

Masuma Hasan Oral History Content Summary

Track 1 [duration: 54:25] [Session one: 24 October 2013]

[00:00] Masuma Hasan [MH] born Panipat, ancestral home, outside Delhi, India during Second World War, struggle against British rule, movement for Pakistan. Describes family history, 700 years of living in Panipat. Describes father as 'Cambridge man', barrister, law professor, head of Indian Institute of International Affairs. Family members pioneers in women's education. Describes early childhood in Delhi, not enjoying New Delhi Church School, classes held in tents, but happy home. Describes mother as beautiful, good homemaker, parents cousins, younger brother, father doting on MH.

[05:00] Describes family's departure for Karachi with creation of Pakistan, amid 'rape, blood and carnage', father richest man in area, leaving all behind, passionate about Pakistan. Vivid description of dangers of two-day Delhi-Karachi train journey, MH age 5. Describes arrival in Karachi.

[10:00] Describes living in remarkable community in barracks named Intelligence School for 13 years. Describes mother searching vast refugee camps, helping women in search of relatives. Describes private tuition with Anglo-Indian teacher. Description of Karachi, then capital of Pakistan. Attendance of convent school run by nuns from Belgium, Sisters of the Cross order. Describes Catholic environment, before government order exempting Muslim girls from Catholic prayers.

[14:43] Describes learning much from nuns, mix of compassion and austerity experienced, module of 'character building' moral and ethical guidance, emphasis on sports. Describes influence of teacher, rare Jewish woman in country. Discusses westernized teaching of history without patriotism of own heroes. Describes getting large dose of culture at home, father great admirer of Muhammad Iqbal, MH learning to recite entire poetry, also work of literati from Panipat. Describes childhood dining room as 'our great classroom', comparing to colleagues' lack of exposure.

[19:20] Describes father as important figure in Karachi public life, in charge of Pakistan Institute of International Affairs. Describes father's great efforts for family to develop cultural roots in Pakistan, travelling to historical sites, picnicking by Hindus river. Describes difficulty of uprooting for paternal grandmother, as educated, wealthy, propertied woman leaving everything. Mentions trying to teach MH from Koran. Description of Moghul style ancestral home built by grandfather, inclusion of well in case of war. Describes circumstances of grandparents' marriage, portrait of Hyderabad at time as land of great opportunity for professionals and men of literature and learning. Grandfather Chief Engineer in Nizams Government. Story about grandparents travelling to see Sphinx and Pyramids, Egypt, grandfather's death, burial at Necropolis, Cairo, MH visiting grave on father's request while student.

[25:03] Describes passion to become astrophysicist, father's insistence MH attend Cambridge University, England. Remarks that custom among aristocracy to send young to study at Oxford or Cambridge, example of father sending younger sister to

England, 1930. Discusses belief that educational institutions should be government-owned. Describes studying Political Science at University of Karachi, Pakistan as turning point in life, learning about country through strong student movement, National Students Federation, meeting husband.

[29:53] Discusses growing up as girl, parents not differentiating between sexes. Mentions refusing to learn piano, but horse-riding. Describes father as modern man. Describes fighting with brother as children. Describes people met at university coming from less privileged backgrounds, politically motivated and angry. MH acknowledging open but sheltered life led. Mentions learning to drive age 15, stealing family car. Describes Karachi students leading revolt against Ayub Khan, events eye-opening for MH, sympathising with students but not understanding properly. Describes arrest and conviction of fellow students.

[34:35] Becoming great friends with Fatehyab Ali Khan, leader of country-wide movement age 24, later marrying. Discusses paradox of parallel lives. Describes nuns upset that MH friends with prisoner. Describes admission to Cambridge University, England, through essay written on Socrates. Describes experience of Cambridge, staying at Women's Graduate Club, women not permitted to wear trousers in university library and public spaces. Anecdote on trying to climb double decker buses in traditional sari before giving in to western dress. Nicholas Mansergh.

[41:17] Describes limited access to telephone, communicating with parents by letter. Mentions supervisor, Nicholas Mansergh. Thesis on transfer of power to Pakistan, returning home for field research. Describes research at Cabinet Division Library, first person to ever view record of Punjab Boundary Commission, Lahore, Pakistan. Description of archives in historic tomb sealed by Moghul Emperor Akbar, being designated graveside table where spent summer copying text by hand. Describes meeting Fatehyab Ali Khan several times on trip, expressing uncertainty about future together.

[46:16] Describes Cambridge as fun, punting on river, May balls, tea at Grantchester, but women not yet independent so always slightly on defensive with suitors. Describes work possibilities on return to Karachi, not wanting to work in private sector, joining The National Institute of Public Administration as Research Officer.

[50:13] Marriage to Fatehyab Ali Khan. Describes influence of work, MH's vital contribution, running one hundred courses for civil servants, taking organisation into computer age, building solid knowledge of Government of Pakistan, learning about other countries, their management and administration. Describes husband as remarkable man, devoid of gender bias, never questioning MH's actions, often working as sole woman among 200 men. [interrupted]

Track 2 [duration: 03:51] [Session one: 24 October 2013]

[00:00] Describes unusual circumstance of working as sole woman with men, travelling together, never questioned by husband. Describes feelings as mother, leaving son for assignment in The United States of America (USA), sadness felt

today, understanding that manipulated by director. Mentions posting as Ambassador to Vienna, Austria. [pause]

Track 3 [duration: 56:29] [Session one: 24 October 2013]

[00:00] Discusses political climate, everything in life influenced by political dynamics of Pakistan, since meeting radical politician husband, fall of Ayub Khan's government, rise of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, change brought to politics, arousing workers, peasants finding dignity, new voice. Describes 'tragedy' of loss of East Pakistan, becoming Bangladesh, influencing entire political system. Account of husband's courage in intervening in trial of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, under dictatorship of Zia-ul-Haq. Observes that own career had to develop under Zia-ul-Haq's anti-women laws, conservative policies, use of Islam and brutal torture. Describes husband's regular imprisonment, member of Pakistan Workers Party [later merging with Pakistan Mazdoor Kisan Party], only leader to sign declaration of Movement for the Restoration of Democracy.

[08:00] Describes difficult period, home under surveillance, children easily detecting activity. Describes impact on own work, move to remove MH from job at The National Institute of Public Administration, taking forced leave. Describes daily routine of cooking for husband and cell mates in prison, becoming friends with prison guards. Anecdote about Begum Bhutto in prison at same time.

[16:03] Account of civil disobedience movement against Zia-ul-Haq, technique of political persons offering to be arrested used by Mahatma Gandhi, MH accompanied by children driving husband to intended point of arrest, Empress Market, Karachi, Pakistan. Reflects on time with children, wishing had explained more to them, relying on mother. Describes visiting prison with children, bullying by neighbourhood children.

[22:26] Describes husband's transfer to prison 350 miles away, MH flying to Sukkur, Pakistan, then journeying by rickshaw, carrying items from other wives. MH's request to Home Secretary for husband's transfer back refused on grounds that too influential to be in Karachi during hanging of Nasir Baloch and later Ayaz Sammo. Describes keeping vigil night before hanging.

[26:46] Describes further attempts to prevent MH's return to work, finally reinstated with transfer to Islamabad, ostracised by colleagues, friends, believing association too dangerous. Describes being visited by very senior political leaders and mother and brothers only. Husband's comment that in such movements bravery paramount.

[31:05] Begins work in Management Services Division, in-house consultancy organisation of government. Mentions introduction to Aurat Foundation through Nigar Ahmed. Describes return to original office in Karachi in different times. Description of day Benazir Bhutto returned from exile, 1988, attending speech with children. Mentions Nusrat Bhutto.

[36:00] Promotion to Director of The National Institute of Public Administration, changes effected. Further promotion to Grade 22, highest level in government, implying that should be assigned ministry. Describes Benazir Bhutto's philosophy, offering MH Women's Ministry. MH's refusal on grounds of sexist stance of offer. Eventual solution to make Ambassador, though also closed club. Describes insignificant offers, until Vienna, Austria.

[43:18] Discusses importance of Vienna posting as a United Nations (UN) headquarters with many agencies present, Slovenia and Slovakia also accredited to ambassadorship. Describes orientation, being sent to UN General Assembly as member of Pakistan delegation. Brief description of responsibilities in Vienna, 1995. Mentions representative from Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission due to high level of co-operation with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Describes sons living with MH. Recall of position with change to Nawaz Sharif's government. Reflects on work in Vienna, major involvement with IAEA for assistance in projects for peaceful nuclear purposes, hope that developed countries would reduce nuclear warheads. Discusses Pakistan's aim to become permanent member of board of governors of IAEA, MH's lobbying effort.

[51:20] Describes UN agencies in Vienna, mentions Drugs Control, Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice. Describes fighting US effort to close down United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). Mentions Turkish diplomat, Fügen OK. Mentions representing Pakistan on Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. Elected Chair of Global Fund Group 77, 1996.

[53:20] Describes establishment of Aurat Foundation by Nigar Ahmed [NA] and Shahla Zia [SZ], viewing as act of courage during Zia-ul-Haq's term, when prolific passing of several existing laws against women. MH attending meetings and becoming board member. Describes main issues at time, repression relating to Hudud laws, involving predetermined punishments in Koran. [pause]

Track 4 [duration: 1:13:46] [Session one: 24 October 2013]

[00:00] Discusses two kinds of repression against women, cultural relating to patriarchy, and state imposed, legacy of Zia-ul-Haq era, significance of Aurat Foundation [AF]. Describes liberal, highly-educated background of founders. Describes female quota in Parliament, established 1950s, rising to 10 percent. Discusses practices against women, observing most negative aspect of women's lives as poverty, setting context of poor country, low income and literacy rates, history of women used as commodities for settling tribal disputes. Mentions British officials honouring this system.

[05:20] Describes denial of women's inheritance rights, lack of land rights. Discusses girls' right to education, will compromised by lack of security in reaching school/home.

[06:22] Limitation of professions open to women, AF's recognition that women must be involved in political arena. Describes work on legal reform, to have law in place as

first instrument for justice, use of radio to impart technical advice to women farmers. Describes original aim of Foundation, provision of information as resource, starting out as active printing and publications programme. Mentions Nigar Ahmed [NA]'s inspiration from women's organisations in India. Mentions Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA). Describes Shahla Zia [SZ]'s legal work, laying foundations and fighting for, new laws passed.

[12:01] Discusses daunting reality of donor-driven agenda. Describes one of great achievements as Citizen Action Committees set up in various districts of Pakistan, seen as catalysts for change, messages for women's rights relayed through members of community, traders, nurses, doctors, lawyers, teachers. Examples of bringing 500 people from grassroots communities, together in two days for any event/campaign.

[15:47] Discusses lighthearted public perception of women's initiatives, NA and SZ's professional positions and network, making a difference. Describes Foundation's Legislative Watch Programme for political empowerment, started at grassroots, reaching Federal Parliament. Outlines specific challenges, highlighting bravery involved, working in highly male-dominated communities. Explains methodology in rural areas, paper work involved in elections restricting illiterate women, Foundation working with them to complete. Refers to moment after decades of work, when Pervez Musharraf [PF] agreed to women securing 33.5% of vote, accounting for motivating women further. Mentions MH's work as Cabinet Secretary, account of PF's willing to increase to 50% not understanding full implications, before prevented by conservative elements.

[21:45] Describes necessity for capacity building, setbacks from men on local councils. Describes progress beyond local government, holding workshops and training for women elected to provincial government. Describes work with women parliamentarians in Pakistan's Federal Parliament, study of performance showing successful action, advantage that Speaker of the National Assembly female at time, taking proactive role, forming Women's Parliamentary Caucus of Pakistan. Attributes enactment of laws in past decade to collaboration across party lines, exception of Jamaat e Islami group. Describes modifications of laws and new laws against sexual harassment, harassment at work place, honour killings, Anti-Women Practices Act criminalising practices including depriving woman from inheritance, forced marriage, new law against acid throwing, all as result of work of women in Parliament, lobbied by AF. Exception of law against domestic violence, insufficiently passed by only one, Provincial Assembly of Sindh.

[27:19] Describes AF employees as young graduates with foreign degrees, good English, satisfying donor culture, some elders guiding. Observes problem of implementation of law related to knowledge that there is such a law, then many women reluctant to implicate husbands, brothers. Describes 'sea change' in presence of women in public sphere, not conceivable when MH young, professional women in all fields holding important positions, especially in corporate sector. Discusses significance of women-friendly government, acknowledging The People's Party. Majority of university students women, women in armed forces, commercial pilots, doctors, lawyers, judges in lower courts, though none in higher or Supreme Court.

[32:50] Describes AF brainstorming on whether should remain as women's rights organisation, or strategize to become civil society organization with bigger agenda, to incorporate family work, develop social capital. Discusses necessity of remaining neutral between regimes to maintain influence, example of gaining 33.5% quota from a dictator. Describes funding as problem until four years ago, change in donor landscape, now able to make significant bids. Discusses demands of donors, hopes to have own money one day to enable charting own agenda. Describes change in organisational culture, previously family culture, needing to become more professional, scaling down of staff.

[38:00] Describes moment of triumph as International Women's Day, 2013 when Domestic Violence Bill passed by Sindh Assembly, AF acknowledged for support in drafting. Discusses approach in conservative, tribal, rural areas of Pakistan, MH's view that can build on success for ripple effect. Remarks that real change can only come through government policies, importance of lobbying, AF engaged in advocacy at every level since formation.

[42:22] Describes social mobilization project AAWAZ, network of five civil society development organisations in Pakistan, AF taking gender lead in programme, volunteers interacting with administration to facilitate better service delivery. Mentions Income Support Programme (formerly Benazir Income Support Programme), providing financial incentives to family to send child to school. Discusses changes seen for women in society, that progress inevitable in spite of government in developing societies, due to economic compulsions. Remarks that female federal secretaries not in policy-making positions, referring to own experience as Cabinet Secretary.

[47:40] Describes role as Chair of Working Group on Women's Development for Five Year Plan, remarking on necessity to have concern for women under every separate head, industry, agriculture, transportation, commerce. Describes experience as Cabinet Secretary as greatest moments of MH's life. Describes background of appointment when Pervez Musharraf in power. Mentions Tariq Aziz.

[52:10] Announcement of appointment, backlash, resentment. Mentions living in Parliamentary Lodges, Islamabad. Describes first encounter with Musharraf at National Security Council meeting, ensuing trust.

[1:00:22] Describes road trip to China, through Khunjerab, Pakistan, into Kashgar, China. Reflects on colleague perception in cabinet. Describes brother's contributions as architect focusing on humanist aspects of development.

[1:05:20] Reflects on impossibility of achievements without emotional support, trust and wisdom of husband. Mentions AF partner, Women for Human Rights in Nepal, working with widows. Acknowledges world view instilled by father. Mentions younger brother, barrister.

[1:08:20] Describes relationship with Women's Learning Partnership (WLP), commenting on unique bonding between women, impressive publication output. Mentions Mahnaz Afkhami, Moroccan partners Rabéa Naciri, and Amina Lamrini. Describes translating WLP 'Leading to Choices' manual into Urdu, impact where used, current undertaking to translate 'Leading to Action' manual. Discusses participatory nature of organisation.