

## SHOAIB SULTAN KHAN

By virtue of a master's degree from Allahabad University and a superb command of English, Shoaib Sultan Khan's maternal grandfather, Sultan Ahmad Beg, won a coveted position in the state civil service of Uttar Pradesh, known in the days of the British-Indian Raj as the United Provinces. He maintained a large household that embraced his children and grandchildren, all of whom moved with him from one posting to the next. Sultan Ahmad Beg was assigned to the small city of Moradabad when, on 11 July 1933, his grandson Shoaib was born, the second child (and second son) of his daughter Husna and her husband, Mohammad Nasim Khan. When Husna died just a few years later, Shoaib remained with his grandfather's peripatetic household as it shifted to Shahjahanpur, Dehra Dun, Lakhimpur, and Hamirpur. His father stayed permanently behind in Moradabad, where he was employed as the city clerk.

As part of Sultan Ahmad Beg's household, Shoaib grew up in the daily company of his older brother and male cousins and uncles, who became his playmates and companions. There were other relatives, too, and plenty of servants, including a *majordomo* who "ordered everyone about" and whom the children both feared and respected. Compared to the vast majority of Indians, the family was affluent. Shoaib's earliest memory is of the arrival of his grandfather's new Ford convertible in Shahjahanpur. In Hamirpur, where Sultan Ahmad Beg was deputy commissioner, the family occupied a compound of one square mile and a house "like a palace," as Shoaib remembers it.

Over the entire family, Sultan Ahmad Beg cast a warm, nurturing shadow. He was the patriarch who acted out his role in grand style. "He would welcome everyone," says Shoaib. "Magnanimity was his hallmark." As the youngest grandson, Shoaib seems to have come in for special affection, which he happily returned. "I never felt a need for my mother or my father," he says, "because I was so well looked after."

By the time Shoaib was old enough to enter school, Sultan Ahmad Beg had been posted to the hill town of Dehra Dun, where he was in charge of resettling a large group of Afghan refugees. There Shoaib entered the American Presbyterian Mission School and embarked upon his education in both Urdu, his mother tongue, and English, the language of the British Empire. For both middle and high school,

he shifted to public institutions in Hamirpur and Lakhimpur and added Hindi and, later, Persian, to his linguistic repertoire. At home, Urdu was spoken. But Sultan Ahmad Beg had taken his own degree in English and encouraged his grandson to learn it well. He often entertained Europeans at his official residence, for example, and on such occasions Shoaib and the other youngsters were obliged to come forward with some well-turned pleasantries in English. In and around the hill station of Mussoorie, where Shoaib often holidayed with his grandfather, English was also *de rigueur*. In this way, through formal schooling and the elevated social environment of his youth, Shoaib became comfortably multilingual.

By the time Shoaib was in middle school, his grandfather had become a full-fledged district officer, responsible comprehensively for collecting revenue, administering justice, and undertaking the occasional rural improvement project. To carry out this work, he spent as many as three months each year touring his district, moving from place to place in a huge caravan of pack animals, teamsters, servants, clerks, and minor functionaries and living for weeks at a time “under canvas,” that is, in tents. Shoaib joined his grandfather *en tournée* whenever he could, especially for the “winter touring” that coincided with long school holidays. Shoaib relished this life above all others and attributes his fondness for “rather aristocratic sports like riding and hunting” to these adventurous excursions. He remembers a particularly grand tiger hunt in Lakhimpur in which the local maharaja and his guests, including Shoaib and his grandfather, mounted fifty elephants to flush out the hapless animal. More commonly, he and his brother hunted birds and deer with shotguns, although on one occasion they unexpectedly encountered a leopard, which, to their amazement, they actually shot and killed.

Shoaib’s family was Muslim and hailed originally from Azamgarh in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, an important seat of Islamic learning. One of his aunts was the daughter of a great Muslim theologian who had written a biography of the Prophet Muhammad. But only a few members of his immediate family were actively devout. Sultan Ahmad Beg never performed the five daily prayers (an example Shoaib followed) nor did he abstain from eating during the fasting month—although, in accordance with local Ramadan tradition, he did bring a poor man into his household and fed him in lieu of honoring the fast himself. On the other hand, Shoaib and other members of the family participated happily in Hindu processions and festivals, which were great public events. “There was never, ever any intolerance preached in our family,” he says. Furthermore, despite the fact that Muslims were a minority in predominantly Hindu Uttar Pradesh, Shoaib remembers nothing of Hindu-Muslim hostility from his childhood. Rather, an ambience of tolerance prevailed in which Hindu and Muslim lived, worked, and socialized side by side. A great many of his grandfather’s Indian associates were Hindu, of course. And,

as Shoaib later discovered, his father's regular poker group in Moradabad was completely ecumenical.

As a civil servant, Sultan Ahmad Beg did not participate openly in the Indian independence movement. "He was not a political person at all," says Shoaib. But the family was hardly immune to the burning issues of the day. Although Shoaib himself admired Jawaharlal Nehru, the leader of the Congress Party and an advocate, with Gandhi, of an undivided India, he tended to side with Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who led the Muslim League and pressed for a separate state for South Asia's Muslims. Shoaib was just fifteen and living with his father in Moradabad when independence from Britain was realized in 1947 and, along with it, the partition of the subcontinent into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. With partition, the culture of tolerance between Hindus and Muslims broke down. Communal violence erupted in many places, even in Moradabad, where, to evade harassment by aroused Hindus, Shoaib's father was forced occasionally to flee his civil servant's quarters for the safer neighborhood of his wife's relatives. Privately, Sultan Ahmad Beg also sided with Jinnah and Pakistan. But anticipating the intrigues and power struggles that would inevitably accompany the establishment of the new nation, he declined an offer to become its first public service commissioner. Instead, he retired and remained in India.

For a while, Shoaib also remained in India. Having joined his father's household at last in 1947, he pursued his baccalaureate degree at the Government Intermediate College in Moradabad, concentrating on English, civics, history, and Persian. It was his father's wish that Shoaib remain in Moradabad. But Shoaib had visited his older brother at Lucknow University and decided that he, too, would like to complete his baccalaureate degree there. The problem was posed to Sultan Ahmad Beg, who asked, "What does Shoaib want?" When Shoaib said, "Lucknow," the old man settled the matter by saying, "Then he shall go to Lucknow University."

Shoaib's relatively brief stay in Moradabad had one profound consequence. Among his stepmother's relatives was a niece named Musarrat Rahim, the daughter of a University of London-trained historian. The two teenagers fell in love. Although it was a good match, the families advised the couple not to marry until they were older—both Shoaib and Musarrat were just seventeen. Even his doting grandfather, fearing that Shoaib might abandon his education, expressed disapproval but concluded that Shoaib should make up his own mind. "Obviously," says Shoaib today, "I was too young to marry. Everybody was appalled because they had such high hopes for this young darling of theirs. But I was in love. So I said no, I will not wait. I shall marry her." Shoaib and Musarrat were married on 14 August 1950. Afterwards, Musarrat remained behind in Moradabad as Shoaib studied in Lucknow, where he kept his civil status a secret from his schoolmates.

With his grandfather's example as his North Star, Shoaib had already begun charting a path to the civil service. This had led him to abandon mathematics and science in high school and college and to concentrate instead on English, political science, and history. As he now contemplated a master's degree in history, also at Lucknow, Musarrat advised him that one historian in the family was enough. He therefore opted to study English literature, just as his grandfather, Sultan Ahmad Beg, had done. Shoaib completed his master's degree in 1953, in time to celebrate the arrival of his daughter Roohi, the first of four daughters born to him and Musarrat. (Afshan, Falaknaz, and Shelley arrived in 1955, 1959, and 1968, respectively.)

By this time Musarrat had moved to Pakistan with her father and Shoaib joined her there. His ambitions were fixed on earning a high mark in the civil service examination. To sit for the examination in Pakistan, however, meant qualifying for citizenship, and this required a year's residency. With a degree in English, Shoaib found himself "being offered jobs by half-a-dozen colleges." Teaching appealed to him and he decided to accept a position at Jahanzeb College in the district of Swat, high in the mountains some 160 miles north of Peshawar. The college provided a house, a good salary, and beautiful surroundings. He and Musarrat settled in and Shoaib launched into a busy life teaching English to young men bound for careers in engineering, medicine, and government—many of whom, some years later, rose to important positions. Aside from regular classes, there were frequent outings and treks to the mountains, all of which he enjoyed "wonderfully well." All the while, however, he prepared studiously for the civil service examinations.

The civil service examinations of Pakistan came in two stages. Success in the initial battery of written examinations led, some months later, to a series of oral interviews and a week-long psychological test. Shoaib took his written examinations over a period of three weeks in October 1954. In addition to the general questions on current affairs and English composition, applicants were also required to select specific areas of knowledge for deeper testing, such as physics, mathematics, literature, and history. Shoaib chose English literature, of course, and both European and Indian history. His *viva*, or oral examination, occurred six months later. One's performance in these examinations determined not only if one would enter the government services, but also in which branch one would serve, since the same set of examinations acted as gatekeeper to all departments: finance, revenue, police, customs, and foreign affairs, as well as the coveted administrative services—Shoaib's own choice and, indeed, the branch for which he was selected.

When he learned of his success, Shoaib resigned his teaching job in Swat and entered the Civil Service Academy of Pakistan in Lahore, the next obligatory stage in his formal preparation for a government career. The academy was run by a British expatriate, Sir

Geoffrey Burgess, formerly of the Indian Civil Service. Shoaib now studied revenue law for the first time and Bengali, the language of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) where he was assigned for four months as a probationer. In the district of Bakargunj, he served as an apprentice magistrate with third-class powers, meaning that he could sentence a miscreant to one month in prison or fine him up to one thousand rupees. Shoaib was twenty-two.

At the time, probationers of the Pakistan Civil Service were sent to England to round out their educations. Having completed his apprenticeship in East Pakistan, Shoaib, along with Musarrat, left the children behind with relatives—their second daughter had been born in February 1955—and settled briefly near Cambridge University, where Shoaib was affiliated with Selwyn College. Ordinarily “all-Anglican,” the college broke with its tradition and accepted a Muslim at the behest of one of its dons, D. P. Hardy, a former district magistrate in Moradabad and a close acquaintance of Shoaib’s father.

At Cambridge, Shoaib concentrated on economics and international law, but given the option of studying a third subject unrelated to public administration, he could not resist English literature. For a term, he devoted himself to the Eighteenth-Century Mind. Shoaib loved the life at Cambridge, with its stimulating lectures and tutorials and magnificent library. Indeed, he delighted in England generally, which somehow held few surprises for him given his years of indirect exposure and study in India and Pakistan. (The campus at Lucknow University, for example, had been built to resemble campuses in England.)

In 1957, having finished his course at Cambridge, Shoaib purchased a Ford Anglia motorcar for three hundred fifteen English pounds and set out for home. He and Musarrat crossed the English Channel at Calais, made their way to Belgium and then south, through France, to Switzerland. They crossed into Italy and then to Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, and Iran, finally reaching Quetta in southwestern Pakistan in late summer. This long roadway odyssey from West to East exhilarated Shoaib and he has repeated it several times since.

Shoaib and his fellow probationers now looked forward to their first real assignments, hoping for postings in their home districts. Instead, he and others from West Pakistan were assigned to East Pakistan; those from the East were assigned to the West. (This was part of Prime Minister Hussain Shahid Suhrawardy’s scheme to integrate the two geographically separated parts of the new country.) So, in September 1957, Shoaib became a training magistrate in the East Pakistan district of Kushtia, the birthplace of the Bengali literary genius Rabindranath Tagore. Four months later, he took charge of Brahman Baria subdivision in Comilla District, where he served for three years. “In Brahman Baria,” he says, “I learned the secrets of the trade.” As subdistrict officer, Shoaib had comprehen-

sive responsibilities. He was revenue collector, judicial magistrate, and development officer for a territory containing about half a million people. Five magistrates worked under his supervision as well as a small army of civil functionaries, clerks, and police officers. As the subdivision's senior government official, he was also responsible for leading the people in rural improvement projects and for raising funds for any number of cultural and charitable activities. (When a military friend of his was killed in a border skirmish, for example, Shoaib raised funds to build a small local hospital and a memorial column in his memory.)

In light of later hostilities between East and West Pakistan, it is remarkable that Shoaib experienced no resentment at all about the fact that he had been "imported" from West Pakistan. He knew that the local people reacted badly to the patronizing airs of some of his colleagues, who viewed the easterners as the new country's "poor relations" and heirs of an effete Hindu-weakened culture. But Shoaib's respect for the local people was genuine and they seemed intuitively to have sensed this. He strove to be an honest and efficient administrator. As a magistrate, he earned a reputation for impartial and humane judgments, of putting himself "in the place of the accused," as one old Bengali pleader told him. Shoaib found the people warm and appreciative in return and remembers, "I had the most beautiful years there."

Although rich in its own ways, the rural society of Brahaman Baria was also mired in poverty. Aside from emergency programs for famine relief and the like, the British colonial officers had done little to alleviate this apparently permanent and pre-ordained condition affecting millions of their Asian subjects. As custodians of a huge empire, the British strove primarily to impose law and order and to collect taxes. They designed the entire colonial administrative structure with these two goals in mind. This structure was inherited more or less *in toto* by the region's newly independent nations and their civil servants. With independence, however, came the urgent need to raise standards of living for millions of new citizens, something that Pakistan, no less than India, was ill equipped to do.

In Brahaman Baria, Shoaib was directly responsible for the government's primitive efforts to achieve economic development. Some of these efforts were based on Victorian-era theories of self-improvement, in which officials like Shoaib were expected to exhort villagers to "help themselves" through acts of communal volunteerism, such as clearing the subdivision's waterways of predatory hyacinth plants or repairing dikes and other earthworks. Shoaib soon concluded that programs based on missionary zeal and self-sacrifice offered little in the way of a permanent solution to the indebtedness, lack of employment, and dearth of basic amenities that characterized Pakistan's rural poverty.

A better approach, he thought, was offered by the Village Agricultural and Industrial Development Administration, or Village-Aid program, which was being introduced experimentally in two of Brahaman Baria's police districts, or *thana*. A "brainchild of the Americans," as Shoaib calls it, this program placed a multipurpose Village-Aid development worker in each *thana* "to act as a guide, philosopher, and friend to the villagers" and whose "functions included education, organization, motivation, formation of all-purpose village councils, modernization of agriculture, improvement in health facilities, building of roads, giving of credit, arranging marketing, and generating self-help."

Shoaib believes that the Village-Aid program correctly identified the *thana* as the best administrative unit for initiating development. Furthermore, the program itself was well designed. Despite this, Shoaib watched helplessly as the program's potential was squandered in a series of mistakes. To begin with, the subdivision's new Village-Aid worker, flush with foreign-aid funds, arrived equipped with his own jeep and a "money bag." This set him above fellow government workers in, say, the education and agriculture departments, whose cooperation was essential but who had been given no orientation about the program. When the new development officer aggravated the situation by "trying to be smart and patronizing," as Shoaib recalls it, the others naturally intrigued against him. Within the villages, moreover, he was easily manipulated into disbursing aid as patronage to benefit one faction or another in local power struggles. A deeper flaw, Shoaib noticed, was that the Village-Aid program still relied upon voluntary labor for public works projects. Because of the rural class structure and the custom of *begar*, in which the village poor were routinely "rounded up for free labor," the program inadvertently benefited the better-off and, at the same time, denied to the truly needy the opportunity to work for wages. Nevertheless, Shoaib did his best to make the program work. Meanwhile, in nearby Comilla, a related effort was underway under the direction of Akhter Hameed Khan.

Akhter Hameed Khan was something of a local legend. A former member of the prestigious Indian Civil Service, he had resigned several years before, saying, "I want to lead the life of a poor man." Thereafter, he had worked as a farmer, locksmith, journalist, and teacher. In 1951, he became principal of Victoria College in Comilla. Shoaib had first heard about him from one of his young assistant magistrates, a Victoria graduate, who marveled about the school's brilliant principal who had simple habits and, in the Gandhian tradition, wore homespun cloth.

In 1954, Akhter Hameed Khan was tapped to serve as provincial administrator for the first year of the Village-Aid program. He quickly discerned the need to provide special training for development workers, many of whom were floundering on the job. When the govern-

ment decided to establish two national academies to remedy this, Khan was appointed to lead the one in East Pakistan, to be based in Comilla. Casting about for field sites where the new school's faculty could observe current development efforts and the dynamics of rural life, he selected nearby Brahman Baria. "I knew," Shoaib wrote later, "that whatever the academy's instructional staff had seen at Brahman Baria came under close microscopic inspection."

Shoaib did not actually meet Akhter Hameed Khan until 1959. While returning to Brahman Baria on the train one day, he learned from a fellow passenger that Akhter Hameed Khan was also on the train. Shoaib immediately introduced himself, at which Khan said, "Oh yes. Very good. You were put under close scrutiny and came out with flying colors." The two men chatted amiably until the train reached the station, where Khan slipped inconspicuously away before Shoaib could arrange transportation for him. This serendipitous meeting led to several visits by Shoaib to Comilla Academy, where Khan was exploring practical new approaches to alleviate rural poverty and energize the countryside. The two men developed a rapport and, the following year, Khan persuaded the chief secretary of East Pakistan to second Shoaib to the academy so that he could help design a new development course for government officers. For about fifteen days, Shoaib occupied the academy's guest cottage where he drew up the basic outline for the new course. It had been Khan's hope that Shoaib would also be on hand to conduct the course. But in late 1961, Shoaib was transferred back to West Pakistan and was soon off to England for another study tour. For several years thereafter, he and Akhter Hameed Khan barely saw each other, and when they did, Shoaib remembers uncomfortably, Khan would always chide him for "having run away."

After a sixteen-month stint at the Royal Institute of Public Administration at Oxford and London, where he studied with fellow post-graduates from twenty countries (and, for a time, worked at the Royal Institute itself), Shoaib returned to Pakistan. His new appointment was as deputy commissioner of Kohat District in the Northwest Frontier. As the senior government administrator in the district, Shoaib was simultaneously chief magistrate, head of the five-thousand-strong police force, and coordinator of all government departments working in Kohat, including public works, health, and education. Some four hundred functionaries worked under his supervision. He was also the district's chief development officer responsible for the disbursal of large sums of development aid from the United States. Pakistan's strong man at the time, Field Marshall Ayub Khan, also charged the deputy commissioners to head the local district councils, involving them directly in local government and politics. "I don't think there is a parallel of such a job anywhere in the world," says Shoaib. It reminded him of his grandfather's career at its prime. Shoaib's official residence, for example, was a grand villa built in



the nineteenth century by an Italian count who served as Britain's first ambassador to the court of Kabul. And yearly, he made a winter tour of his district—although now by jeep and no longer under canvas. Shoaib loved these pilgrimages to the far corners of the district, visiting out-of-the-way places up in the mountains where “they said the deputy commissioner hadn't come for thirty years.”

In 1965, however, Shoaib ran afoul of Ayub Khan's attempt to politicize the civil service. In an election that year the Field Marshall was pitted against Fatima Jinnah, sister of Pakistan's great independence hero, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Ayub Khan was determined to harness the machinery of government to bring about victory for his party. When Shoaib remained impartially above the fray—and when this was reported to the president—he was called before his superior, the provincial governor. The apologetic governor expressed respect for Shoaib's position but was nonetheless obliged to do something. Shoaib eased the situation by volunteering to be transferred and, within a week, he was named deputy director of the civil service academy in Lahore. Although he was reluctant to leave the front lines of the administrative services, he considered this “a very good posting.” Shoaib remained in Lahore for nearly five years training hundreds of civil servants, among them several future high commissioners, ambassadors, and federal secretaries, and one future president of Pakistan.

By 1970, Shoaib was back in the field again as deputy commissioner of Peshawar District, also in the Northwest Frontier. In that capacity, he joined a group of other officials on a trip to East Pakistan to observe Akhter Hameed Khan's Comilla-based rural development project. The idea had been broached that something similar might be tried in Peshawar District, seat of the Pakistan Academy for Rural Development (PARAD), Comilla Academy's West Pakistan counterpart. In Comilla, Akhter Hameed Khan encouraged Shoaib to revisit his old subdivision, where the project was now in full swing. Shoaib had not been to Brahman Baria for ten years. He now found it “a different world altogether. The whole countryside had been transformed. There was an excellent network of roads and thriving markets all along the way. The produce was in abundance and the *thana* centers were alive and pulsating with energy and activity . . . and crowded with people trying to learn new techniques or obtain services.” When Shoaib expressed his delight to Akhter Hameed Khan, Khan suggested trying the Comilla formula in one *thana* in Peshawar where, if successful, it could serve as a model for the rest of the country.

As much as this idea appealed to Shoaib, he was not immediately in a position to carry it through. Moreover, when rebellion broke out in East Pakistan in 1971, Shoaib faced a new crisis. General Yahya Khan, who had assumed power in 1969, let it be known that government officials with experience serving in East Pakistan

should be reassigned there in an attempt to mollify the angry population and to reassert the authority of the West Pakistan-based government. Shoaib had spent many happy years in the region and believed that the current crisis was one of the government's own making. Not wanting to be part of an "immoral administration," he told the chief secretary, "If they post me there, I am not going to go." Shoaib submitted his resignation. The sympathetic chief secretary agreed to keep his resignation on hand and to activate it if and when Shoaib was assigned to East Pakistan. Meanwhile, he moved behind the scenes to keep Shoaib in the west. Shortly thereafter, Shoaib was reassigned as commissioner of Karachi. However, this very powerful position was soon abolished in an administrative reorganization, in part at Shoaib's own urging. Shoaib now asked to be named director of the Pakistan Academy of Rural Development, a post he assumed in April 1972. (In the meantime, East Pakistan had seceded from Pakistan and become Bangladesh.)

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was now prime minister of Pakistan. His government established a committee, of which Akhter Hameed Khan was part, to address the country's vast rural poverty. It recommended the creation of an Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), to be initiated through several pilot projects. In the Northwest Frontier Province, the chief secretary assigned the lead, or "mother," project to PARD under the personal supervision of its new director. Shoaib used the opportunity to take up Akhter Hameed Khan's idea of developing the Comilla formula as a model for Pakistan.

A critical insight of the Comilla experience had been that the most effective administrative unit for promoting economic development was the *thana*, or police district—called a *markaz* under Pakistan's IRDP. This was practical because whatever primitive infrastructure that may have already existed in rural Pakistan at the time—roads, a school, a dispensary—tended to be clustered in the police district center. Khan's idea was to make the *thana* the local center for government efforts to provide services and training for surrounding villagers. As Shoaib explains, the British had determined the boundaries of the original *thana* by measuring how far the police station officer could travel by horseback and return in a single day. "It suited our purpose," he explains, "because we wanted the farthest village representative to come to the *markaz* center, get his training, and go back."

To launch his pilot project, Shoaib selected Daudzai, a police district of eighty-nine villages and some one hundred thousand people. In Daudzai, Shoaib wrote later, "the rural population was in need of a hundred and one things. . . . Their lands were deteriorating, becoming waterlogged and affected by salinity; the irrigation system was falling apart; villages were threatened by river action; lands were being eroded. There was lack of communications affecting marketing as well as causing indescribable hardships in getting

consumer goods, medical attendance and education. . . . Farmers were in need of fertilizers. They were in need of pesticides. They were in need of extension education.”

At the outset, only the departments of police, revenue, and agriculture had agents in Daudzai. So Shoaib began by persuading other departments to expand to the *markaz* level. Several soon did so: health, education, animal husbandry, forestry, irrigation, and cooperatives. At the same time, the agriculture department vastly expanded its staff in Daudzai by adding eight assistants. A project manager from the local government department was then appointed to coordinate the activities of the various specialists. Although PARD provided the intellectual guidance and monitored the pilot project closely, Shoaib was adamant that government itself, and not the Academy or a new superagency, be the instrument for development.

Yet it was not government’s role, in the Comilla plan, to perform the major tasks of development itself. This was impossible, in any case, given the small number of development functionaries available against the range and severity of the problems facing rural dwellers. Rather, it was the responsibility of government agents, through technical support and training, to assist villagers in becoming the executors of their own economic progress. Herein lay the most difficult problem of rural development. In Comilla, Akhter Hameed Khan had solved it by promoting the creation of disciplined organizations in the villages, which functioned both as credit cooperatives and as management committees for local public works projects. In Daudzai, Shoaib followed the same approach, tailoring it where necessary to the special circumstances of the area. Through occasional visits and frequent correspondence, Akhter Hameed Khan followed developments closely, advising Shoaib at every critical juncture and providing essential moral support.

Moral support was important because, at the outset especially, the problems in Daudzai seemed intractable. After almost a year, assessments by PARD revealed that “the *markaz* functionaries were getting nowhere.” For example, villagers showed little sustained interest in the new “inputs” being offered by agricultural extension agents and clamored instead for assistance in land development, irrigation, flood control, and road improvement. Shoaib was horrified to discover that a development plan drawn up by the *markaz*-level development agents under his guidance in the early stages of the project had nothing in common with a development plan that emerged later in consultation with the people. “Without first getting their particular problems solved,” Shoaib says, “the villagers were not prepared to accept or even to listen to any other type of assistance or extension advice.” He and his team soon acknowledged that rural people themselves “were in the best position to identify their needs” and that, perhaps more importantly, “they were capable of suggesting solutions to their problems.” This insight paved

the way for a breakthrough. Shoaib found that villagers responded willingly to government's efforts to organize them if the initial projects were organized around their own high-priority problems. "Thus," as Shoaib wrote later, "problem-centered organizations were the first ones to emerge in Daudzai."

Members of the development team now approached villagers and persuaded them to form disciplined organizations to execute local infrastructure projects of their own choosing—but with government assistance. In Shoaib's words, "The small farmers of every village were asked to group themselves, to hold regular weekly meetings, to select a manager, and to learn to work cooperatively. Moreover, they were asked to make weekly deposits in order to prove their bonafides and to show that they were capable of raising funds to defray maintenance costs of the project to be completed." For its part, the government provided organizational and technical assistance and the funds to pay for the initial project. In accordance with Akhter Hameed Khan's master plan, the functions and responsibilities of the village organizations, once established, were expanded to address a wider range of village needs—extension education, crop improvement, and village maintenance projects. Aside from encouraging regular savings and facilitating material improvements in the villages, they also provided a mechanism for community decision making and the identification of local persons who could be recruited for training in the *thana* center. Armed with new skills, they became local catalysts for improvements in farming, public health, and cooperative saving. This is why, as the villages organized, government attempts to assist them also improved.

In just a few years' time, eighty of Daudzai's eighty-nine villages hosted new village organizations and, just as Shoaib and Khan had hoped, Daudzai was emerging as the most successful and replicable of the country's pilot projects under the Integrated Rural Development Programme. A steady stream of foreign diplomats and observers from the World Bank, the Agricultural Development Council, the United States Agency for International Development, and the Ford Foundation visited Daudzai and reported approvingly about it. The resident representative of the United Nations Development Program, for example, called the Daudzai project "the best in the IRDP." Within Pakistan, senior officials were also taking note. By 1975, the program had been launched in a full third of the *thanas* of the Northwest Frontier Province and a plan had been approved to expand the model vigorously to the rest.

As the spearhead of this movement, Shoaib Sultan Khan had certain advantages. He was a well-known figure, having served as deputy commissioner in Peshawar for several years. At PARD and throughout the province, he relied on a team of collaborators and allies, including former graduates of Jahanzeb College and the Civil Service Academy. Moreover, his in-laws were well connected; he

was friendly with the leading politicians; and he had the critical support and sympathy of the chief minister of the province, Hayat Muhammad Khan Sherpao. Despite this, Shoaib's project ran into difficulty. For one thing, the very success of the Daudzai scheme, indeed its small fame, aroused jealousy in certain quarters. PARD, says Shoaib, "became the subject of a whispering campaign and sometimes of open propaganda that it was . . . only providing services to the North West Frontier Province." Much more damaging was the allegation that Shoaib's program was subversive; namely, that it was part of the locally active National Awami Party's efforts to undermine the government led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Complicating matters was Shoaib's absence during a critical period in 1974, when for several months he attended a course on local government in Birmingham, England.

In February 1975, Chief Minister Sherpao was killed in a bomb blast and Shoaib was left without his protector in the bureaucracy. Shortly thereafter, a disgruntled mid-level official and former development trainee submitted a stinging invective against Shoaib and the Academy, which, in the words of the new chief minister, "questioned certain loyalties, disputed certain bonafides, mentioned certain names, and criticized certain views." Shoaib explained that the allegations were baseless. But he and Akhter Hameed Khan had inadvertently become variables in a larger political power struggle over which they had no control. Their staunch defense of the program could not turn the tide and, in August 1975, Shoaib was peremptorily removed as head of PARD. "We were thrown out," he says, "lock, stock, and barrel." The Daudzai project came to a standstill.

Shoaib himself was transferred to Rawalpindi and appointed officer on special duty, which means, he says, "that you have nothing, nothing to do." For six months, he had a comfortable holiday as federal investigators probed the accusations of subversion leveled against the Daudzai project. When they found nothing, Shoaib was subsequently offered senior positions in the civil service, but he was now personally committed to Akhter Hameed Khan's approach to rural development. Realizing that the government would not let him continue in this line of work, he began looking, he says, for "other avenues, other opportunities."

Shoaib bided his time, serving as joint secretary to the ministry of local government and rural development and, later, as joint secretary to the cabinet ministry. In 1978, opportunity knocked when the United Nations invited him to spend a year at its Center for Regional Development in Nagoya, Japan. At the center, he advised a team of experts engaged in a cross-national study of village-level methodologies for development in Asia. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) then approached Shoaib to become its senior consultant for social development at the three-year-old Mahaweli Ganga Development Project in Sri Lanka, where some twenty-seven

thousand poor families were being transferred to a remote tropical area newly opened for settlement. “UNICEF’s idea,” Shoaib recalls, “was that I would go there and identify the needs of women and children, and then identify how these needs could be met.” He happily accepted.

Even so, Shoaib was frankly skeptical about his mission. Everything he had learned from Akhter Hameed Khan and his own experience suggested that concentrating on only one or two components of development (i.e., women and children) would lead ultimately to frustration. The development process had to occur holistically and involve the creation of three mutually dependent infrastructures: the administrative, the physical, and the socioeconomic.

In Mahaweli, Shoaib quickly discerned that the first two infrastructures were already in place. A small army of officials and development workers were intelligently deployed throughout the project area so that, for example, irrigation engineers as well as agricultural, livestock, and community development officers were accessible to everyone. In addition, a highly sophisticated new irrigation scheme was in place so that each new settler was provided with one hectare of irrigated land.

Yet, after three years, something was amiss in Mahaweli. There were terrible complaints about the distribution of water. Crops were only fair. New cultivation techniques were not being adopted. The new medical clinic stood empty. In short, the people were not responding. For Shoaib, the diagnosis was simple: “What was lacking was what Akhter Hameed Khan would call the socioeconomic infrastructure, which is really organizing the people and upgrading their skills for production, management, and cooperation.”

Right away, Shoaib surprised his new employers by insisting on living at the project site, not among the community of diplomats, development experts, and foreign consultants in comfortable Colombo. He moved into a small room in an old government guest house and, following principles now well developed in Comilla and Daudzai, set about organizing the villagers. The irrigation scheme itself provided logical units for organization, since from twelve to twenty farming groups shared the water from each “turn-out” gate. Shoaib identified the natural leaders from each group and trained them in irrigation, agriculture, and the management of local projects and cooperative savings and credit schemes. These leaders, in time, became the agents for local organization in each irrigation unit. “As soon as these people got organized,” says Shoaib, “they identified the need for polyclinics, they participated fully in immunization, day care centers became nutrition centers—everything that UNICEF wanted. . . .”

Shoaib devoted four years to the Mahaweli project. His success there gained him a small measure of international attention when, in 1981, Sri Lankan journalist Tarziè Vittachi\* published a profile of

him in *Newsweek* magazine titled “A Man Named Khan.” Vittachi homed in on Shoaib’s singular accomplishment in Mahaweli, i.e., linking government-provided infrastructure and technical expertise to the idiom and needs of the village, an achievement accomplished by making community participation the key to rural economic development.

Meanwhile, Robert d’Arcy Shaw, director of special programs for the Aga Khan Foundation, was conceptualizing a development program to target Pakistan’s poverty-stricken mountain villages in remote Gilgit District and the neighboring Northern Areas of Chitral and Baltistan. A foundation task force had identified certain broad objectives and sketched out a prototype administration. Someone was now needed to develop a detailed plan and to lead the effort. Akhter Hameed Khan recommended Shoaib. This proposal was attractive to Shaw who, as the Ford Foundation representative in Pakistan, had known Shoaib’s work as head of the Pakistan Academy for Rural Development. Both Shaw and Akhter Hameed Khan approached Shoaib in Sri Lanka and appealed to him to accept. Shoaib longed to return to Pakistan, especially to the north. But memories of the subversion case and his ouster from PARD were still fresh and he feared getting caught up again in the same kind of mess. He therefore decided to take up the new work, but only on deputation from UNICEF. This unusual arrangement was finally accepted by all parties, including the Aga Khan himself, and in December 1982 Shoaib arrived back in Pakistan to assume his post as general manager of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme.

When his flight from Islamabad to the north was canceled, Shoaib borrowed a jeep from another Aga Khan project and set out on the long road for Gilgit. He arrived the next day, he recalls, “after spending the coldest night of my life . . . in a rest house which had no bedding.” In Gilgit, the new program had “no premises, no staff, no logistical support.” Shoaib took a room at a local government hotel called the Chinar Inn and began from scratch.

The mountain world to which Shoaib now addressed himself presented almost every conceivable obstacle to economic development. The land was rugged and cold; snow was the major form of precipitation. Its eight hundred thousand inhabitants were fragmented by language and religion and scattered in a thousand mountain villages, very few of which were accessible by road and virtually none of which had electricity. Farming and livestock grazing were almost the sole occupations, yet only narrow passages of flatland along the mountain riverbeds were arable and grazing lands were scattered and stingy. Life was a constant struggle against nature: the frigid temperatures and snow of winter; the raging streams and rivers of spring; the swift passing of summer and its precious growing season. Making matters worse, once-abundant trees no longer anchored the soil and rocks on the region’s ubiquitous hills, making land-

slides inevitable and forcing village women to roam ever farther in search of firewood. Even the area's few major towns were vexed by irregular electricity supplies and telephones that seldom worked. And, as Shoaib was already aware, Gilgit was twelve-to-sixteen bone-jarring hours away by car from the closest major city to the south, despite the newly completed Karakoram Highway. Because of the highway, however, an increasing number of the region's men were able to search for better livelihoods in the fatter economy of lower Pakistan. This brought needed money to the hills but removed robust men from the upland economy and weakened essential social ties.

Calling largely upon his former collaborators in the Daudzai project, Shoaib assembled a staff and set to work. Despite the daunting nature of the task, he had certain advantages. The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) was well funded and backed by a donor who was committed to provide support for a long period. Moreover, as a private organization, it was not so susceptible to the winds of politics and the petty power struggles of the official bureaucracy. Most of all, Shoaib already knew a great deal about generating economic development among villagers. He put his years of accumulated wisdom to the test in designing a program for the AKRSP.

The absolutely fundamental lesson of Akhter Hameed Khan's and his own work in rural development had been this: without the sustained, organized, and disciplined participation of villagers themselves, no development effort will bear long-term fruits, no matter how well funded or brilliantly planned. Once organized, however, villagers are more than capable of exploiting outside financial and technical assistance to become the masters of their own economic improvement. Shoaib had long ago concluded that the best way to promote the creation of disciplined organizations in villages was through the collective execution of a local infrastructure project chosen by the villagers themselves—the improvement or extension of a irrigation canal, for example, or the construction of a feeder road to connect the village to the local traffic artery. Shoaib's basic blueprint for the AKRSP built upon these insights.

Beginning in early 1983, Shoaib launched his plan in the villages of Gilgit District. Gathering the village men, he told them that the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme was prepared to help them make a critical physical improvement to their village, but only on very strict conditions. First, the members of the village had to agree to attend weekly meetings and to make regular deposits into a village savings account. Second, they must collectively agree upon the needed project and, eventually, choose leaders to be responsible for its execution. If they met these conditions, Shoaib told them, the AKRSP would fund the project and provide technical and organizational assistance. Shoaib then invited the villagers to gather for further dialogues in which they would select and plan a Productive Physical Infrastructure project (PPI) in consultation with AKRSP spe-



cialists (who could advise on costs and feasibility) and form a village organization (VO) to execute the scheme. In the last of these initial dialogues, villagers committed themselves to meeting regularly and saving regularly and explained how, exactly, they would execute their project. For its part, the AKRSP spelled out the nature and degree of the assistance it could offer and, if all was in order, presented the first installment of its grant—usually a quarter of a total average grant of some U.S.\$9,000.

During the first year or two of the AKRSP, Shoaib personally initiated dialogues in over three hundred villages in Gilgit. He also trained his senior staff, who routinely accompanied him to the villages and, in time, assumed important roles in the dialogues. In this way, the entire managerial team of the program became intimately familiar with the village world and with Shoaib's approach to making the AKRSP an effective catalyst for change.

Initially, the Aga Khan Foundation envisioned the AKRSP with only a senior staff of six professionals: aside from the general manager, an engineer, an agriculturalist, a training specialist, a finance officer, and an economist. Once projects were underway, however, it was essential for the program to provide sustained assistance and to monitor successes and failures. Shoaib therefore persuaded the foundation to expand the staff of the program with a large team of social organizers (SOs). By maintaining direct and frequent contact with villagers, these field agents negotiated the relationship between the program and the villagers and helped to identify the kinds of training and technical assistance that they needed—not only to complete their initial projects but also, and more importantly, to institutionalize the VO as a permanent instrument for economic betterment in the village.

Shoaib expanded the program quickly, from Gilgit into Chitral in 1983 and, in 1985, into Baltistan. By this time, his staff numbered nearly two hundred; although they were now distributed across the three districts, Shoaib maintained his command center and senior team in Gilgit, where he continued to reside in the Chinar Inn, now equipped with a suite built especially for him. By 1986, his efforts through AKRSP had resulted in the creation of 526 village organizations encompassing more than thirty-eight thousand households, including 97 percent of those in Gilgit. Nearly one thousand village projects had been identified and four hundred were underway or completed. All across the mountains, villagers were busy building and improving irrigation channels; cutting new link roads; and constructing dikes, bunds, and storage reservoirs. More importantly, with AKRSP's assistance, they were moving on from their original projects to follow-up activities organized and facilitated by village organizations, such as allocating irrigated water, improving the soil, introducing new staple and cash crops, upgrading livestock,

and exploring new marketing channels for apricots and apples—the local specialties.

Shoaib's methodology was working. One important measure of AKRSP's growing credibility was the outside financial support it was able to solicit. By 1986, for example, the largest single contributor to AKRSP was the Canadian International Development Agency, followed by Aga Khan-related philanthropies, the government of the Netherlands, the United Kingdom's Overseas Development Administration, OXFAM, and the Ford Foundation.

Praising the AKRSP in a lengthy report in 1986, the World Bank noted the remarkable familiarity shown by Shoaib and the program's senior managers with individual villages and issues. It attributed this to the regularity, length, and substance of staff meetings and the emphasis Shoaib placed upon documentation. "The net effect of the meetings and the extensive reporting is a system of written and oral communication that links managers, field staff and villagers effectively in both directions: from top to bottom, and from bottom to top." About Shoaib himself, the World Bank wrote, "He spends most of his time on frequent field visits, walking and talking with villagers, SOs [social organizers] and field engineers. The GM's [general manager's] example makes it clear to the staff that the practical needs of villagers come first, and that the focus of the program is the field, not the office."

Shoaib continued to expand. From 1986 to 1991, between one hundred and two hundred new villages in Chitral and Baltistan were initiated into the program annually, each one launching its own local infrastructure project. At the same time, in villages where VOs were already established, AKRSP worked to enhance their effectiveness by facilitating follow-up projects and developing full-fledged support programs in infrastructure engineering, agriculture, livestock, forestry, marketing and commercial development, and credit and banking. As a consequence, onions, carrots, peas, garlic, and several other vegetables were introduced into garden plots across the mountains; cherry and apple trees now bloomed alongside the traditional apricots; hardier wheat and maize seeds were being introduced; and livestock were healthier.

In hundreds of villages, AKRSP also initiated women's organizations (WOs) whose members committed themselves to meet and save regularly, just as the men were doing. Through a growing cadre of female staff members, the program assisted women in health and livelihood enhancement projects—improving family diets, for example, and growing vegetables and fruits as a cash crop sideline. With women, as with men, finding enterprising local leaders was almost always the key to success. AKRSP devoted extraordinary attention to mentoring its precious village "activists"; without them, Shoaib's system could not truly take off.

In the follow-up phase, therefore, AKRSP's primary contribution was training. This was critical given the low level of literacy and other skills among mountain folk. Shoaib therefore set up a Human Resource Development Division (HRD) to organize village-oriented training programs in a variety of skills such as farming, livestock development, plant protection, animal husbandry, food processing, and marketing. In addition, village organization officers were taught how to run meetings and keep regular records—of weekly savings deposits, for example. Shoaib established the HRD Institute to institutionalize the training process and to expand it to provide AKRSP-style training to persons outside the project area.

Generally speaking, AKRSP provided no monetary grants after the initial infrastructure project. In order to pay for new projects, a village organization had to call directly upon its assets (accumulated collectively through disciplined saving) or, more importantly, use those assets as collateral to borrow the money it needed, either from AKRSP or from outside lenders. Indeed, making villages credit-worthy was an essential element in AKRSP's vision for economic development.

Few commercial banks conducted business in the hills, however; thus, the program launched its own lending program to provide short-term loans to VOs to help pay for new farming inputs, such as fertilizer and expenses associated with marketing vegetables and fruits, and medium-term loans for farm machinery and land improvement schemes. By 1992, nearly U.S.\$5 million in loan funds had coursed into AKRSP-affiliated villages for such purposes, benefiting seventy-five thousand families. Initially, AKRSP avoided loans to individuals, but in 1989 it launched the VO/WO Banking Program, which provided to village organizations a revolving fund for making loans to their members. The revolving fund was equal to the organization's accumulated savings, which served as collateral for the revolving fund. By 1992, nearly twenty thousand households were participating.

AKRSP's initiatives in the field of credit and banking reflect Shoaib's awareness that prosperity in the hills is inevitably connected to integration into the larger economy of the region. In today's world, isolation perpetuates poverty; subsistence economies perpetuate subsistence living. This is why so many AKRSP projects are geared to linking mountain villages to roads, markets, and opportunities on the outside as well as to helping the highlanders discover their competitive advantages in the wider economy. It may make sense, for example, for some villages to concentrate on the commercial production of apricots, a cash crop, rather than of food staples. Cash cropping can be profitable, and money earned in the marketplace can be used to purchase foods when needed. More importantly, cash cropping involves villagers in the money economy and exposes them to new patterns of economic exchange and opportunity. In the long run, this involvement provides the means whereby the moun-

tain villages can be permanently lifted to higher standards of living. To facilitate this, Shoaib foresees the need for a more highly developed banking system in the north, perhaps an AKRSP-initiated “development bank” that will reinvest its deposits in the hill regions, rather than in the large urban economies to the south.

The village of Jhinkapa in Skardu, Baltistan, provides one example of AKRSP’s impact. In 1989, at the program’s initiative, forty individuals formed a local village organization. From AKRSP, they received a grant to execute their first infrastructure project, a pony track. Subsequently, the VO mobilized its own financial resources to purchase a generator, bringing electricity to Jhinkapa for the first time. (Villagers who use and maintain the generator pay rent to the village organization.) Eager to enhance village productivity, the VO purchased a plot of land to develop cooperatively as a commercial orchard or nursery. The VO also provided funds to train its president as a “nursing attendant” and established a well-stocked first-aid dispensary in the village, which it now maintains. Most dramatically, the village organization managed to contact the Canadian High Commission and lodge a request for assistance in building a local high school for girls; the commission agreed. These days, girls from Jhinkapa no longer have to leave home to enjoy an education.

Over the decade since its inception, AKRSP’s staff has grown to 350, forty of whom are women. Although Shoaib initially relied on colleagues recruited from the Pakistan Academy for Rural Development and the Daudzai project, these days his team hails almost entirely from the northern areas. Shoaib is generous in assigning credit for AKRSP’s success to his many colleagues. “The fact that we were able to recruit highly qualified and dedicated staff and retain them, even women professionals, speaks volumes for their commitment and dedication and for the satisfaction the work gave them to balance all the hardships, including the constant risk to personal safety during field visits involving journeys on tortuous, narrow, hilly roads with hairpin bends.” In recounting the growth of the program he mentions name after name: Hussain Wali Khan, his right-hand man from the beginning who is “a leader in innovations”; Maliha Hussein, a former Pakistan foreign service officer who “introduced the much-needed Women in Development component to the program”; countless social organizers, engineers, agriculturists, veterinarians, foresters, economists, social scientists, monitors, trainers, marketing specialists and so on. The Aga Khan Foundation, he says, has been “like a guardian angel,” with the Aga Khan himself taking a personal interest (and providing, among other useful things, helicopters to reach distant villages quickly.) And his longtime mentor and friend, Dr. Akhter Hameed Khan, he says, has been like “a beacon.”

When observers point to Shoaib’s own charismatic role as motivating spirit and practical executioner of AKRSP’s growth and success, he often replies that his real contribution has been to refine

and give widespread practical application to a model that originated with others, most importantly Akhter Hameed Khan. The charismatic leadership attributed to him, he says, “is nothing but an unambiguous understanding of the conceptual package.” This conceptual package, moreover, “is not difficult to understand and anyone with average intelligence can grasp its essentials, but it needs a rigid discipline and conviction in its efficacy, bordering on fanaticism, to implement it. That there is no dearth of such people is clearly borne out by AKRSP experience.”

Although unduly self-effacing, this statement reflects Shoaib’s conviction that the successes of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme can be reproduced elsewhere. Indeed, based on his own decades of experience in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, he believes that its fundamental principles apply to “any region and any country which has small farmers and subsistence [land] holders.” Implementation of the principles, of course, requires careful attention to the expressed needs of the recipients themselves who, once catalyzed, actually drive the development process. The concept, he says, is universal, but the program must always be local—a point he continually drives home as government officials and development experts flock to Gilgit to learn the lessons of AKRSP. (So many, in fact, that a visitors’ center was added in 1991.) In Pakistan and elsewhere, Shoaib’s method is clearly poised for expansion.

These days, Shoaib is pleased and brimming with enthusiasm. His has been a successful life with many fruits, a fitting sequel to that of his beloved grandfather, Sultan Ahmad Beg, who inspired in him both a vigor for public service and a certain bigness of heart. It was from his grandfather, too, that he imbibed his love for English literature, a love so strong that he named one of his daughters Shelley. It is to literature that Shoaib sometimes returns to reflect on life’s imponderable tragedies, such as the bedroom gas heater accident in 1988 that took the life of his daughter Falaknaz and her two children. Reciting from memory, he recalls the lines of John Keats, who in his “Ode to Melancholy,” wrote:

Ay, in the very temple of delight  
Veiled Melancholy has her sovran shrine

But Shoaib is not given long to melancholy and, pondering this, he again remembers Keats, who also wrote: “It amazes me that the human heart is capable of containing and bearing so much misery.” “They are such true words,” Shoaib says.

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J.R.R.

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