

Speech at CSA
37th PSA Passing Out Ceremony
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By: Shoaib Sultan Khan

I am most grateful to Director General Arifa Saboohi for bestowing the honour to be the Chief Guest at today's ceremony. I am overwhelmed with nostalgic. Sixty years ago, I came to this Academy as a CSP probationer in 1955. I don't know what your feelings were when you first arrived at the Academy but I can still recollect the excitement tempered with apprehensions of the unknown what the future held for me. Having been brought up in a civil servant's household, it was my childhood dream to follow in the footsteps of my grandfather as I was completely dazzled by the pomp and grandeur of the life of a Deputy Commissioner in British India. Having achieved that dream, you can well imagine what it meant for me. The residence was awesome and the discipline strict being overseen by an ex-PCS Officer Geoffrey Burgess as Director of the Academy. Burgess was aloof and reserved but he instilled a horde of qualities requisite of a civil servant which I personally found of immense benefit in my later life.

In our first session Burgess punctured the balloon of our ego and arrogance by telling us in no uncertain terms that you are having successfully completed and got into CSP, means nothing unless in your future career you do not prove yourself clearly and demonstrably superior to those whom you are leading. Secondly, your integrity is your greatest asset if you lose that you are lost. Don't console yourself by justifying that you were always upright honest and impartial in hundreds of situations so what if you succumbed in one out of thousand cases. Burgess if you compromise your integrity even once you are finished because integrity is only put to test in one out of a thousand situations. He also warned that being part of an elite service, don't think if you are upright what does it matter if your other colleagues cover a bit. He said you will always be judged by the worst in the service. These were simple and candid words of advice and I found them tinged with fundamental truth in my career.

One habit which Burgess inculcated me was of writing diaries when we were sent on field visits and he used to read each diary and make copious remarks not only our observations but also our expression and language. This inculcated in me an acute habit of observation of each and everything that came in view and also of writing. I got used to writing not only diaries but also Notes for Record of my meetings, visits and tours, which resulted in my writing two books printed by Vikas of India and Oxford University Press of Pakistan.

I have no advice as to how you should follow Burgess's advice of clearly and demonstrately proving yourself to be superior to those you are leading. Personally, I experienced humility and politeness and going out of your way by putting yourself in the shoes of those who come to you for help, the quality of empathy, the best weapon to win the trust and confidence of your subordinates, superiors and the people in general whom you are supposed to serve. One good and kind act and the person will never forget it and beholden to you for life. Sometimes, I feel overwhelmed when people come and remind me of the something I did for them ages ago which of course, I would never recollect but they have not forgotten.

Burgess' observation about integrity, when on look back on my years in the civil service from 1955 to 1978, I can count on my fingers the situations when my integrity was put to test and I could have suffered by way of transfer or osdship dismissal. Since I did not succumb, I indeed came out bitter off every time.

The first time it was when as Assistant Commissioner Brahmanbaria in the then East Pakistan, the local political leader of the ruling party required me to refuse permission to his opposite party to hold public meeting, otherwise he would disrupt the meeting. I warned him if he tries to do so, the police is under orders to take appropriate action to thwart his attempts. He rushed to the Chief Minister in Dacca asking for my transfer. The Chief Minister responded if the AC is so much against the party, he would be even more ante party in the other place he is transferred to. The local leader came back chastised. A month later Ayub Khan's Martial Law was imposed. I called the local leader and assured him I had no ill will against him and we remained on very good terms during remainder of my stay there.

In 1965, as DC Kohat, at the time of the Presidential election, my colleagues and I was called by Commissioner Peshawar and conveyed President's wishes that after he had spoken to the Basic Democrats who formed the electoral collage for the presidency, the Deputy Commissioner should ensure that all the BDs from their respective districts should leave the meeting place and present an employ Pandal before Mohtarima Fatima Jinnah to address. All the CSPs refused to comply with the instructions. Nothing happened to anyone of us. The Commissioner said he knew beforehand all of you would say this and conveyed this to the authorities accordingly but he said he wanted to make sure and hear it from us personally.

At the time of 1965 National Assembly election, I was summoned by the Governor Nawab of Kalabagh to Peshawar and informed by the Governor that the President wants a written undertaking from you as DC Kohat that his party candidate will win. On my polite refusal, the Nawab Sahib stunned me by saying "I thanked him for his kindness and requested him to get me transferred to the Federal Government". It happened within a week, a month before the elections. On reporting to Establishment Division, I was posted to one of the best postings of my career as Deputy Director, Civil Service Academy. During my stay 1963-69, nearly 200 CSP and PFS Probationers passed through the Academy, who became my lifelong friends. Unfortunately, I have become so ancient that they all retired reaching highest pinnacle of the services as Federal Secretaries or Ambassadors.

The most serious situation I faced in my career was in 1971 when as Secretary to Provincial Government of NWFP, I was being transferred to East Pakistan alongwith all my other colleagues seniors and juniors who had served in the Eastern Wing earlier. My wife and I thought it to be highly immoral to go where I had so many friends and spent six years of career and be part of a highly autocratic administration. I submitted my resignation to the Chief Secretary who kept it with himself and assured me that if my transfer orders come, he would send my resignation certifying I had resigned before the orders came. I don't know what he did but my name was deleted from the list and after a few months, I was promoted and posted as Commissioner Karachi.

When the post of Commissioner Karachi was abolished by the newly inducted PPP government, I was given a choice by Governor Mumtaz Bhutto to stay back as Member, Board of Revenue but on my request, he allowed me to join Pakistan Academy for Rural Development at Peshawar. The post of Commissioner Karachi, greatly diluted, was revived after three years.

I have always believed that life is a bundle of coincidences which governs your life. In 1955, I had felt I have carved out a life long career for myself. But destiny had something else in store for me and it was triggered by my chance meeting with Dr. Akhter Hameed Khan (AHK) as AC Brahmanbaria, AHK was an ICS who had resigned from it in 1943 for the simple reason as he told me that he had learnt a great deal from his British employers but they had no solution to meeting the evil. Of poverty unlike to successes in establishing _____ and maintaining law and order. AHK after resigning from ICS tried to experience poverty by becoming a labourer but that did not help him in finding solution to rural poverty. When I met him he had been persuaded by his erstwhile ICS colleagues who were now in high positions. The Chief Secretary of East Pakistan called him and said “Akhter you are fool but you are a good fool” and persuaded him to become the Director of the newly established Pakistan Academy for Rural Development Comilla. Comilla happened to be the district when I was AC. I learnt a great deal from AHK and when in 1970, I again visited Brahmanbaria subdivision, I could not believe the transformation PARD Comilla had brought about in the lives of the rural poor.

, My request in 1972 to be posted to PaRD Peshawar was to emulate and implement AHK’s model in West Pakistan. In the wake of the events of breakup of the country, AHK was also evacuated by the army, against his wishes, to West Pakistan and he accepted a professorship at Michigan State University. But before going to the States, he visited Peshawar and saw what I had started and wrote to me “you are building an island of sincerity in a sea of hypocrisy” and asked me to send monthly progress reports to him of the Daudzai project. After a year he got so interested that he left Michigan and came to Peshawar as Adviser to the Academy to help me. In three years, it became so renowned in development circle especially with foreigners that Daudzai generated lot of jealousy and one fine morning I

saw an order appointing me as Officer on Special Duty (OSD). Akhter Hameed Khan left Peshawar and went back to Michigan and came in 1980 and developed the world famous urban development model Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) in Karachi slum area.

I got disgusted with service and sought pastures new. Daudzai had given me also some kind of renown in development circles and I was offered a consultancy at UN Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD), Nagoya Japan where I was approached by UNICEF to join UNICEF's Mahaweli Project in Sri Lanka as a Social Development Consultant. There my work was recognized in a full one page writ up in Newsweek entitled "A Man Khan".

In 1982, I was offered to initiate the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) by the Aga Khan Foundation in Gilgit, Baltistan and Chitral. According to the World Bank evaluation, in ten years the income of the million people of the area had more than doubled in real terms.

The replication of AKRSP is another long story which you can read in the two books Arif has. If you want more copies, come to Islamabad I will give it to you.