



THE ROOTS OF MISERY

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The Roots of Misery

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Dedicated

To all the people in my life who talked to me and, thus, made their knowledge a part of my reservoir – from which I have drawn this book;

and,

to the 'Chirya` who said to me " you cannot only listen and learn all your life. You must also say what you think";

and

to the "gale" who helped me regain momentum when the going was slow;

and to

Lahore, Cervia de Ter, Stockholm and Calcutta

Smiling General with cobra-eyes
Shadowing truth with loaded dice
Eighty million – without a voice
‘Democratic’ elections – without a choice

(On Pakistani electoral process. February 1985)

Some Important notes

1. This book is divided into three sections. My autobiographical sketch is not really a part of the book and, therefore, the reader may omit it entirely. A reading of it, though, will explain my attitude towards various issues which are discussed later in the book.

2. Unless specified 'the Arabs' stands for 'the Arabs of the Inner Circle'. See page 174.

3. Brain ↔ Mind,

The brain is the material part of the body which receives sensations and regulates physical actions. The mind is the operational ability of the brain, which receives and conceives thoughts and influences actions.

4. In the chapter titles 'Religion' I had intended to discuss the Tao-Confucius thoughts, too, but decided against it, because I find my present study of the classical Chinese way of life incomplete mainly because I have not had the opportunity to discuss the subject directly with the followers of that way.

5. In this book I have used words like angel of death, Satan, Gabriel, God, Allah, ghost, spirit, etc. these words do not describe my present belief or disbelief in the entities which they denote, but are used as they are used by the people in normal conversation, and as I was given to believe them in my childhood. My own views concerning such beings shall

become clear in the chapter 'Religion' and the part of the book which follows it.

Preface

This is a book for which I have been collecting material all through my adult life.

The general contents, as well as the intensity of my feelings, have varied reciprocally to my age, the extent of my experience and the depth of my knowledge of the universe; nevertheless, the central query has remained consistent: Who am I? What is my mutual relation to and with the expansion known to me as the surrounding space and the secrets hidden beyond the horizon? What is wrong with the world I live in? And Why?

The book is written in three distinct sections.

The first section describes me, because the kind of subjects I am dealing with in this book demand certain minimum qualifications - which I claim to possess.

In the next section though most of the comments and study is based upon Pakistan, and to a lesser degree upon Sweden, I believe that the contents apply to all countries of the world, and in particular to the countries of the third world. With a few relevant alterations, and excepting a few peculiarities which are unique to every people, it should hold for any place where the religion, the language, the political system

and very many of the activities of the daily life are imposed upon the indigenous people by the conquerors or manipulators from other places and their collaborators from within that people.

The intention is to establish that the misery prevalent in these areas is as much a work of the local collaborators as that of foreign exploiters. I assert that in all these countries the future of the majority of the individuals is determined before they reach the age of ten.

Excepting some of the more primitive nations where brute force is still used, this fixation of destiny is done by the subtle use of 'the language' and 'the religion', two elements on our life which decisively shape the social structure in a people.

I chose to use Pakistan as a model and contrasted it mostly with Sweden because I happen to know these two countries in detail, and by virtue of my personal circumstances which gives me the natural/ naturalized right to criticise the situation in these two places. As the book deals with very many of the evils in society I might appear over pessimistic and critical of these two countries. This will be contrary to my total view of life. Because I believe, and to a large extent know, that the majority of the people anywhere on the earth are positive, social and friendly, but often ill-informed about the situations around them. The villains, though only a minority, are much better organised, intra-nationally and internationally, and dedicated to their schemes. A number of issues raised in the book are quite disturbing and in

contradiction to the tradition of keeping the secrets of the East undisclosed. Revolting against all of my inhibitions I have bared the sensitive nerves of the Pakistan society because I know it for a fact that no foreign investigator, no matter how thorough his research or acute his observation may be, has ever been, or maybe, permitted to reach those strata where most of the filth from the society is hidden under the decorative carpeting. Thus the traitor, and I presume that that is what the guardians of the Eastern Honour shall call me, has to be an inborn.

In this attempt, I am most obliged to an American citizen who put me on the right path. He was a black deserter who talked much against his country. One evening I questioned his patriotism when suddenly a special look crept into his eyes. With his stare locked into mine, he whispered in his smoky voice "Brother! If someone sticks his finger up my arse hole then I have every right to open my mouth and yell "Stop, it hurts "".

To say that Pakistan has a finger stuck up their arse will be putting it too mildly. The present-day Pakistani is so ruthlessly screwed on a bed of imported conventions that all his movements are made towards achieving a quick, although temporary, relief from the latest thrust. I departed from the chaotic state some years back and although I shall never cease to be a Punjabi I am willing to take the risk of being labelled as a traitor - which I am not.

The third section of the book deals with a global tragedy which I a precipitation of the minds of a certain breed of

persons which is found all over the world. I have done my best to capture the foulness of this crime in as few words as possible; being afraid that any unnecessary detail shall ferment dramatization, and thus weaken the impact. I understand that much more insight and detailed investigation is required in the very near future by the Just in the world to fight off this hideous plot; nevertheless, a warning at this stage is not premature and is laid out.

The last chapter contains some conclusions and a few suggestions.

This book is not aimed exclusively at the scholars and, therefore, I have used a language, in direct communication and in simile, which will be comprehensible to the people from all walks of life. Thus, the language used in shockingly Public, although I could very well have chosen words which dampen the impact to the oversensitive minds. The book is written against the euphemism in life; and that entails, when appropriate, calling the shit as the shit, and a prick as a prick, and not using shock absorbers like the refuse or the generative organ instead.

There is one more explanation due; in this book I have discussed and criticised the people who call themselves as the Muslims, Jews, Christians, Hindus or Buddhists and those beliefs which are practised by most of the followers in these systems. If there are a handful of secluded scholars who happen to know the absolute truths contained in the sacred books of these religions and faiths then they are not relevant to this book, because the subject matter here is that which is

known, believed and practised by the majority. Same applies to the various interpretations of the religious beliefs as they are known today. If any of these books contains truths which are endorsed, but yet not known to mankind, then obviously my present criticism does not apply to those apodictic tenets which shall become known one day. At no place I have intended to insult any deity or the absolute sacredness of any true belief; on the other hand, I see no reason to refrain from disclosing the deliberate misinterpretations which are current in our days, nor do I profess to accept the beliefs which are definitely false. Thus, any accusation of blasphemy will be irrelevant because either my criticism is justified or the holders of the truth have failed to make their views clear to the majority.

I

I was declared born on April 12th, 1941 at about 14:00 at Montgomery, India (now Sahiwal, Pakistan).

My father is a Punjabi, as was his father and grandfather and...

They were from Lahore- the centre of the Muslim culture in Pakistan and the home of the Punjabi language. Though none of them had a deep understanding of Islam they were, and are, practising Muslims -as most other Pakistanis claim to be.

My mother is originally from Lucknow- the centre of the Muslim culture in India and the real home of the Urdu language. She also understood little of religion but believes that she is a Christian.

To keep the records straight I might as well clarify here that the conversion to Christianity was made by maternal grandparents. My grandmother was born at Lucknow in a Shia-Muslim family. She was married away very young within the Shia sect. One day when she was sleeping 'siesta' one of her calves became partially bare. Her mother- and sister-in-law took a red-hot iron bar to chastise her and burnt her in the bare leg; believing that Islam does not allow the female to bare her leg - not even a thirteen years old girl in her sleep. My grandmother and her husband - who had recently returned from England and, probably, was

impressed by the liberalism there, was much shocked by the barbarity of his mother and sister – fled from their home and found a sanctuary in a Christian hostel in a distant part of India. Thus started the short Christian tradition from my mother’s side.

In spite of two major languages spoken at home – Punjabi and Urdu – I was sent to an English medium school, till it was set on fire in 1947 as a sign of the burning enthusiasm for our liberation from colonialism. Thus, from my childhood I was brought up split between two religions and tree languages at home and several others outside in the street. Though I was only six and a half years old when India was divided between Bharat and Pakistan, I retain, even today, vivid impressions of Hindu festivals and ceremonies from other religions. The beauty of these memories being so supreme that in spite of all the distortions and misinformation propagated by the agitators, commonly known as the Mullahs of Pakistan, in the later years, the images stayed.

I had five elder brothers and a sister who were very nice to me and we played a lot with one another. I presume that it was their company which prompted my early talkativeness; which in turn resulted in my entrance in the school at the age of four. I was told, years later on, that I was good at my studies and, despite missing two terms when I fell sick with typhoid, I was ready with my Bachelor’s exam (B. Sc) by nineteen.

As a young boy I spoke Urdu at home, Punjabi in the street and English at the school. We had a neighbour called Hakim Sheikh Muhammad Madood who was a Greco-Indo doctor and a gentleman. He contributed much to my early upbringing, and was an honest and careful adviser to me later on when I had adolescence problems at home. His family had migrated from Delhi and Saharanpur in the early thirties and spoke excellent Urdu. He was also a man who was much inclined towards religion, especially towards its mystical and esoteric aspects. Several times a week he held debates and discussions on different religions and religious views where learned men from various faiths were present and defended their beliefs. In spite of my young age I was permitted to sit and attend those meetings; a big exception to the rule in those circles where children normally were not allowed in adult sessions. I deduce that I absorbed much during those meetings as in the following years of my life I was drawn so intensely to similar topics. I also understood from the very beginning that so many of those so-called learned men were great fakes, sometimes almost foolish- often their ignorance, which they tried to conceal, far exceeded their arrogance, which they strove to project. Life at that level was wonderful and there was much to be learnt.

A particularly strong memory from that age is our meetings with the Anglo-American missionaries who came to serve their Lord in the Salvation Army school near Temple Road. We nicknamed them as 'Bander-di-Bund' - monkey's

arse- because the pink patches on their pale cheeks resembled so vividly the buttocks of baboons in Lahore Zoo.

I remember that their intrusion in our society was resented and we did our best to make fools of them by giving them the most perverted and fanciful details about the sexual and social habits in our culture. With laughter restrained in our eyes we watched the disgust and horror creep up on their faces, followed by earnest prayers for our sinful souls. In spite of their advanced ages, we found them so childish in their approach towards understanding the culture and feelings of other people. Those short earthly encounters with them used to provide us with hours of heavenly joy.

Death, too, was an early acquaintance. I have confronted it, my own and others, several times and by this moment it is more like a nuisance around the corner than a danger lumbering over the head. My first meeting with it was when I was only five years old. I fell sick with typhoid and remained bed-ridden for five months. My parents tried different doctors but my constitution went deteriorating. Eventually, the doctors declared me practically gone. I must have been an ugly sight because the angel of death took one look at me and decided that I was a specimen unfit for the lofty heavens or the fiery Hell (I presume that at that age I had not committed any sins and born a Muslim, that is what my father announced me to be, I was free from the blemish of the Original Sin). So, I regained my breath, learnt to walk again, and subsequently became a well-respected sprinter in my area.

My most striking memory of the stark death is from the day when I was about six and a half years old. It was July 1947. The schools were closed for the summer vacations. The time was around eight or nine in the morning, but it had already become rather hot. Sitting on the pavement by the roadside, a favourite hobby of mine in Pakistan I saw the Sikh cycling towards me. He was a middle-aged man wearing soiled clothes and probably on his way to his work, as a Tiffin carrier swung from the handle of his bicycle. He was about six meters away from me when I saw the other man leaving the pavement and rushing towards him. Even to this very moment, I can recall the flurry of the cloth and the flash of the dagger, which was embedded around the left kidney of the Sikh, followed by another jab in the same area. The bearded man was taken by complete surprise, the pain from the cutting metal and the fear of impending death exploded upon his face. He fell from his cycle. The killer chased him to the ground, but the Sikh using all the energy he could muster got up and ran towards a passing by tonga (a horse carriage). Without least signs of compassion, the tonga driver kicked the wounded man off his vehicle. He landed on the road with his body jerking spasmodically. The hunter got hold of him again, sunk the cold hard metal in the warm soft flesh several times and disappeared from the scene. There were many spectators. Temple Roads was, and is, a busy major street of Lahore, but no one attempted to step forward and check-out if that bleeding, trembling body might have belonged to a member of their own species. Only two meters away from me

died a poor man colouring the future history of the Indian subcontinent.

To the best of my knowledge the killer and the slain were not acquainted. The open street butchering of an unfamiliar labourer had nothing to do with personal motives. It was a killing of one unacceptable animal by another animal who executed his action believing that he contributed to the benefit of his stock. I must have been spellbound because I saw it all happen from a distance of less than seven meters, absorbing total detail of that murder. Over the following years many have doubted my memory and ascribed a number of these details to the work of my fantasy. BUT THIS IS NOT TRUE. The witnessing of that killing, its immediate impact on my brain and its subsequent recollection has nothing to do with the normal act of remembering. Like a film scene viewed in slow motion it has always been a part of my active memory; because it has been a constant reminder to me that at any given time and place the noblest of God's creation, the man, has the capacity to put any other animal to shame when it comes down to perform acts of the most beastly nature – may it be the slashing of a Sikh by a Muslim, the rape of a ten year old girl by a country English gentleman, the bayoneting of newborn Vietnamese by the U.S peace troops, the deliberate selling of known semi-lethal chemicals disguised as medicines to the unsuspecting needy in the poor countries by the shareholders in the pharmaceutical companies registered in otherwise apparently peaceful Switzerland, live-feeding to the alligators by Idi Amin or

donkey fucking by orthodox Arab Muslims. I also remember the incineration of about three hundred Sikhs¹ in the temple not so far from the house in Temple Road. I know when and where the plot was made to burn them alive. I recall it was initiated when the strongman of Mozang received a parcel containing blood-soaked clothes and glass bangles from Amritsar, India; implying that the men of Lahore had turned into women and fit for wearing the glass bangles. The cold blood on the stained clothes boiled the blood running in the young heads and thus three hundred trapped Sikhs were condemned to death. There are not so many people in the world who have heard the anguish in the cries of a burning body; and you will have to take my word for it, that the agony carried in the shrieks of three hundred souls on a still summer night, its silence broken suddenly by gunfire and screams of the enflamed live flesh, is so afflicting that no effort what-so-ever is involved, on a later day, to re-live that hellish nightmare. The pain of that experience is so intense that it leaves its marking on that section of our brain which is meant to preserve the most horrid events in a person's memory. I heard those damned souls that night and I can hear them today if I so wish – which I dare not.

Strangely enough, neither of these two nor several other savage incidents of that period left any nightmarish effect upon me in the years to follow. By my parents and other

¹ Ishtiaq Ahmed in his book *Punjab, Blodied, Partioned and Cleansed* (Oxford 2012) asserts that although the number of people in the Gurdewar were 200 or more a few days earlier, the number of persons who died on that particular day were 25-30.

grownups I was given to understand that such cruelties were an integral part of our experience of the pains and pleasures of life. I accepted that explanation on its face value and went on looking at the paradoxes of life as a neutral observer. Street killing in Lahore has never been a rare observation and in the part of Lahore where I lived, Mozang, such incidents were tacitly considered to be adding spice to the dull life.

My next major encounter with death was in the summer of 1958 (or was it 1959) when cholera broke out in Pakistan. My father was a sanitary inspector, who taught me to inject cholera vaccine. In the weeks which followed I saw people standing one moment on their feet and dying a few minutes later. My whole vision of life became so blurred. Human bodies raised after years of hard labour and careful nourishment just turned lifeless in a matter of few hours, sometimes minutes. As usual, I looked upon the pathetic scene as an external spectator; trying to understand the meaning of some very central verses from Holy Quran which declares 'Man' as the best of all creations. How could the Almighty Creator always wise, infinitely compassionate- be so very heedless, dispassionately cruel, almost sinfully ridiculing his own masterwork? Or was the alleged masterwork merely a composition of flesh, bones, blood, water and urine, carrying a little undigested food and a lot of shit in his stomach, and was made to be there to be humiliated, refused and destroyed whenever the Life-giver found it pleasurable?

Notes