

## **Post Script**

### **A FEW EXAMPLES**

Syed Ubaidur Rahman, in his book 'Muslim Freedom Fighters: Contribution of Indian Muslims in the Freedom Movement', has mentioned some individuals who gave up their profitable professions, practice or education only to join the freedom struggle. Incidentally, I came across one such person in Calcutta in 1975. He hailed from Allahabad, he came from a rich and prominent family very close to Nehrus. He was doing some business in Calcutta when I had a chance meeting with him. The old man was Mobarak Mazdoor by name. He was a student in Allahabad in early 1940s when the freedom movement was at its peak. I am narrating his story as he told me. I am very sorry that I could not meet him again as shortly after I left Calcutta, the enchanting Delhi got me completely enamored.

Mobarak Mazdoor (an unusual name for the son of a big businessman) says, "When Gandhi ji was arrested and sent to Naini jail, I was a student, the only person to go to jail along with him. When my father heard the news of my arrest he was severely shocked and died. He was a big businessman. He was in tourism business and guided tourist caravan from Afghanistan to Europe. He had seen the world twice before Nehru did. In 1947 when I heard that Nehru had accepted the partition plan I went to him, took off my Gandhi cap and consigned it to a match stick before him. In 1946 Calcutta riots, my car was the first one which was set on fire by a mob in front of Islamia Hospital."

Some leading poets had come to Calcutta in connection with a mushaira. We were sitting in the room of Nushur Wahedi while Firaq Gorakhpuri was staying in the adjoining room. Mobarak Mazdoor during the course of his rather emotional talk said that he had beaten Firaq Gorakhpuri with his shoe and that if he saw me here he would not enter the room. Incidentally, after a short while Firaq Sahab appeared, peeped into the room, saw Mobarak with a piercing eye and went on. Mobarak giggled. Unfortunately I could not see him again nor I could get a person

of those days from Allahabad from whom I could know more about him. Perhaps Allahabad had forgotten him like many others like him elsewhere.

A few years ago Door Darshan Urdu broadcast a series of interviews. A lady Nora Chopra was one of the participants I was struck to hear from her that she hailed from Allahabad where she was educated in a convent school and his father was Mobarak Mazdoor. Again unfortunately, I could not contact her. I wish someone who knew her would enlighten me. She passed away early last year (2017)

Another example is that of a forgotten hero of Kanpur. He was Professor Shabbir Ahmad, founder of Maulana Mohammad Ali Memorial School in Beconganj. As far as I remember he began that school in a few rented rooms in Humayun Bagh in 1937, the year when Kanpur had adopted me, a poor child. Thence on Shabbir Ahmad Sahab and the school were one and the same. He lived alone in the library room, had no traditional food, and would eat any single thing when felt hungry, any fruit, carrot, fried or unfried gram, milk, even a number of sugarcane. He travelled widely in the Far East during the war years to collect funds for the school building which was built years after. Once, on an Eid day I saw him down with high fever all alone in his library room. I asked him quite childishly why did he not marry. In plain and simple words he said, "I am in and out (of prison), I don't want to leave someone behind me uncared for. He had communist views like Maulana Hasrat Mohani in that very city (Molvi Fazlul Hasan Hasrat Mohani). He too was in and out of prison. I saw his glimpse only once. After an election victory processionists were carrying him over their heads. He was lying flat and garlands heaped upon him. Only pointed tip of his Turkish cap and the tip of his beard were visible. It is said that he had invented the popular slogan Inquilab Zindabad.

Shabbir Ahmad Sahab said goodbye to Kanpur in 1951 and left for Karachi. I asked him about his sudden decision. He said, "I established this school, built the school building and formed a managing committee, now the committee may not agree with me on issues and the conflict may only harm the school so I chose to withdraw completely". He never looked back and never came to Kanpur. The school management in its annual report for the year 1996 had mentioned him as late Shabbir Ahmad, one of the three founders of the School. Shame. He passed

away in 2004 in Karachi. After his retirement as a professor from the Hyderabad Sindh University, he lived with his niece in Karachi. He authored six books on the subject of education. I happened to meet him in 1988. We don't remember our benefactors.

Two more examples from Kanpur may not be out of place. These are two great people whom the city forgot. Dr. Abdus Samad, a Messiah for many. When he chose to leave Kanpur and left for Karachi, the whole city was in grief. A huge crowd saw him off with tearful eyes. Another benefactor was Sher Mohammad Khan, a teacher by profession but very active in social life. He was running the St. John's Ambulance Brigade and a running spirit behind the Scout Movement. He would be present with his first aid brigade on every occasion where there would be a crowd including mela or Ram Lila or even an accident. He too migrated to Karachi almost at the same time as Dr. Abdus Samad. It is rather peculiar coincidence that both of them passed away in mid 1990s when they were about to make their centuries.

I was talking about the forgotten heroes who offered great sacrifices for the future of ungrateful coming generations who chose only to forget them. This writing also happens to be a short glimpse of the memories of the city of my first love where my innocent childhood opened its eyes to the hazy world around and then the helpful benevolence of institutions like Madrasa Faiz-e-Aam, Kanya Kubja High School and Christ Church College groomed a poor young man to enable him to face the challenges of the vast unfathomed world spread from east to west and from the earth to the sky.