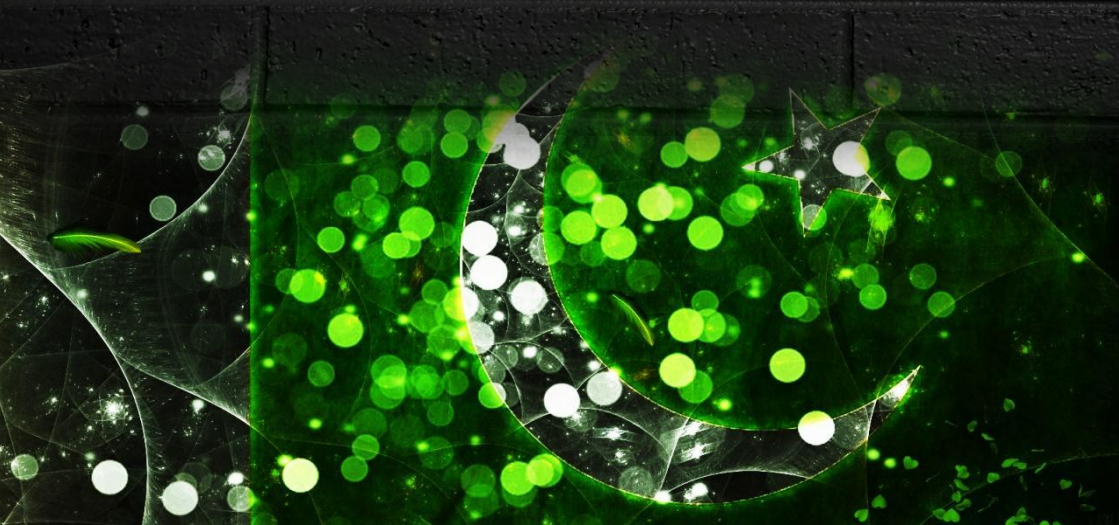




JOURNEY TO PAKISTAN

A H S A N K H A N



نہ میں سیر نہ پا چھٹا کی

نہ پوری سرساہی ہو

نہ میں تولہ نہ میں ماشہ

گل رتیاں تے آئی ہو

رتی ہوداں ونج رتیاں ٹلاں

اوہ بھی پوری ناہی ہو

تول پورا ونج ہوسی باہو

جداں فضلِ الہی ہو

This book is dedicated to my grandmother, Rabiya Habib.

Also dedicated to N.A.K.

About the Author

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Disclaimer

THIS IS A TRUE STORY. All names, characters, places and events in this novel are real, and have been narrated exactly as they occurred.

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About the Main Character

Zainab Bibi (b. 1925 - present) was born in the city of Sangrur, Punjab, British India. This novel narrates the story of her life, in third person, from early childhood to marriage, and to the events which led to the migration to Pakistan.



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JOURNEY TO PAKISTAN

MEMOIRS OF ZAINAB BIBI

1. Birth and Early Childhood

Zainab Bibi was born in 1925 in the city of Sangrur. Sangrur is a city in the Indian state of Punjab, India. It is the headquarters of Sangrur District. It is located at the intersection of the roads connecting Jalandhar with Rewari and Chandigarh with Bathinda, at a distance of 77 km from Ludhiana and 58 km from Patiala. Before the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, it was a part of the state of Patiala, in the province of East Punjab.

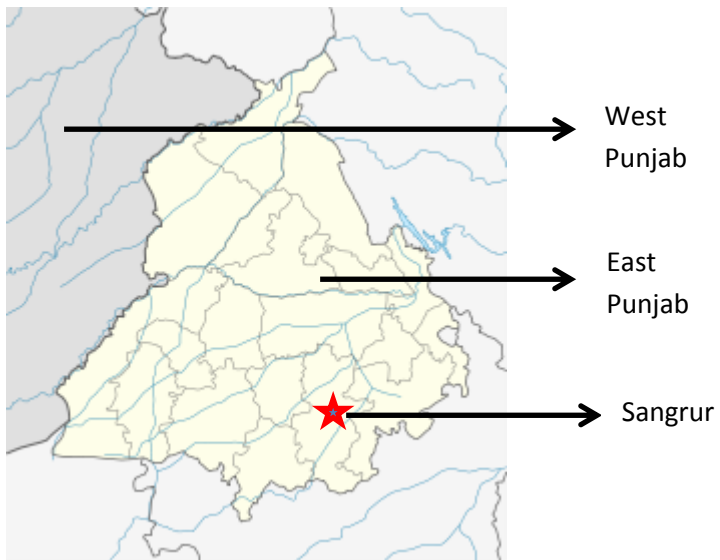


Figure 1: Map of Sangrur

Sangrur was a city which had an equal amount population of Muslims and Hindus, who were living together with each other peacefully under the British rule. The population of Sikhs in the city was very little. It was a city which comprised mostly of working people and had few rich merchants or traders.

Zainab's grandfather and grandmother were originally from a small village called Kot Muhammad Khan, in Amritsar. The names of Zainab's grandfather and grandmother were Maula Baksh and Fatima respectively. When Zainab's father was in his teenage years, the family moved to Sangrur. The name of Zainab's father was Fazl Ilahi, and her mother's name was Ramzan Bibi. Zainab had one elder sister named Sajida Bibi (8 years elder) and two younger brothers named Rashid Ahmad (8 years younger) and Habib Ahmad (13 years younger).

Zainab was born and grew up in Sangrur. Her father and his brother, Tufail Muhammad, Zainab's uncle (*chacha*), had their own houses in Sangrur and lived next to each other.

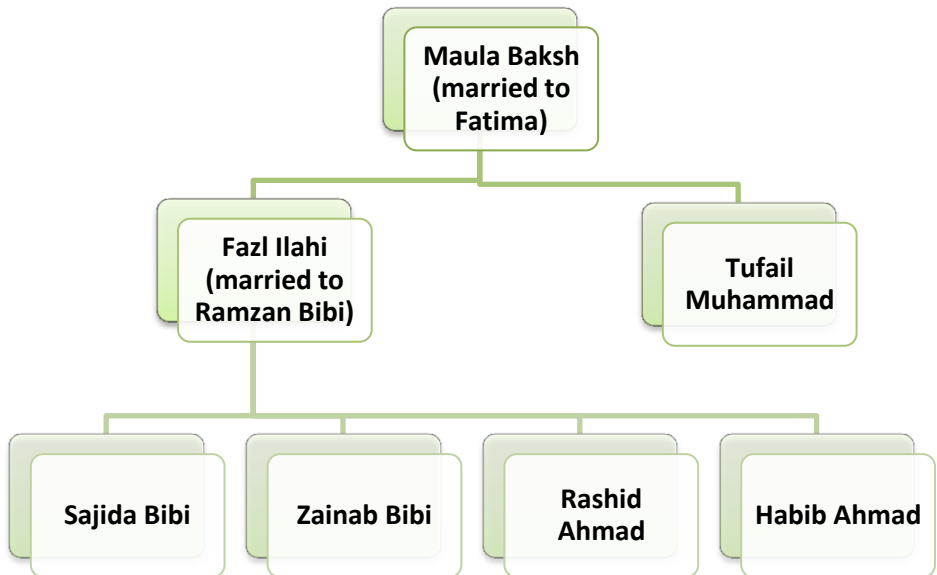


Figure 2: Family Tree of Maula Baksh

When Zainab was one year old she was struck with a specific type of fever. In those days, the common term used for this fever was '*morka bukhar*'. The fever remained for about two months. After plenty of medications and herbal treatments, the fever eventually subsided.

Soon Zainab began to crawl. However, Ramzan Bibi noticed one day that one of Zainab's legs would lag behind the other when she was crawling. Ramzan Bibi immediately called Fazl Ilahi and the rest of the family and told them her observation. They too agreed that the left leg was not operating normally. Fazl Ilahi was worried and he contacted a local doctor (*hakeem*) and showed her the condition of the baby girl.

The *hakeem* suggested, "This is probably the result of the fever which struck your child when she was one year old. Your daughter is an infant now. I advise you to take her to some well reputed hospital and get her checked with a specialist doctor. If this predicament is solved early, she can be treated in time. Otherwise, the leg may be affected for the rest of her life."

Fazl Ilahi was very concerned with what the *hakeem* said. Tufail Muhammad had a friend in Delhi who knew a respectable doctor in a civil hospital. The family decided that they should take Zainab to Delhi and get her checked up with the doctor.

2. Treatment of Zainab's Leg

Fazl Ilahi and Ramzan Bibi, along with Zainab, left from Sangrur to Patiala, from where they would proceed to Delhi. Patiala was a big city and was the centre of transportation in the region. After arriving by horse-carriage (*tanga*), the family found seats in a train going from Patiala to Delhi.

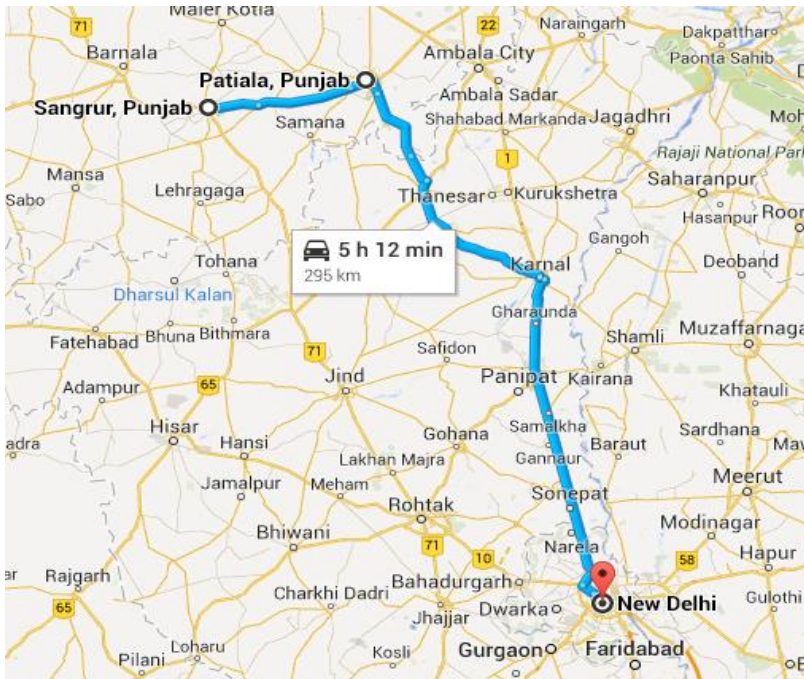


Figure 3: Map of route from Sangrur to Delhi

After arriving in Delhi, they located the hospital and proceeded to meet Dr. William Brown. On meeting Dr. William, they gave him the reference of Tufail Muhammad's friend. Dr. William first

inquired about the details of Zainab's illness and then inspected her leg.

Dr. William gave his analysis, "Zainab's leg seems to be suffering from reduced blood flow which is impairing the growth of the leg. We must give her leg treatment with electricity. I will recommend a two-week treatment. After that her leg will begin growing normally."

Fazl Ilahi asked Dr. William for some time so that the family can consult and make a decision. Dr. William agreed. Fazl Ilahi sent a letter to Sangrur asking the family for their advice. After a couple of weeks, the reply came back in which Maula Baksh stated that Fazl Ilahi should go ahead with the treatment. Maula Baksh also sent some money for the treatment. Hence, Dr. William started on a two-week electricity treatment on Zainab's leg. After two weeks, the treatment was over.

Dr. William assured Fazl Ilahi, "I am pleased to inform you that the treatment of your daughter has been successful and the leg is now fine. As Zainab will grow older, the weaker leg will recover and there shall be no problems of lack of growth. When Zainab will reach 6-8 years of age, the leg will be totally healed and the lagging will not be visible."

Fazl Ilahi was very grateful of Dr. Williams and thanked him wholeheartedly. Glad and relieved, the parents along with Zainab made their journey back to Sangrur.

3. Posting to Ajmer Sharif

Zainab was now nine years old. After the electricity treatment given by Dr. William the family was quite confident that Zainab's leg would get better. However, the treatment did not have any effect whatsoever. As Zainab had grown older the leg had shrunk even more. The lagging was now blatantly visible. A few local procedures were also applied on the leg, but to no result.

One day Fazl Ilahi came home very excited and happy. Ramzan Bibi asked him the reason for his elation.

“I have been posted to Ajmer. It is a very special city and I feel really blessed”, Fazl announced, and immediately proceeded to offer prayer of thanks.

Fazl Ilahi was in charge of a ministry in the government, and had been posted from Sangrur to Ajmer Sharif. Fazl Ilahi had not been posted outside Sangrur for the last 20 years. However, this was a welcome change.

Ramzan Bibi was also very happy to hear this news. She immediately proceeded to inform the family and the relatives. Everyone gave their greetings and congratulations.

In just a week, the family completed all the packing and the preparations for moving to Ajmer. On the eve of their departure, the entire neighbourhood gathered to send them off. Each gave them their list of wishes and instructed the family not to forget them in their prayers when they visit the shrine of Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer. Ramzan Bibi collected all their wish lists and promised them that she would remember their request when she gets a chance to visit the shrine.

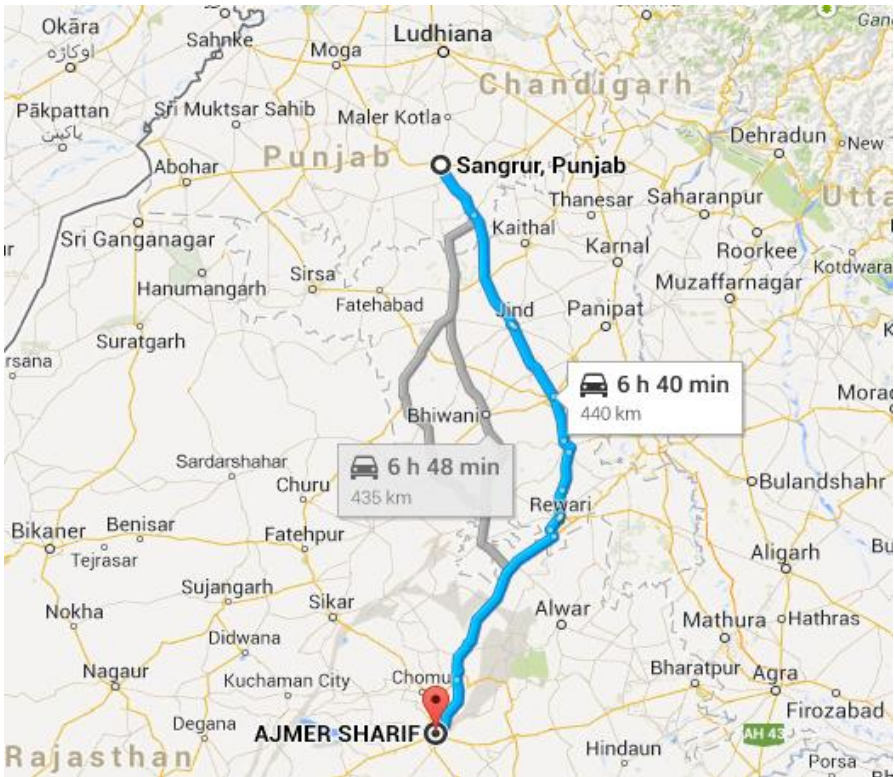


Figure 4: Posting from Sangrur to Ajmer Sharif

The reason why everyone was so excited was that the shrine of Moinuddin Chishti is located in Ajmer Sharif. Moinuddin Chishti was born in 1141 and died in 1236 CE. He is also known as *Gharib Nawaz* “Benefactor of the Poor”. He is the most famous saint of the Chishti order of Sufism of the Indian subcontinent. The initial spiritual chain or *silsila* of the Chishti order in India, comprising Moinuddin Chishti, Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki, Fariduddin Ganjshakar and Nizamuddin Auliya,

each successive person being the disciple of the previous, constitutes the great Sufi saints of Indian history.



Figure 5: Shrine of Moinuddin Chishti, Ajmer, India

Fazl Ilahi's family came and settled in Ajmer Sharif. They would often visit the shrine of *Khawaja Ghareeb Nawaz* and pray. There were special prayers for the healing of Zainab's leg too.

Two years passed by in Ajmer Sharif and Zainab was now 11 years old. One day Zainab and his father were in the marketplace, buying some grocery items. They were at a fruit shop when a man approached Fazl and said greetings to him. The man introduced himself as Mr. Mehta, and informed that he worked in the car industry. There was a big industry of car and engines in Ajmer Sharif at that time. They exchanged pleasantries and talked casually for some time.

Then Mr. Mehta changed the subject to Zainab and said to Fazl, "I have noticed your daughter walk. One of her legs is not supporting the other. What is the matter with her leg?"

“She had *morka bukhar* when she was one year old. Since then her left leg has not grown normally”, said Fazl.

“Have you given her some medications or therapy?” inquired Mr. Mehta.

“Yes, we gave her some treatment by electricity in Delhi”, Fazl replied.

Fazl then proceeded to tell him the complete details about Zainab’s leg since her infancy, how it was not growing properly and the corresponding treatment that was given by Dr. William. Fazl also stated with sadness that the results which Dr. William had promised had not materialized and the condition of Zainab’s leg was worse than before.

Mr. Mehta said to Fazl, “Don’t worry. We have some local treatments which can sometimes be very expensive. If you wish I can help you”.

Fazl was reluctant and responded, “I am not sure we are looking for some local treatments. Besides, we have done a few experiments ourselves and so far we have achieved no results. So, thank you for your offer, but I don’t think I am interested”.

Mr. Mehta developed a serious expression on his face and said to Fazl, “I understand your frustration. But, this is a matter of your daughter’s health and life. If her leg stays like this, probably nobody will marry her. I advise you try my recommended way. I believe I can treat her. I will lower my charges for you. What do you have to lose in this bargain?”

Fazl was moved by what Mr. Mehta had just said and replied, “OK. Let me think about it and also discuss with my family.”

They exchanged contacts and then departed. Fazl came back home and narrated the entire incident to Ramzan Bibi of what

had transpired earlier in the day. They discussed among themselves, and for the sake of their daughter, finally decided to give it a go.

On the next Sunday, Fazl invited Mr. Mehta to his home. He inspected Zainab's leg and looked optimistic.

Mr. Mehta said, "This ailment can be cured. We will need to make a special type of lotion to apply on the leg."

"What type of lotion?" inquired Fazl.

"We will need the oil of cows, lots of herbs and a few other ingredients. I will then prepare the recipe to mix them together in appropriate amounts and in a fixed order, to prepare the lotion. We will then massage the leg with this lotion", Mr. Mehta instructed.

Mr. Mehta's normal fee was 200 rupees. But, he had promised Fazl Ilahi that he would give him some concession. Hence, the fee agreed was 150 rupees.

Mr. Mehta gave Fazl the list of materials to be bought. After that the lotion was prepared under the direction and invigilation of Mr. Mehta. Mr. Mehta said that he will check up after every one month. Mr. Mehta then also taught the proper way of giving the massage, and instructed the family to strictly adhere to his directions.

Zainab's mother would regularly massage her daughter's leg, and Mr. Mehta was frequent in his visits. Within 2-3 months, change began to appear in the leg and the leg began to get better. The color of the leg, which had turned pale for a few years now, also began to reappear. Mr. Mehta would say, "Blood has begun to flow".

The entire family was very happy with this recent development. Razman Bibi gave sweets in the neighbourhood and free food for poor people at the shrine of *Khawaja Ghareeb Nawaz*, thanking him for listening to their prayers.

4. The Secret of the Lotion

The massage from Mr. Mehta's lotion was proving to be quite effective. However, only six months later, Zainab's father was posted back to Sangrur. Fazl Ilhai's three year tenure in Ajmer Sharif had come to an end, and now it was time to go back to Sangrur.

Fazl Ilahi and Ramzan Bibi were now concerned about the massage therapy of Zainab. They consulted Mr. Mehta regarding the situation, and in what way would they be able to continue the massage therapy.

"I can prepare the lotion for one year's therapy. You can take it with you and continue the massage." Mr. Mehta offered.

"That is very kind of you, but, soon it will run out. We would be very grateful if you can share the recipe and the procedure of making the lotion with us, so that we may be able to make it ourselves" Fazl Ilahi insisted.

"No, I do not share the secret of the lotion with anybody" Mr. Mehta retorted.

"It will be very difficult for us to come back to Ajmer Sharif from Sangrur or to make any arrangements for having the lotion transported. Please consider my request" Fazl Ilahi appealed.

"This lotion is very sacred to us. However, I will give you the recipe and the procedure for creating more, only on one condition." Mr. Mehta asserted.

"You will not share this secret with anybody else, and you will only make this lotion for the poor, and not for the rich. If you agree to these conditions I will share the secret of the lotion with you" Mr. Mehta continued.

Fazl Ilahi happily agreed, “I agree to your terms and I testify that I will not break this oath”.

Subsequently, Mr. Mehta gave Fazl Ilahi the recipe and the procedure for making the lotion. He also prepared some lotion, which would last for approximately a year.

The family then returned to their hometown of Sangrur. Initially, Ramzan Bibi would regularly massage Zainab’s leg. But as time passed by, she would often get busy in the household chores, and there would not be much time to massage Zainab’s leg. Therefore, Fazl Ilahi decided to hire a man for the massage.

The hired masseuse applied the lotion on Zainab’s leg for the first two days. However, on the third day he came to Fazl Ilahi and announced, “Your daughter has refused to take the massage today. I asked her a couple of times, but she is saying that she does not want the massage.”

Fazl Ilahi was concerned on hearing this. He asked Ramzan Bibi the reason why Zainab has refused to take the massage.

“Zainab is saying that she is now 12 years old and is now an adult. She will not take the massage on her leg from a man” Ramzan Bibi replied.

“Well if she is not comfortable with a man, we can hire a female masseuse for her” Fazl Ilahi reasoned.

Thereafter, the male masseuse was discontinued and a female masseuse would pay regular visits for the massage. This affair did not last long as well. The female masseuse was not a professional or trained masseuse and was not able to perform the massage as required. Hence, she was discontinued as well.

Fazl Ilahi and Ramzan Bibi sought another masseuse in the area, but could not find any. Ramzan Bibi would give Zainab’s

leg some massage whenever time was available. However, the uniformity and regularity required for the proper treatment could not be maintained. Furthermore, the cost of the materials of the lotion was very high. Cow oil was more expensive in Sangrur than in Ajmer Sharif. A few of the herbs required for the lotion were also not available in the region. As a result of these factors, the massage therapy eventually died off.

5. The Chronicle of Sajida Bibi

Sajida Bibi was Zainab's elder sister (8 years elder). When Sajida was 16 years old, she was engaged to a man named Faiz Muhammad Khan. The engagement happened one year before Fazl Ilahi was posted to Ajmer Sharif. When Sajida Bibi was 17, the family was posted to Ajmer Sharif. One year later, when Sajida was 18 years old, Faiz's family demanded marriage.

Therefore, Fazl Ilahi and his family came to Sangrur for one month in the summers, so that the marriage could take place. Hence, Sajida Bibi was married off to Faiz Muhammad Khan at the age of 18, and went to her new home in Ramgarh Sardaran.

Ramgarh Sardaran is currently a city in the Ludhina district of Punjab, India. Before 1947, it was a part of East Punjab. Ramgarh Sardaran was a Sikh dominated city.

Faiz Muhammad Khan was the son of Inayatullah Khan. Inayatullah Khan was a doctor in the British army. He had a high post and had close relations with senior British officials. He was very well respected as well as feared in the society. People would send him gifts and their regards, even from faraway places. Inayatullah Khan was famous for his disciplinary and authoritative personality. He was commonly called *Mian Ji*.

The family had been given the title of Khan by the British. It was a prominent, powerful and influential family, even across many other villages. Even though Ramgarh Sardaran was a Sikh majority city, all the Sikh community had a high regard for Inayatullah Khan and his family. All important community matters were first discussed with *Mian Ji*, and then implemented.

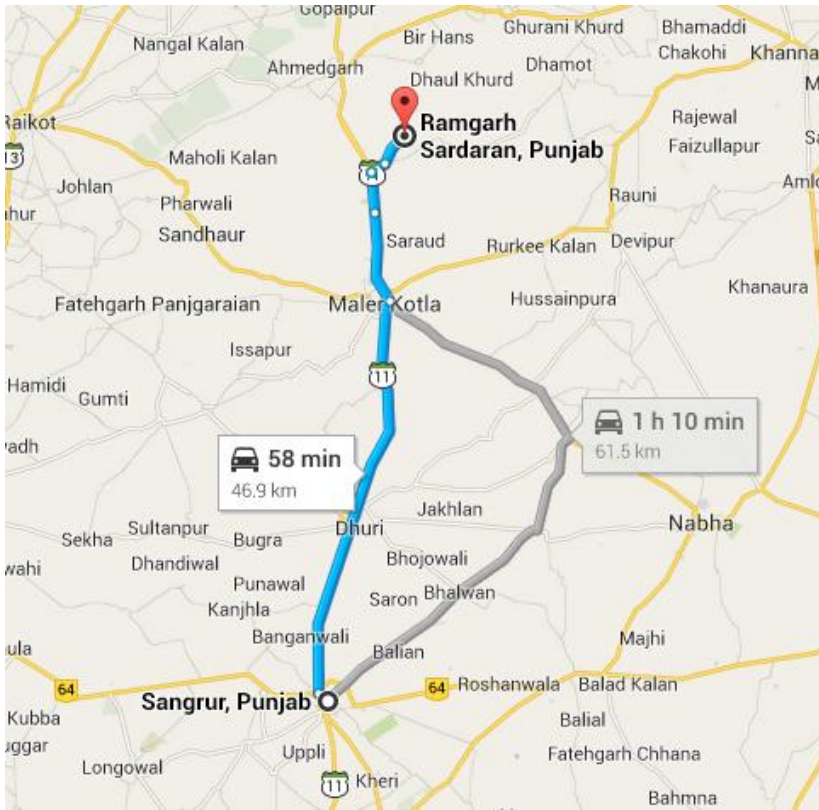


Figure 6: Location of Ramgarh Sardaran, East Punjab

Inayatullah Khan had five sons and four daughters. The five sons were Taj Muhammad Khan, Niaz Muhammad Khan, Faiz Muhammad Khan, Mumtaz Muhammad Khan and Muhammad Ali Khan. The names of the four daughters were Azmat, Rasheeda, Khurshaid and Fazeelat. Two of Inayatullah's sons, Niaz Muhammad Khan and Mumtaz Muhammad Khan, were also officers in the British army. The name of Faiz's mother was Bhaag Bhari. The husband of Rasheeda was Fazal Muhammad Khan, who had a PhD in Mathematics from a university in London and was a professor at Aligarh University.

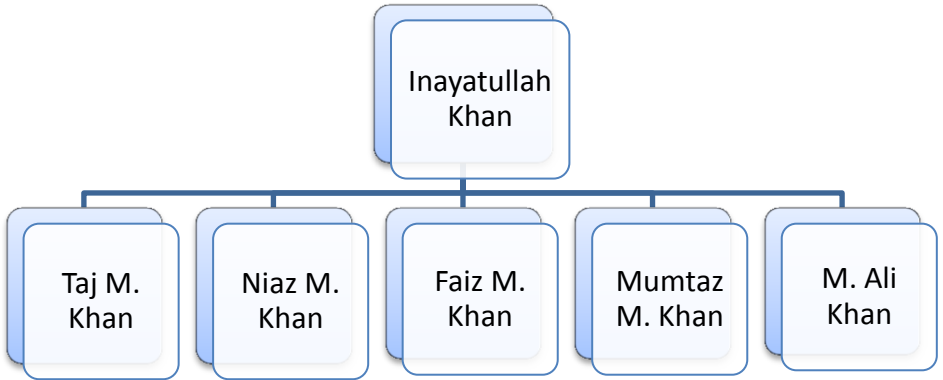


Figure 7: Family Tree of Inayatullah Khan



Figure 8: Aligarh Muslim University

Sajida Bibi settled to life in Ramgarh Sardaran. Three years of happy matrimonial life passed by. Sajida would participate in the household chores, like all women. Sajida was responsible for cooking the dishes while the wife of Niaz Khan, who was called Aapa Sardari, would prepare the bread (*roti*) for the entire family. They had a huge pan (*tawwa*) for making the bread. One of the servants would prepare the bread pellets (*peeray*) and Aapa Sardari would make the bread.

Aapa Sardari was expecting a child. She had to leave the city and go to Ludhiana to The Christian Medical College and Hospital for checkup. The hospital specialized in women care and had female doctors and staff for the patients.

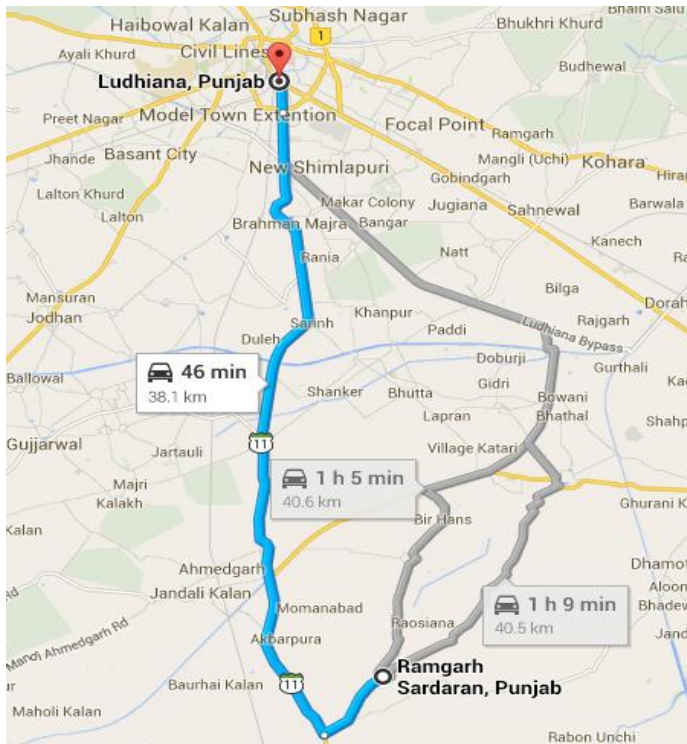


Figure 9: Map showing route from Ramgarh Sardaran to Ludhiana



Figure 10: The entrance of the old building of The Christian Medical College and Hospital, Ludhiana, India. It was the first medical school for women in Asia.

Since Aapa Sardari was out of town, Sajida was preparing the bread that day. It was a hot summer afternoon and Sajida was not accustomed to the heat of the pan and the bread-making area. After she finished making the bread, Sajida immediately went to take a bath with cold water. When she finished taking a bath, she went outside to hang the clothes. It was a very hot summer afternoon and a warm gust of wind (*loo*) was blowing that day. These sudden changes in body temperature affected her, and by evening, she got fever.

Sajida was given medicines and bed-rest. Everyone was hoping that it was just a seasonal fever and would get better in a few days. However, two weeks passed by and the fever did not

subside. Sajida would continuously remain in bed and lost body weight and health. A month passed by and the warm summer weather turned into the rainy monsoon season.

One day, Sajida was in bed and was feeling very thirsty. No one was around. She called a couple of times, but no one was there at the moment. Feeling the need to quench her thirst immediately, she decided to get up herself and fetch herself a glass of water. However, she had become very weak. As she tried to get out of bed, she fell down and suffered a head injury on the right side of the forehead.

Since, it was the rainy season, there was a fear that the wound might worsen. *Mian Ji* asked Sajida if she wanted to go to Ludhiana for treatment, or go back to her parents' house in Sangrur. Sajida opted to come back to Sangrur.

Fazl Ilahi and family received the news that Sajida and her husband were coming back to visit them. However, they did not know that she was ill as well as injured. Sajida and Faiz travelled by train to Patiala and from there took a horse-carriage (*tanga*) to Sangrur.

As soon as some kids saw the *tanga* entering the street, they called everyone outside. Fazl Ilahi and his family, and Tufail Muhammad and his family, who lived next doors, all came out to greet their daughter.

Sajida had barely stepped down from the *tanga* when she requested, "Can I get some water please?"

Everybody was surprised at this request from Sajida, and Tufail Muhammad replied, "Come to my home first, child. You will get everything inside."

Tufail Muhammad's house came first when entering the street, while Fazl Ilahi's house was further down the street. Hence, everyone went to Tufail Muhammad's house to welcome their guests. Later, Faiz and Sajida moved to Fazl Ilahi's house, where Faiz informed everybody regarding Sajida's condition, and what had transpired before.

The next day, Fazl Ilahi called a doctor and had Sajida checked up. The doctor informed that Sajida has been struck with typhoid, and now needed special care and attention, if she was to get well.

Sajida began to get weaker by the day. She reached a point where after lying down, she could not get back up on her own. The disease eventually ended up taking her life, and Sajida left this world at the tender age of 21.

6. Aunt From Aligarh Pays a Visit

Sajida Bibi died in the year 1938. Naturally, this was the cause of a lot of sorrow and grief, not only for Fazl Ilahi and Ramzan Bibi, but also for the rest of the family. There was a lot of crying and mourning in the house. Zainab was 13 years old at the time of her sister's death. Although this was a shock for her too, Sajida's mother was the one most affected by this tragedy.

A lot of relatives and friends attended Sajida's funeral. There was an aunt of Zainab, who was the cousin of Fazl Ilahi, called *Phuppi Choti*. She lived in Aligarh. She was not able to attend the funeral, but sent her condolences and promised to visit Sangrur as soon as it was possible for her.

A month later, Fazl Ilahi received a letter from *Phuppi Choti* informing him that she was coming to Sangrur. A week later *Phuppi Choti* arrived. Firstly, there was a lot of crying and grieving. After a couple of days, the atmosphere in the house turned normal.

One day, Ramzan Bibi asked *Phuppi Choti*, "Sister, we have not been able to take care of you properly. You are our guest. Today we will cook whatever you would like to eat. Tell me your request and I will prepare a special meal for you".

Phuppi Choti expressed her desire, "I would love to have some cow meat. It has been a year since I ate some cow meat".

"Why have you not eaten cow meat in a year? I hope your health is fine", Ramzan Bibi showed her concern.

Phuppi Choti elaborated, "My health is perfectly alright. But, you might not be aware of the conditions we are living in, ever since Congress came into power."

The general elections in India were held in 1937. Congress was the overwhelming winner of these elections. Congress ministries were formed in 8 out of 11 provinces of British India. These Congress ministries worked under the instructions of the Congress High Command, which was controlled by Mr. Gandhi and other Hindu nationalist leaders.

The Congress had gained outright majority in 5 of the provinces, which included Madras, Uttar Pradesh, Central Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa. *Phuppi Choti* lived in Aligarh, which was a city in Uttar Pradesh.

Phuppi Choti continued, “We have a ban on cow slaughter in our province. Nobody is allowed to slaughter any cows. We did not even get permission to sacrifice cows on *Eid-ul-Fitr*”.

“I was definitely not aware of this”, Ramzan Bibi replied with a puzzled expression on her face.

“This is not the only difficulty we are facing. Our children are facing a lot of problems in school as well. The Congress has introduced the ‘Wardha Scheme’. The aim of this scheme is to encourage Hindu religion and culture. Urdu has been stripped off as a language of education and teaching is now only in Hindi”, *Phuppi Choti* pointed out a few more details.

“Oh my God”, Ramzan Bibi was now clearly going into shock.

“Just the other day, my little one came back from school and asked me about the naked guy they pay their respect to every morning in school. Later we found out that all kids are now required to show their reverence to Gandhi’s portrait which is hung up in all schools. Furthermore, there is now no religious education allowed in schools. *Bande Matram* has been adopted as the national anthem and it is compulsory for all school children and office workers to sing it”, *Phuppi Choti* narrated.

“So, why did you vote for Congress then?” questioned Ramzan Bibi.

Phuppi Choti replied with a big sigh, “We never knew these things would happen. We had always lived with the Hindus together for many centuries. I, along with many other Muslims, always thought that we should all stay together in One India. That is what Congress promised before the elections.”

“But, now we have come to realize that Hindus and Muslims can never co-exist together in peace. We should have believed in what Muhammad Ali Jinnah was saying and given our vote to Muslim League. Now, we will all give our votes to Muslim League and work together to get a separate state for the Muslims of India”, Phuppi Choti was getting emotional now.

Ramzan Bibi listened carefully and took some time to digest what she had just heard, and then in a low voice asked, “Can I ask you one question?”

“Sure”, *Phuppi Choti* replied.

“Who is this Muhammad Ali Jinnah? I do not know much about him. I have only heard a few stories. I have heard that he is almost like a British. He does not wear our clothes, and even does not know how to properly speak Urdu or Punjabi. I only know about our beloved Allama Iqbal. I always thought that Allama Iqbal should lead the Muslims. Why is Muahmmad Ali Jinnah leading the Muslims and not Allama Iqbal?” Ramzan Bibi expressed her sentiments.

Phuppi Choti replied, “I also used to think the same. But, then I came to know what Allama Iqbal said about Muhammad Ali Jinnah in 1935”.

Allama Iqbal addressed a student delegation in 1935 and said:

“I am sitting outside the ring, merely watching the fight. The real wrestler is somebody else. He will wrestle your fight. He is your doctor. He will give you medicine. His name is Barrister Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He has gone to London. I am calling him back. He is coming. Whenever he comes to Lahore, take orders from him and obey him blindly.”

“From now on, I will also obey Muhammad Ali Jinnah blindly”,
Phuppi Choti said with firm determination.

7. Married Life

Three years passed by and Zainab was now 16 years old. Faiz Muhammad Khan, husband of Sajida, came to Sangrur for about a week. He then sought permission from Fazl Ilahi to marry Zainab.

Sajida was very beautiful and was known for her beauty. Zainab had ordinary looks, and also had a defected leg. Faiz was not only rich and belonged to a reputable family, but was also highly educated and was a handsome man. People were very curious and asked Faiz the reason because of which he wanted to marry Zainab.

To this query Faiz responded, “It is our family tradition that if the wife dies, and has an unmarried younger sister, it is bound upon the family to give honour to the ex-wife’s younger sister and bring her into the family. My father has always taught me to be a man of principle and honour, and I will uphold the family traditions.”

Thereafter, Zainab was married to Faiz Muhammad Khan and moved to Ramgarh Sardaran. It was a quiet and simple marriage. Ramzan Bibi had never fully recovered from the death of her young daughter Sajida. After Sajida’s death, she did not eat meat or any sweets for one year. Some days, she would only eat once, and on others not eat at all. Ramzan Bibi was not in favour of any extravaganza or festivities for the marriage.

There were no traditional marriage ceremonies, such as *Mehndi*, and there were no celebrations on the day of the marriage. Zainab was given no jewellery or clothes on her marriage. The very simple affair took place quietly and Zainab was off to her new home in Ramgarh Sardaran.

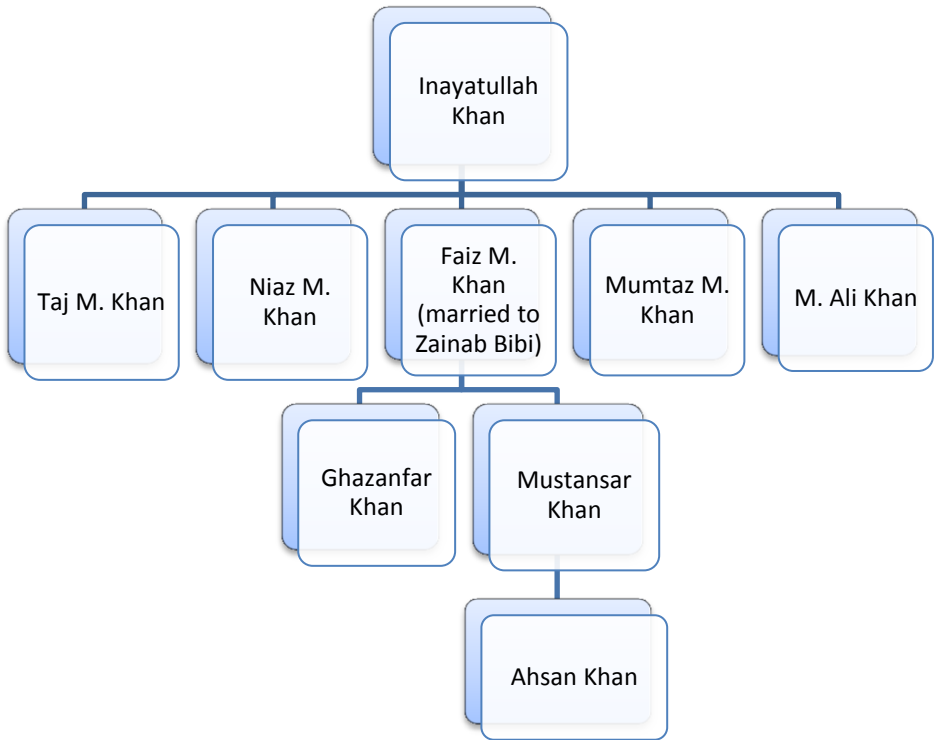


Figure 11: Family Tree of Inayatullah Khan

Three years passed by and Zainab did not become a mother yet. There was a lot of social pressure. Relatives began to suggest that maybe there is some medical condition in Zainab's family, which is not allowing her to become a mother. Zainab's sister, Sajida, also did not become a mother in her three years of married life with Faiz, and now Zainab was also facing the same dilemma.

Another theory also surfaced that a woman who has received treatment by electricity loses her capability to become a mother. Zainab was under immense social pressure. People also began

to suggest to Faiz that he should marry another wife. However, Faiz was very supportive and understanding of the situation and stood by his wife.

After three years of long waiting, all prayers were answered and Zainab was expecting a child. In those days it was a tradition to send the mother-to-be to her parents place before childbirth. Hence, Zainab went back to her parent's home in Sangrur for the birth of her child. A daughter was born. Zainab named her daughter Kishwar, who was born in 1945.

8. A Separate State for Muslims

The period after World War I was marked by repressive British reforms such as the Mongtagu-Chelmsford Reforms, and the enactment of the Rowlatt Act. This led to strident calls for self-rule by Indian activists. The widespread discontent of this period crystallized into nationwide non-violent movements of non-cooperation and civil disobedience.

In December 1930, the idea of a separate religion-based state was introduced by Allama Iqbal in his speech as the President of the Muslim League. Three years later, Choudhary Rahmat Ali proposed the name of the separate state “Pakistan”.

In the 1940s, an upsurge of Muslim nationalism helmed by the All-India Muslim League took place, under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah. During a three-day general session of All-India Muslim League from 22-24 March 1940 in Lahore, a formal political statement was presented, known as the Lahore Resolution, which called on for the creation of an independent state for the Muslims of the subcontinent.

In 1946, the Labour government in Britain, getting exhausted by recent events such as World War II and numerous riots, realized that it had neither the mandate at home, the support internationally, nor the reliability of the British Indian Army for continuing to control India. Thus, the British government decided to end the British rule of India.

In 1946, the Indian National Congress demanded a single state for a united India. The Muslim majorities gave stress to the idea of a separate state for the Muslims of India, called Pakistan. In 1946, a Cabinet Mission was sent by the British to India to try and reach a compromise between Congress and the Muslim

League, proposing a decentralized state with much power given to local governments. This was rejected by both the parties.



Figure 12: Group photograph taken at the residence of Mian Bashir Ahmed at Lahore during the All India Muslim League's session in March 1940

In February 1947, Prime Minister Clement Attlee announced that the British government would grant full self-governance to British India by June 1948 at the latest. However, it was still not decided whether the British will leave behind one, united India or separate states for the Muslims and Hindus.

Riots and acts of communal violence had already started since the start of 1946, and were now beginning to increase in their level of violence and were spreading rapidly all over the subcontinent.

Inayatullah Khan was in the British army and had close relations with senior British officials. He had the position and

the experience to predict the events about to occur. He foresaw great killings and massacre, and a bloody partition of India.

In March 1947, he took Zainab into confidence and explained the situation to her, “I have already informed you and the rest of the family about what is about to happen. If you wish to go back to Sangrur and visit your parents, you are welcome to go, especially now that you are expecting a second child. Kishwar is two years old now, and she can accompany you. Who knows if and when you might be able to meet your family again.”

Zainab heeded *Mian Ji's* suggestion and went to Sangrur, to meet her parents and family. Zainab and Kishwar made the journey safely and without any discomfort. When they reached Sangrur, Zainab's parents were very happy to see her and Kishwar. They welcomed them and thanked God for their safe arrival.

When Zainab had entered Sangrur, she had noticed big bags of sugar, placed along the roads. She was very curious as to why they had been placed along the roads and at all public gathering places.

She asked her father regarding what she had seen, “Father, why are all the bags of sugar (*cheeni ki borian*) placed all over the city?”

Fazl Ilahi replied, “As you know that it has still not been decided as to whether the Muslims will get a separate state or not. Even, if they do, every city or state will decide on their own whether they want to join Hindustan or Pakistan. Since, Sangrur has an equal majority of Muslims and Hindus, the Congress has sent bags of sugar along with many other valuables to the Muslims of Sangrur, so that we side by them and give our votes to join Hindustan.”

These tactics were being applied by Congress in all Muslim majority areas throughout India, either through appeasement, or threat, and in some cases, by direct violence.

Zainab stayed in Sangrur for a couple of weeks, and then headed back to Ramgarh Sardaran. The departing moments were very emotional and tearful, and everyone knew that this could be the last time they meet.

On 3 June 1947, the British government announced that the principle division of British India in two independent states had been accepted. The successor governments would be given dominion status and would have an implicit right to secede from the British Commonwealth.

The Indian Independence Act 1947, passed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom, divided British India into the two new independent dominions, India and Pakistan. Viceroy Mountbatten chose the dates of 14 and 15 August for the ceremony of power transfer to Pakistan and India respectively.

9. The Division of Punjab

Punjab was a state of British India. It was annexed by the East India Company in 1849, and was one of the last areas of the Indian subcontinent to fall under British control. It comprised five administrative divisions: Delhi, Jullunder, Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi, and a number of princely states.

The partition of India led to the province being divided into East Punjab and West Punjab, belonging to the newly created dominions of India and Pakistan respectively. West Punjab was mostly Muslim, and became part of Pakistan's Punjab province. The eastern part had a majority of Hindu and Sikh populations and became India's East Punjab state.

While British province of Punjab was being divided into East Punjab and West Punjab, the cities of Lahore and Amritsar were at the centre of the problem. The Boundary Commission was not sure where to place them; whether to make them a part of India or Pakistan. The Commission decided to give Lahore to Pakistan, while Amritsar became part of India.

Many Hindus and Sikhs lived in the west, and many Muslim populations lived in the east. Some areas in West Punjab, including Lahore, Rawalpindi, Multan and Gujrat, had a large Sikh and Hindu population, while cities in East Punjab, such as Amritsar, Ludhiana, Gurdaspur and Jalandhar had a majority Muslim population. This division of Punjab into the eastern and western parts was soon to be followed by widespread protests, violence and mass emigration.

The declaration of the division of Punjab came as a shock to many, including Inayatullah Khan's family and Tufail Muhammad's family. Sangrur and Ramgarh Sardaran had been declared as parts of East Punjab, and would soon become parts

of India. This meant that all Muslim families living in these cities would now have to make the journey across Punjab to the western side of the province, which was to become a part of Pakistan.

In Sangrur, Fazl Ilahi and Tufail Muhammad were reluctant at first. They wanted to stay in Sangrur, which was their home. However, the incidents of violence and killings that had broken out all over India and especially in the provinces of Punjab and Bengal, left them with no choice than to make the journey to Pakistan.

The thought of leaving their hometown of Ramgarh Sardaran disturbed *Mian Ji* too. However, he was well aware of what the consequences of staying behind would be. Despite his prominence and status in the society, he knew this was now no place for Muslims to feel themselves safe.



Figure 13: Lord Ismay (third from left), Advisor to the Viceroy Lord Mountbatten, discussing the plan of partition in 1947, with Jawaharlal Nehru (left) and Muhammad Ali Jinnah (extreme right).

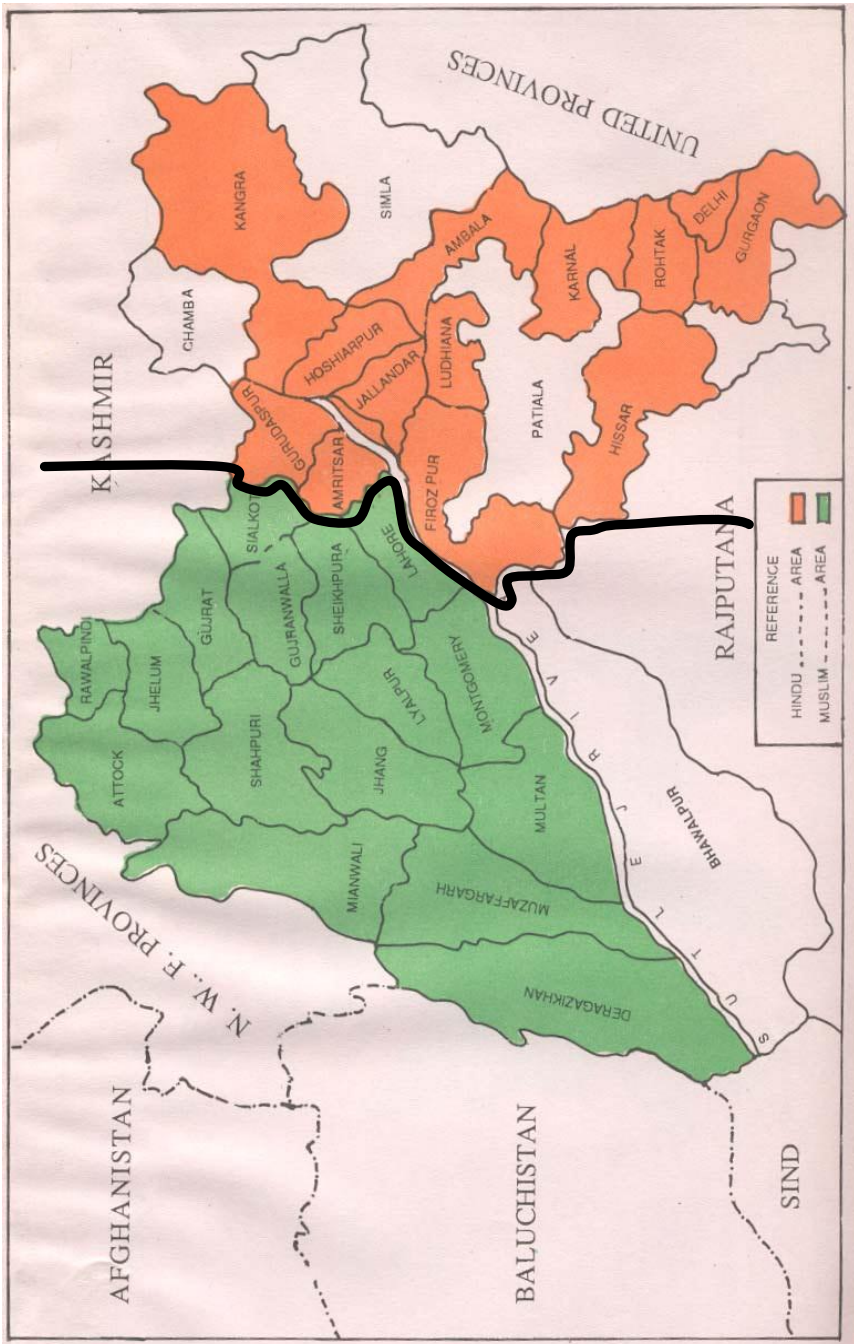


Figure 14: Map showing the partition of Punjab into West Punjab and East Punjab.

10. Attack on Ramgarh Sardaran

It was July 1947, and the Islamic month of Ramadan had commenced. Inayatullah Khan and all of his five sons were out of town that weekend. *Mian Ji* had gone to Ludhiana to deal with some legal issues. Niaz Muhammad Khan and Mumtaz Muhammad Khan, who were in the British army, were on army duty in another city. Faiz Muhammad Khan and the rest of the brothers too were not at home for a variety of reasons.

Inayatullah Khan and his family had not migrated yet. They were wrapping up legal and other issues, and were also waiting for the month of Ramadan to pass by before they migrate to Pakistan.

It was almost dawn and the stirrings of the first sun rays could be seen on the horizon. Zainab and the rest of the family were sound asleep. Suddenly, noises and shouting could be heard. Loud noises superseded the silence of the early morning.

Then somebody screamed, “We are under attack! The Sikhs have attacked the house!”

Ramgarh Sardaran and the surrounding villages had a heavy Sikh population. All the Muslim families from the adjacent villages had already migrated because of fear and dread. However, in Ramgarh Sardaran, *Mian Ji*'s family and a few other Muslim families remained. They had not moved on yet because of Inayatullah Khan's influence in the region, feeling safe that no harm would come to them.

The entire Sikh community not only respected *Mian Ji*, but also feared him. The Sikhs were fully aware that *Mian Ji* is out of town, and so are his sons. Taking full advantage of this situation they attacked Ramgarh Sardaran.

The Sikhs began to enter all the Muslim houses. Gates were broken down and walls were climbed over. A few of the boys and younger men tried to resist, but they were unarmed and not fully ready, and were killed. All the men were killed in the courtyards, on the gates of the houses, and in the streets.

Meanwhile, all the women began to look for places where they could hide, or not be visible somehow. Some tried to run to the roofs or the terraces, while other tried to conceal themselves in cupboards, closets or storerooms. There was no escaping as the Sikhs had attacked from all sides and the Muslim houses had been completely surrounded.

After all the men and the resistance had been exterminated, the Sikhs began to enter the houses. One by one all of the women were taken out, from every corner of the house. Some of them were raped inside the house, some on the terraces, while others were violated on the streets.

None of the children were spared as well. The infants were thrown off the rooftops. The younger children were killed by strong men standing on their chests and crushing their upper body.

There were around 25 girls and women in *Mian Ji's* house. When they saw what was happening around them, 18 of the girls and younger women jumped into a well near the house, so that they could die rather than be dishonoured. However, the well was not very deep. One of the Sikhs saw them jumping into the well. He immediately brought this to the attention of others, and all 18 of them were taken out and raped.

Zainab, along with six other women, hid in a barn near their house. After searching through all of the houses, this was the last place the Sikhs were about to hunt.

As soon as they were about to enter the barn, one of the Sikhs sounded the warning, "It's time to go. *Mian Ji* has brought the army!"

This was a false alarm. The Sikhs had probably heard some noise, and thought cars were approaching. They were so afraid of *Mian Ji* that they did not even wait to verify the rumour. Immediately they began to vacate the area. But, before leaving they set the barn on fire from all four sides, so that anyone alive inside may not survive.

All the younger women were picked up and taken along. All the jewellery and other valuables were plundered. For the older women, the Sikhs did not bother to ask them to take off their jewellery. They were in a hurry and simply started taking off body parts along with the jewellery. Ears, hands, etc. all were cut off along with the jewellery.

The Sikhs departed with all the valuables, and the girls and younger women, having killed all the men and children. Meanwhile, Zainab, Kishwar and a few other women were hiding inside the barn, with the fire approaching them from all sides.

11. The Fire in the Barn

Zainab and the rest of the women inside the barn heard the pronouncement that *Mian Ji* has arrived. This was soon followed by the sounds of the Sikhs scuppering and leaving the area. All inside the barn began to breathe a sigh of relief.

Then they heard the dreading plot, “Burn the barn! Burn it from all four sides.”

Soon fire erupted from all four sides and the barn was encircled. Smoke and ash filled the air and began to enter into the lungs of everyone inside. Yet, no one dared to cough aloud, for the fear of being heard. Some coughed in their clothes to muffle out the noise, while other coughed in the hay laid around in the barn.

There were a total of seven women and two children, and one of them was 2-years old Kishwar. Kishwar began to cry loudly. Zainab tried hard to somehow make her quiet, but the child was scared and troubled by all the smoke and the fire.

“We have to stop her,” one of the women remarked on Kishwar’s loud crying. “Otherwise the Sikhs will hear us.”

“Let us throw her into the fire. We cannot sacrifice all of us, just because of her,” another woman suggested.

A couple of other women also appeared to agree with this idea, out of fear and trepidation. Zainab had no idea how to react, and went into a daze. How could she throw her own child into the fire? But, deep down inside her heart, she knew that if Kishwar is heard, all of the women would end up in strife.

Faiz Muhammad Khan’s aunt, Allah Bakhshi, was the most elderly woman present in that group. She harshly scolded the other women and exclaimed, “Are you women crazy? How did

you even entertain such a thought in your minds? Give Kishwar over to me and I will take care of her.”

Allah Bakhshi took Kishwar in her lap and covered her face up in her shawl (*dupatta*), and starting soothing her. Within time, Kishwar stopped crying.

There was complete silence outside now, and it seemed apparent that the Sikhs have left. Zainab and the rest of the women finally found the courage to get out of their hiding places and begin to search for a way out. All the doorways and windows were burning, and there was no way out of there.

There was one air vent high up near the roof, which could be used as an escape route. The women began to search for a ladder, a table or any other item which could be used as a springboard. There was none. The air had become thick in concentration and visibility was dropping. The fire was swiftly approaching from all four sides.

The women began to cry now. Death was now imminent. Suddenly, Allah Bakhshi began to articulate something out aloud.

“What are you doing?” one of the women asked.

Allah Bakhshi replied, “I am reciting verses of Surah al-Anbiya from the Holy Quran. These verses describe the incident of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and when he was thrown into the fire by Namrud. Then Allah put out the fire to save Prophet Ibrahim (AS).”

“But, why are you reciting these verses?” the women were curious.

This time Allah Bakhshi gave no reply and just kept on reciting. After a few minutes the women realized that the fire was no longer approaching, but had seized to expand.

On observing this, Allah Bakhshi said with tears in her eyes, “O you foolish women! Stop crying and recite with me.”

Now, all the women began to recite the verses of Surah al-Anbiya from the Holy Quran. Miraculously, the fire began to diminish. The women became more insistent and devoted in their recitation. Soon, the fire extinguished!

Allah Bakshi began to cry and went in prostration (*Sajda*), saying out aloud, “Allah-o-Akbar (Allah is the Greatest)!”

12. *The State of Maler Kotla*

Zainab and the rest of the women were still coming to terms with what had just happened with the fire inside the barn. They had always heard about miracles and wonders in stories and folk tales, but had never expected to witness one themselves. But, they knew Allah Bakhshi very well, who was known for her spirituality and mystic character.

The sun had fully risen by now. Zainab peeked through one of the windows. It was completely desolate outside, with no moving creature in sight.

“What do we do now? Where should we go?” asked one the women.

“I don’t think it is safe for us to stay here any longer. We should leave now,” suggested another woman.

“But where will we go? Everybody we knew in this city is already dead. Besides, all the surrounding villages are Sikh dominated areas. There is no one here which will give us refuge,” Zainab stated.

One of these surviving women was a *dai*; a woman who is an expert in childbirth. Her real name was not known, but everyone used to call her Boli Boli. Since, it was her profession to administer childbirths, she would regularly move from town to town and hence, had all the latest news and updates.

Boli Boli informed everyone, “There is a city nearby called Maler Kotla. It is a Muslim majority city, and the *Nawab* (ruler) is also a Muslim. The situation is very peaceful there. We must try and reach Maler Kotla. If we reach the city safely, we would find protection and would be safe from any further Sikh confrontations.”

Maler Kotla is currently a city and a municipal council in Sangrur district in the Indian state of Punjab. It was the seat of the eponymous princely state during the British Raj. The state acceded unto the union of India in 1947 and was merged with other nearby princely states to create the Patiala and East Punjab States' Union (PEPSU).

Maler Kotla was a Muslim majority state and was established in 1454 A.D. by Shiekh Sadruddin-i-Jahan from Afghanistan. It was then subsequently ruled by his Sherwani descendents. The State of Maler Kotla was established in 1600 A.D.

Maler Kotla was a city with great interfaith tolerance and societal serenity. The roots of this communal harmony date back to 1705, when Sahibzada Fateh Singh and Sahibzada Zorawar Singh, 9 and 7 year old sons of the 10th Sikh guru, Guru Gobind Singh, were ordered to be bricked alive by the governor of Sirhind, Wazir Khan. The Nawab of Maler Kotla, Sher Muhammad Khan, was a close relative of Wazir Khan. Sher Muhammad Khan was also present in the court when this verdict was announced. He lodged a vehement protest against this inhuman act and said it is against the glorious tenets of Quran and Islam.

Wazir Khan, nevertheless, had the Sahibzadas tortured and bricked into a section of wall while still alive. At this the noble Nawab of Maler Kotla walked out of the court in protest. Guru Gobind Singh on learning this kind and humanitarian approach profusely thanked the Nawab of Maler Kotla and blessed him with his sacred Sikh valuables, such as his *Hukamnama* (Sikh guru hymn) and *Kirpan* (Sikh religious dagger).

In recognition of this act, during the 1947 riots when the entire Punjab was in flames, the state of Maler Kotla did not witness a

single incident of violence during partition, and through it all, it remained a lone island of peace.

The women continued their discussion, “I think it is the only hope we have. We have to try and reach Maler Kotla.”

This brought a new wave of optimism among all the women who were hiding in the barn. They now had a ray of hope to which they could cling on to.

However, Boli Boli warned, “But, to reach Maler Kotla we will have to pass through one or more of the Sikh villages. Let me think of a route which will be the shortest and the safest to travel.”

Boli Boli gathered some pieces of straw and hay, and began to draw a rough map in the mud. After a little while she finished marking all the nearby villages, towns and cities, with all that her memory could recollect. Then she went into a deep thought, trying to visualize a route which would get them to Maler Kotla, with all the other women watching with intent and anticipation.

After what seemed like an eternity, Boli Boli finally spoke, “I have sought a route. It requires us to pass through only one Sikh village. All the rest of the routes are longer and pass through multiple villages and towns. This one seems the best to me. We must pass through Jogi Majra, a small Sikh village. We will then reach the Main Road and can then travel quickly and easily to Maler Kotla.”

Zainab replied, “None of us really know these places or the routes. So, we will trust you Boli Boli, and will follow you. Hopefully you are right.”

“Well then, we should start moving, ladies. What do you say?” one of the woman proposed.

All of the rest seemed to agree with her. Hiding in the barn was choking and suffocating them, not only physically but also mentally and psychologically. All were desperate to get out of the barn and its reminiscences.

Just as everybody was about to get up, Allah Bakhshi stopped them and said, "It is almost midday. Don't you think we will be spotted or recognized in bright daylight. We cannot leave now. We must wait till it is dark. Then we go. Besides, it is the middle of the month of Ramadan. The moon will be full and the night sky will offer us plenty of light."

These words of wisdom of Allah Bakhshi penetrated everyone's heart, and all women realized that her recommendation was in the best of their interests. So, it was decided that they would leave as soon as the sun would set.

So, the women stayed on inside the barn. It was midday and was getting pretty hot. Everyone was really thirsty and hungry. They had not eaten or drank anything since the night before. Kishwar was only two-years old and had been dehydrated so much that she was constantly sleeping. Zainab was now feeling worried about her daughter.

"One of us should go out and get some water from the well. Also, we can check if there is any food remaining in the adjacent empty houses," Zainab advocated.

The women agreed. One of them offered to go. She wore her shawl over her head and complete body, and quietly slipped thought the burnt and broken pieces of the barn door. After some time, she returned; but, was empty handed.

Immediately, she was bombarded with questions, "What happened? Did you not find anything? There must have been some water in the well! Why did you not bring anything?"

She replied, “There is no food remaining in any of the vacant Muslim houses nearby. Regarding the well, the Sikhs have destroyed the bucket with which we used to take the water out. And even if there was a bucket, it would be of no use. The well is all polluted and contaminated. The Sikhs threw plenty of garbage, dead bodies and blood inside it to make it unusable.”

On hearing this, the hearts of all the women sank. So, the entire morning, afternoon and evening they waited inside the barn, suppressing their emotions, hunger and pain.

It was evening now. The sun was setting into the horizon and the last rays of light were disappearing into the darkness of the night. A wave of chill and trepidation began to creep up on all the women. It was time to go!

13. Passing Through Jogi Majra

Zainab, along with six other women and two children, left through the front door. The sun had set, and there was complete darkness and silence outside. Boli Boli was the only one who knew the way, and led the group.

All the women had applied *gara* (mud) to their bodies for camouflaging themselves. The group stayed closely together and moved slowly. Yet, Zainab had to try hard to keep pace with them. Not only did Zainab had a defected leg which was hampering her walk, but she was also five months pregnant with her second child (later born and named Ghazanfar Khan).

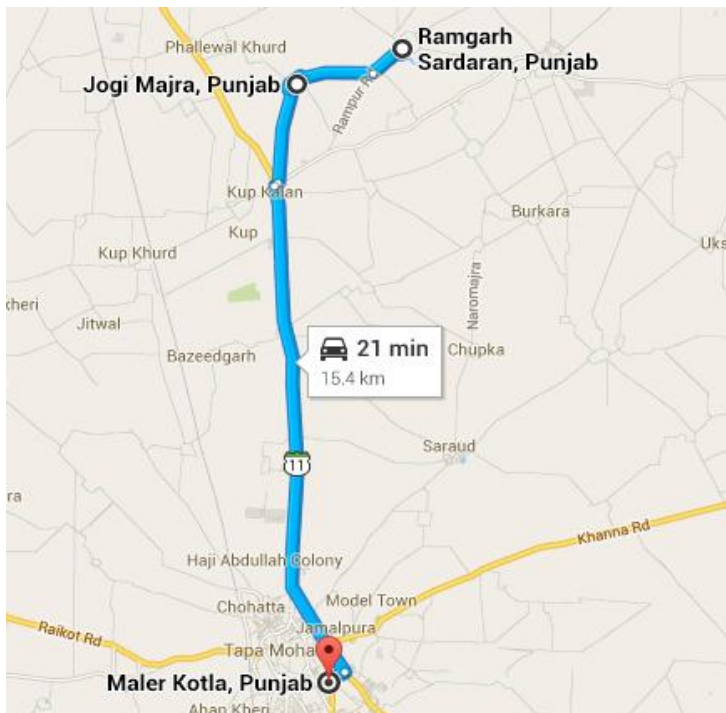


Figure 15: Map of route taken by Zainab, Boli Boli and the group

The full moon made it easy for Boli Boli to follow the path. The streets were full of dead bodies. Every corner, each wall and all the drains had blood in them. The streets were drenched with the stench of dead corpses.

The distance to Jogi Majra was hardly a couple of kilometers, but the women were very cautious with their movements. Before every corner they turned and before every street they entered, they would first check and ensure that nobody is around, and then proceed.

After a careful vigil of around two hours, the group of women reached Jogi Majra. The women were now physically drained and mentally exhausted, since it had now been almost two days they had anything to eat or drink.

Before entering the village, Boli Boli addressed the group of women in a low whisper, "There is a Muslim graveyard nearby. We will go there, and hopefully will find some food and also a place to rest. Be very careful now. We are about to enter the village. No one speaks from now on till we reach the graveyard."

The women nodded their heads in understanding, and the group, led by Boli Boli, continued their travel to the local graveyard. Every slight noise, and the women would stop in horror that somebody has arrived. They slowly made their way through the village and reached the graveyard.

The women breathe a sigh of relief and immediately proceeded to the *Gravekeeper Room*; the place where the Graveyard Caretaker lives and has a small office. But, their hopes of refuge and food dematerialized when they saw a big lock on the door of the *Gravekeeper Room*. The Graveyard Caretaker had already fled, and now there was no place for shelter.

“What are we going to do now?” one of the women asked Boli Boli in a stammer while trying not to panic.

Boli Boli replied cautiously, “I was hoping we could rest for a while here and also get something to eat and drink. However, since that is not the case, we must proceed right away to Maler Kotla.”

The group of women realized that now there was no other alternative. Boli Boli began to lead, and the rest followed. They exited the graveyard and slowly began to follow the road passing through Jogi Majra.

They hardly covered a few minutes of journey when a man’s voice came from behind them, “Stop! Who are you women?”

The group of women was startled and immediately fear overcame them. They had been spotted. They turned around fearing the worst, and saw a Sikh guy (with a turban) who was now quickly approaching them.

The Sikh guy reached them and asked, “Who are you women? Why are you travelling so late in the night?”

Boli Boli found the courage and the spontaneity to reply, “We are just a group of women going towards Maler Kotla. We had come to visit our relatives in a village nearby and are now going back. We had to pass through this village. Don’t worry about us. We know our way and will be out of here soon.”

The Sikh guy was far from convinced from Boli Boli’s explanation and probed further, “Why travelling at this hour?”

Boli Boli tried to convince him and answered, “You know the situation these days. It is safer to travel by night.”

The Sikh guy was hardly listening to Boli Boli now, but was scrutinizing the women very closely. After a few seconds, his face showed an expression of knowingness. He had recognized who they were.

“Are you not women from *Mian Ji’s* house?” he asked rhetorically.

He took a little pause and then exclaimed “Yes, you are. I recognize some of you. You are women of *Mian Ji’s* house!”

The women were now frightened to death. The Sikh guy had recognized them. They all looked at one another, not knowing what would happen next.

“What does it matter? We are just passing by. We will be out of here soon, and nobody will even know we were here.” Boli Boli almost pleaded.

The Sikh guy shook his head in refusal and replied, “You have to come with me. I will take you to our Sardar. He will decide what to do with you.”

He then started to walk them through the village, towards the house of the Sardar. It was almost time for sunrise and a few of the residents of the village had begun to wake up. Soon, they reached a grand house in the middle of the village. The house was heavily guarded, and they had to pass through a manned gate to reach inside. The Sikh guy informed the inmates of the house of the situation.

After a few minutes, a couple of Sikh women came and addressed Zainab and the rest of the group, “Don’t worry sisters. You are safe in our home. Come let me take you inside. You can have something to eat, and you can rest and wait until *Sardar Ji* is ready to meet you.”

Zainab and the rest of the women were relieved to hear this and followed the Sikh women inside the house. They were given a comfortable seating and a delicious breakfast, which each one of them gratefully relished. After a little rest, one of the Sikh women came to inform them that the Sardar was ready to meet them. Zainab and the rest followed the Sikh women into the courtyard.

The courtyard was beautifully decorated and had lots of beautiful flowers and plants arranged in intricate patterns. In the middle of the courtyard, there was a splendid chair, on which the Sardar of Jogi Majra was seated. A couple of his advisors were seated left and right of him.

He called the women forward and addressed them, “I have been informed of the situation. You are women from *Mian Ji’s* house. You don’t need to worry. We have a deal with the Nawab of Maler Kotla, the ruling family of Sheikh Sadr-ud-Din Sherwani. I will give you a safe exit. One of my men will escort you to the Main Road, from where you can proceed safely towards Maler Kotla.”

Zainab and the rest of the women thanked the Sardar for his generosity and big-heartedness. A group of young Sikh boys were designated to escort Zainab and the rest of the women out of the village, and till they reach the Main Road. On reaching the Main Road, the young boys departed back to their village.

Boli Boli suggested, “Let us not walk on the Main Road. We will be visible all the time. Let us follow the canal besides the Main Road. It will lead us to Maler Kotla as well.”

The group of women had already endured much drama, and were in no mood of encountering further incidents. They began to follow the canal. The canal was almost deserted and it was a quite passage.

Halfway through the journey, they came across a man who was washing his cow with the water of the canal. He had a cap on his head and also supported a beard.

On spotting a group of women passing by, he offered them his help, “Where are you women going? If you want, me or my sons can help you and reach your destination.”

Zainab and the rest of the women were now too traumatized and did not wish to take any further chances. They were already halfway to their destination, and the canal was offering a safe path.

Boli Boli turned down the offer and replied to the man, “Thank you for your help. But, we are comfortable. We will reach safely. Thank you again.”

The man showed his approval and the women continued on their journey. They quietly followed the canal. The way was long and silence and fear were their companions. After what seemed like an eternity, Boli Boli pointed her finger towards the city gate which was now visible in front of them, and cried out, “We have reached Maler Kotla!”

14. *Mian Ji Escapes*

Inayatullah Khan had gone to Ludhiana, to deal with some legal issues. He had a court hearing and was expected to be in the city for about a week. *Mian Ji* hired a room on rent in a local hotel, where he could stay during the duration of his tenure.

The court hearing concluded accordingly and all the legal matters were put to rest. *Mian Ji* had an eventful stay in the city, and also met with many of his friends and socialized with officials in the government.

It was almost midday. *Mian Ji* was packing his suitcases and was due to leave soon for Ramgarh Sardaran. Suddenly there a knock on the door. *Mian Ji* opened the door of his room to find his friend, Gagandeep Singh, standing outside with a worried look on his face.

“What is the matter Gagandeep?” *Mian Ji* asked.

“The Sikhs have surrounded the hotel. They are searching and investigating every person entering or leaving this hotel. They are also detaining all the Muslims,” Gagandeep announced.

“What do we do now? You have to help me get out of here, my friend” *Mian Ji* solicited.

Gagandeep began to pace around the room, thinking of some way in which he could help his friend, Inayatullah Khan, out of the hotel safely. After a while his face lit up and he proposed an idea.

“I have an ear ring (*mundre*). Here. Wear it. We will go out together, and I will introduce you as my Hindu friend. Your name is Dhanraj. Get it. From here on till we get out of here, pretend you are a Hindu,” Gangandeep suggested gleefully.

Mian Ji embraced the idea. He somehow managed to stick the ear ring in his left ear. Then he collected his luggage, and both he and Gagandeep left the hotel room and proceeded downstairs to the hotel lobby. Indeed, the Sikhs investigated them. *Mian Ji* introduced himself as Dhanraj, and after a couple of minutes of questioning, they were able to safely leave the hotel.

They proceeded to the train station, from where *Mian Ji* was bound to leave for his hometown. However, at the station they received the news that Ramgarh Sardaran has been attacked and all the Muslims in the city have either fled or have been killed. *Mian Ji* was very worried to hear this news. He was wondering where his family was at that moment.

Gagandeep offered some advice, “There is no point in going back to Ramgarh Sardaran now. If your family is still alive, the best bet is that they have managed to flee to Maler Kotla. You should go to Lahore now. Leave for Pakistan. Meanwhile, I will send a message to your sons, Niaz and Mumtaz. They will send some army trucks to Maler Kotla and retrieve your family if they are there.”

The counsel provided by Gagandeep made a lot of sense to Inayatullah. He agreed with his friend. They first proceeded to a nearby telegram office, from where they communicated a message to Niaz and Mumtaz to search for their family in Maler Kotla. Then they returned to the railway station. And this time *Mian Ji* boarded a train, not to Ramgarh Sardaran, but to Lahore.

15. *Meanwhile in Sangrur*

Zainab's uncle (*chacha*), Tufail Muhammad, had gone to a nearby town for some errands. While he was out of town, the city of Sangrur was surrounded by Sikh militant groups. Tufail Muhammad had to reach back home, so that he could protect his family, and possibly flee along with them.

Tufail Muhammad had a Sikh friend, whose name was Harpreet. He asked for his help. Harpreet agreed to help him get back into Sangrur. Harpreet had a taxi which had a large trunk. Tufail Muhammad hid inside a large box, which Harpreet then put inside the back trunk of his taxi. Together they travelled towards Sangrur.

The Sikh militant group had established a check point at the entry gate of Sangrur. Harpreet and his taxi were asked to stop at the check point. Tufail knew that any sound he made, he would be caught. He even stopped breathing momentarily, out of fear of being found out.

The guard at the checkpoint stopped Harpreet and asked him in a stern voice, "Who are you? What business you have inside Sangrur?"

Harpreet replied, "I live in Sangrur. My family is in the city. I have brought a taxi so I can pick them up and then leave for Amritsar."

The guard began to inspect the taxi, and scrutinizing the back trunk asked, "What is inside the trunk? *Musleh ki boo aa rahi hai* (I can smell a Muslim)."

The blood of Tufail Muhammad froze in its place and Harpreet's face lost its color. If the guard opened the trunk, both of them would be dead.

Harpreet barely managed to reply in a meek voice, “Just my luggage.”

For some reason, the Sikh guard decided not to check out the trunk of Harpreet’s taxi. He signalled to the other guard with his hand to let Harpreet go. The taxi moved forward, and both Harpreet and Tufail managed to breathe again.

They reached Tufail Muhammad’s house, and he came out of the back trunk of the taxi. Tufail Muhammad could not thank Harpreet enough. Tufail gave him 50 rupees as a token of appreciation.

Tufail knew that now it was impossible to get out of Sangrur. Only Harpreet could help him and his family escape the city. He requested Harpreet for a second favour: to get him and his family out of Sangrur.

However, one close encounter was enough for Harpreet and he turned down the request, “Look, you are my friend. That is why I volunteered to help you in the first place. But, things are getting very dangerous now. I have to get my family out of here. I cannot risk their lives because of you.”

Tufail offered Harpreet clothes, valuables, and even the entire jewellery of the house, but Harpreet was not having any of this. He said goodbye to Tufail and left.

That night, the Sikh militant group attacked the residents of Sangrur. Most of the population in the city was slaughtered. Some did manage to escape. However, Tufail Muhammad and his entire family, did not live to see another day.

16. Destination Lahore

Zainab and the group of women arrived at the gates of the city of Maler Kotla. Groups of boys and young men were stationed on rooftops, trees and road intersection, giving guard. The security guards at the city gate asked them who they were. Boli Boli narrated their entire version of events. Zainab and the rest of the women were then told to follow two young boys, who took them to nearby shelter house, where they were provided food, clothes and a comfortable abode.

Mian Ji had meanwhile reached Lahore, from where he sent a message to his sons, Niaz and Mumtaz, to search for their family in Maler Kotla. Niaz and Mumtaz had been severely injured during a clash, and Faiz had been shot, but was in safe condition. Nonetheless, Niaz Muhammad Khan managed to dispatch a few army trucks to Maler Kotla, in search of Inayatullah Khan's family.

Zainab and the rest of the women had just arrived at Maler Kotla that morning. After quenching their thirst and hunger, and getting some much needed rest and sleep, they began to ponder over how they could get in touch with their families and loved ones.

They were in the middle of their discussion that one of boys on guard approached them and asked, "Do you belong to *Mian Ji's* family?"

Zainab and the rest replied in the affirmative.

"Please come outside. They have come to pick you up," he stated and left.

Zainab and the rest were curious and inquisitive about who had come to pick them up, and how did they know they were in

Maler Kotla. They went outside and saw four army jeeps and a few soldiers of the British Indian Army. One of the soldiers approached them and informed them that Niaz Muhammad Khan had sent him to pick them up.

Zainab could not believe at this moment of blessing. She and the rest of the women quickly boarded one of the jeeps. There was plenty of room in the other three jeeps, so, the soldiers asked the people in the shelter houses that if anyone else was planning to go to Lahore, they were welcome to join them. Immediately, a large number of people crowded the jeeps, as all of them were migrating to Pakistan.

The soldiers tried to accommodate as many migrants in the jeeps as they could, though it was only a small percentage of the congregation. With the jeeps now completely herded with people, they began their journey to Lahore.

The journey was surprisingly very quiet and serene. The drivers did not cross through any cities or towns, and only took the major roads. Even when passing through some local populations, nobody interfered with them as they were traveling in the jeeps of the British Indian Army.

After a couple of hours, they reached the Wagah border. There were security forces on both sides of the border. They crossed the border, and on the other side, on a simple metal board, was written "PAKISTAN".

The migrants jumped out of the jeeps and began to kiss the mud and the soil. Many of them began to cry and cries of "*Allah-o-Akbar*" began to fill the air. The soldiers had to wait for a long time to get the people back into their jeeps, so that they could take them inside the city of Lahore.

Ghulam Muhammad, one of the migrants on the jeeps, had fallen into prostration (*sajda*) next to the metal board on which “PAKISTAN” was written. He was in that state for a long time now. The soldiers were waiting for him to get up, so that the entire group could proceed to Lahore. However, a long time passed and Ghulam Muhammad did not rise. One of the soldiers went to check him out. But, as soon as he put a hand on his shoulder, Ghulam Muhammad fell over to the ground. He had died in prostration (*sajda*)!

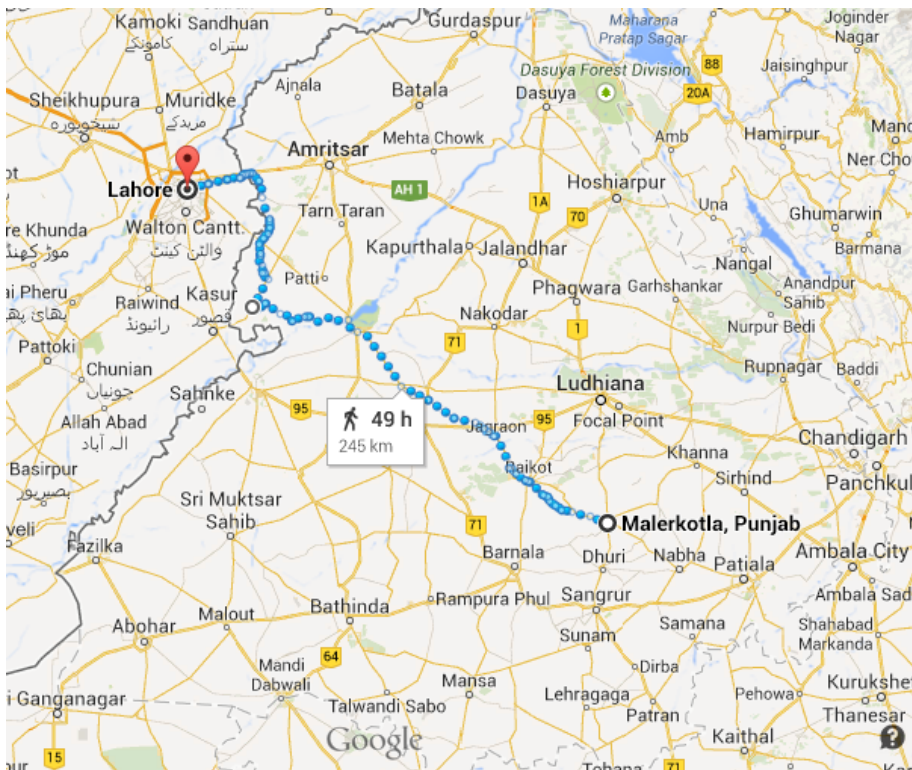


Figure 16: Journey from Maler Kotla to Lahore

17. A New Beginning

Zainab, along with Kishwar, had reached finally reached Lahore. One of Faiz Muhammad Khan's daughter was residing in Lahore, with her husband, after her marriage. They used to call her Aapa Choti. She lived in Lahore in Misri Shah. All the family who had managed to escape to Pakistan, gathered at her house. Zainab also reached *Aapa Choti's* house, where she was re-united with her family.

The migration had come but not without a cost. The Radcliffe Line had been drawn with the blood of around 40-60 million Muslims. Those who had migrated to Pakistan were now living in deprived and underprivileged conditions. People who were highly educated and literate were now doing ordinary jobs, if they found one. People with rich and noble families were now poor and desolate. People with huge lands and properties in India were now just striving to earn basic income. Outside the Walden camp, a fruit vendor was selling grapes at just 1 *aana* per kilo (0.0625 rupees per kilo), and still, nobody could afford to buy them.

Yet, there was an air of optimism and celebration. Nobody had any regrets or repentances. In the Walden Camp in Lahore, an old man, aged 95, was breathing his last breaths. He had lived a long life, and witnessed many events, such as the War of Independence in 1857, the British rule, the Congress rule and the subsequent creation of Pakistan. He had suffered much in his life. Yet, on his death, he had a smile on his face, and a message to the upcoming generations of Pakistan:

"I have lived a tumultuous life and suffered a lot. But, as I leave this world, I am very happy. I am happy because my future generations will live in a free and independent country, and not in slavery like I did all

my life. I sacrificed all that I had to make Pakistan a realization and a reality. You have not seen the things I have. You have not witnessed the events I have. You have not suffered the pain I have. Now it is your duty to work hard and serve your country. We were only the title of this book. You are the main story. Do not make all these sacrifices go to waste. Keep the faith alive, and the flag flying high. Pakistan Zindabad!”

آسمان ہو گا سحر کے نور سے آئینہ پوش
اور زلمت رات کی سیما پا ہو جائے گی

پھر دلوں کو یاد آجائے گا پیغامِ سجود
پھر جبین خاکِ حرم سے آشنا ہو جائے گی

آنکھ جو کچھ دیکھتی ہے لب پہ آسکتا نہیں
موجِ حیرت ہوں کہ دنیا کیا سے کیا ہو جائے گی

شب گریزاں ہوگی آخر جلوہ خورشید سے
یہ چمن معمور ہو گا نغمہ توحید سے