Maulana Azad Road,  
Bombay-11

I started my own business with Hunsa Jhaveri. Hunsa and I had taken the Interior Decorating course together. I always loved decorating. I completed a two-year course and got my diploma as an advanced Interior Decorator. We were doing well in our newly established business, when we got our papers for Canada and decided to move to Toronto, Canada for good.

We have been thinking of getting out of that house because now we had two children and they were being exposed to bad habits. Soon we heard about this new building in Gwalior Tank where we could rent an apartment. So we moved there with my mother-in-law.

My step father-in-law was furious at this move. We were moving out of our house because of him and his family. My mother-in-law was now with us and she was the source of all the money. He did not like this arrangement.

When Sharaf had a cold he brought his doctor-friend, to see Sharaf. This fellow according to Darbar's instructions prescribed him Erythromycin pills to be taken in double dose. We were instructed to give him this medicine even at night. Sharaf was getting weaker and weaker. He had completed thirteen bottles of this stuff already. One of my neighbors who lived in the same building told me that my step father-in-law has been seen at odd hours of night looking up at our building, where our windows were. I thought this was very suspicious. Darbar was trying to kill Sharaf. Once Sharaf was out of his way he could have my mother-in-law, and her money back. Darbar was living off of my mother-in-law's funds.

I figured this out and called my doctor-friend, and told him to get Sharaf admitted in the hospital where he can keep an eye on him. He came right away and took Sharaf to his hospital. He discontinued the medicine and took him under his care. Very soon Sharaf was feeling fine and came back home. When I went to Hyderabad during Salima's summer vacation I took the bottle of that horrible medicine to show my cousin-doctor. I asked him if somebody has taken thirteen of these bottles what would happen to him. He said, "Is this person still alive? If he



is, his fingers must be all curled up.” My guess was right. If I had not acted when I did I would have lost my husband!

By the grace of almighty, our immigration papers to Canada came and we left India for good with my mother-in-law.

My sister, Sajida was living in Canada, and she saw how our lives could change if we moved to Canada. She had gotten me a job letter from the hospital where she worked and sent me all the paperwork to sponsor us. The Canadian Government had sent a letter saying it was not their policy to separate families. So we wrote back and asked them to give our whole family immigration. We did get the immigration, but it was a little late. By the time we got this, Sajida Apa and family had moved to the USA.

I learnt to drive from Ratanshi, Sharaf's friend. I got my Driver's license from Bombay, India in 1969 just before moving to Canada.

I have our family photograph attached, which was taken before we left India.

My Baba and my brother, Hatim Bhai had come from Hyderabad to help us pack our unaccompanied baggage. It was a great help indeed. The packing was so great that nothing was broken. It took six months for our stuff to get to Canada.

We moved to Canada:  
Photo attached:



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# Farewell to India for good



## Farewell to India for good

