**Remembering my parents**

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When I was six years old, I would go to my parents’ bedroom in the mornings and jump into their bed. They would be awake and I wanted to be with them before the day started and everyone got busy. I was in a very loving family and felt very secure.

This was right before Partition, and we were in our Delhi home – Gul-e-Raana. There were always a stream of people coming to see my father and this would upset me because it meant that I could not be with my parents. But then I found out later that these were all members of the Muslim League, and politicians, including Mr Jinnah. People found Mr Jinnah a very stern man, but to me he was actually very soft. He enjoyed teasing my older brother, Ashraf, because Ashraf was very fond of clothes and shoes and he would copy Mr Jinnah’s dressing. One day he kicked Mr Jinnah on his leg, because he was purposely not looking at Ashraf’s shoes and Ashraf was trying to make him look so that he would praise his shoes. This game would continue regularly! Ashraf was named by Mr Jinnah; my parents wanted to name their first born Akber but Jinnah chose Ashraf. So when I was born, I was named Akber.

In July 1947, my mother, brother, myself and our governess Billy (Kate Miles) flew to Karachi not realising the catastrophic madness that would happen in the days following. We stayed with Lady Haroon in Seafield House. The airport road, now called Sharah-e-Faisal, had nothing on either side until we came to Metropole Hotel. In those days, Karachi was a small town – you couldn’t even have called it a city. Ashraf was enrolled into Grammar School and I went to Ms Brooks’ Private School. I was very young and didn’t realise that this was going to be my home for life.

In August ’47 my father joined us in Karachi. He was sworn in as prime minister. I didn’t understand what was happening. We moved to 10 Victoria Road (which is now the State Guest House on Abdullah Haroon Road). I have fond memories of those days; our friends would come over and we would play in the large gardens, with no real knowledge of the turmoil around us or of what was yet to come. Mr Jinnah would often come over to the house to play bridge. We would be sent away while they played bridge and we didn’t like that at all, so we planned deadly acts! Once, when they entered the veranda, we stood on the balcony overlooking the veranda and my brother made me throw a vase of dirty water on Ms Jinnah as she walked by. Luckily it missed her – Ashraf jumped back into his bed and pretended to be asleep. I was left holding the evidence and got punished as a result.

For one semester, Ashraf was sent to Aitchison College in Lahore. He came back for the holidays and complained to Dada that everyone there had a personal valet except him - ‘I am sharing a room with Amir Zeb, son of the Wali of Swat, and he also has a valet’. So Dada said ‘Oh, very good. Now you want a valet because everyone else has a valet! Best that you come back to Grammar School’. So, Ashraf was removed from Aitchison and came back to school in Karachi.

Every morning we would go and chat with our parents. Dada would be in the bathroom shaving and we would sit with him before going to school. Then we would see him for a little time in the evening. The only opportunities to spend longer periods of time with him would be on special occasions, like birthdays, which he loved to celebrate. He would join us in playing games during our birthday parties, and loved taking photographs. That was when he was at his most relaxed. On weekends we would drive to Hawkes Bay with my parents because Dada was looking for an area that could be made into the capital city outside Karachi – Dumlotie.

The day of the assassination I was very disturbed without knowing why. I was 10 years old and Ashraf was 14. I kept saying don’t go Dada don’t go. He said ‘don’t worry I will be back in the evening’. I clung to his leg and wouldn’t let him get into the car. I don’t know whether it was premonition or what, but I just remember I didn’t want him to leave that day.

Mama was at home when she heard the news. She received a phone call and started crying. Then Billy started crying, the staff started crying, my brother started crying. I had no idea what was happening, but I started to cry too. In the evening, the body came from Rawalpindi to the house. Blocks of ice had been placed in the room where his body was placed. The next morning was the burial. And thousands and thousands of people participated in the funeral procession.

It was the most horrible moment of my life; there was oppressive heat, the stink of sweat, people closing in all around me. I will never forget the feelings of terror and oppression that I felt then. When I think back, I still can recall the smells and sounds around me. After that experience I have found it very difficult to attend any burials.

Losing your father when you are 10 years old is a terrible thing. After his death, we shifted into a government house in Bath Island, and in the winter of 1952 Ashraf and I were both sent to England by ship, to attend boarding school. I was 11 years old. Life had changed drastically. I had to learn to stand on my own feet. Boarding school, even though I did not enjoy it, made me independent and showed me how to look after myself. My mother took on the role of Pakistan’s ambassador to The Netherlands in 1954, so that she could continue to provide for her family and to keep us in school. The government provided each of us a stipend of Rs500 per month, but this was not enough to keep us in school. In those days, Rs500 was equivalent to GBP 50.

My mother’s sacrifices were enormous – first her family, then her country, then her husband – yet she never showed us her grief or reminisced about her past life. Dada and Mama were the role models in our family – not only for ourselves but also for our children. I hope people read this and realise that they need to remember such leaders – those who through their deeds show us true courage, discipline, humility, perseverance and faith.

The writer is a Karachi-based businessman, and the son of Pakistan's first prime minister Liaquat Ali Khan, and former ambassador Begum Ra’ana Liaquat Ali.