

Interview with Mr. Ibrahim

Interviewer: Fatima Framarz

Question: Hello Mr. Ibrahim! Thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak with you. We are very happy to be talking with you. Let us begin by asking you to tell us where you were born. In what year were you born?

Answer: In the name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate. I was born in the year 32. I was born in Qol-e Tamki, a village in Qarabagh district, Ghazni province. I grew up there until the age of 22. After I turned 22, I went into the army. I was drafted into military service. Yes, I was in the army on the first street of Pul-e Charkhi in Kabul. After that, I did two years of military service. I served eight months under Zahir Shah, and 16 months under Daoud.

Then, during Daoud's time, it was winter. The soldiers had to clear the snow off the roof, and I went up onto the roof and fell down. My leg broke. I stayed in Quwayi Markaz (the central forces) hospital for three months. They took 250 rupees from me. They said, "Pay 250 rupees and we'll nominate for a leave; after that, we'll send you home for three months." I told them I did not have 250 rupees. They said, "If you don't have it, stay here in the hospital." So I was forced to pay the 250 rupees. But during those two or three months I stayed there, they never gave me even one pill to help with the pain or to treat me. They just said, "You came from X place, you're someone from such-and-such a place," and that was all. In the end, my leg healed crooked.

At that time, because it was the doctors' duty day, I even brought this up to one man and asked to be taken in for treatment again, but they sent me back and tied it up, and that really bothered me. After that I went to the hospital, paid the 250 rupees, and then after that they gave me three months of leave. That three months of leave was given to me. It was 16 Dalw(11th month of Afghanistan's calendar), and it was snowing a lot. There was a lot of snow and ice. I came to Qarabagh, and from Qarabagh I walked all the way to Tamki on foot. From the district all the way to Tamki.

May 30, 2026

Then I stayed there for three months. After that I came home. My father and mother said, “How did you come home from the army? Did you run away? Why didn’t you do your military service? You’re putting us in jail; you’re sending us to prison. What are we supposed to do?” I said, “I did not run away from the army. My leg was broken.” They said, “How is it that your uncle came and said nothing to us about your leg being broken?” I said, “I was in the hospital for three months.” After that I got leave for three months, and then after three months I was supposed to return to the army. They said, “Very good.”

I spent three months there, then I went back to the army camp. I completed the remainder of my service and was discharged in the year 53.

When I was discharged in 53, life at home was miserable. It was a hard time. My father had a large family, we had no household goods, no donkey, no land. So I got work with the Ministry of Public Works. They gave me a number, and in those days they paid me 25 rupees. It was winter, and it was very cold. Then I would go to a place where there was a bookstore, and a library was being set up in Sarai Shomali. I would work there underground; I did manual labor there. We had a room in Karte Sakhi, and I had a brother who worked for the Ministry of Public Works. Then we lived there. Later, one day, that brother said he was going to Iran. He went to Iran and left me there alone. I stayed there alone, working every day for 25 rupees. I lived on chalk marks for bread. By the end of the month I had no money left. There was a board where you marked your account, like: today one loaf, today two loaves, today half a loaf, today three loaves. They kept the tally, and at the end of the month the money I received from the Ministry of Public Works went to the room rent, which was 300 rupees. I paid the 300 rupees for rent with the chalk-mark bread debt.

Then I stayed there for a while. My father eventually said, “Come home, why don’t you come?” I said, “I have no money to come.” I need to work a little longer. Then he said, “If you’re not coming, then I’m coming.” I said, “You shouldn’t come either. You don’t have travel money. I’m earning money here. My brother has also left the debt and the room rent on me; until I clear these

May 30, 2026

debts, I won't come. If you come here, I'll go even further into debt. Then you won't be able to keep me here anymore. I'm forced to stay."

Yes, he did not agree. He said, "You're lying." He came. He came and I had to borrow some money from him, and I bought clothes. He said, "Come, go. You've finished your military service; now I have to find you a wife." I said, "I don't want a wife. I don't have money. Don't be foolish." He said, "No, you have a sister. I'll do *Badali* (marry her to someone's son and their daughter to you)" Yes, he wanted to exchange her for me. I said, "No, that is not useful." But he still did not accept it. Since he would not agree, I said, "Go and do the work you want to do. I have no money."

So, he came from there. He bought clothes and tea, sweets, sugar, and other things. He came. He put me deeply in debt. Until spring I stayed there, then when spring came I cleared the bread debt and the room-rent debt and my father's debt and got rid of them all. I saved enough money that if I went to Ghazni from Kabul, the fare was 60 rupees or 70 rupees, just enough. Then I saved enough and came from the area near Tamki to school in Tamki. I walked home on foot. I went home, but there was no money to even buy a packet of sweets to take home. I stayed there without any work or plane for a long time.

After a while, I went toward Iran. I went toward Iran and stayed there for two years. Then my father also came, my brothers also came. In any case, I worked there, and I also worked somewhere else. But when my father came home, my brother and I stayed there in Iran. We worked there in Iran and I gave my father 40,000 rupees. I told him, "Take this, pay the debts, and buy the household things you need at home." So I stayed there. Then we left. I worked there for one week and the heat hit me, and I got sick. When I got sick, I came from there back to Afghanistan. I came home, and after a while at home, I went back to Iran again. I went to Iran and stayed there for two years. Two years later the Iranian revolution happened. At that time, when Khomeini came to Iran, I was there, yes. I worked in a stonecutting place in Mashhad. After that I kept working, kept working, worked one or two years. Then my father again told me to come home.

May 30, 2026

Then I got tired and came home. We came home and stayed there for a while, but then again I went back on the road because we had nothing left to spend. Then I went to Iran again and worked for two years. After that I came back and bought a house in Kabul, in Afshar. I bought the first house in Afshar. I bought land and said, "I'll build something for myself." Then I bought that house and built it. Then this happened: Hafizullah Amin came, the Khalqis came. We were put under *iatiyat* (reserve). We fled from there. They told us we had to go on *iatiyat* and go to war. I said I would not go to war. I was loaded under a truck to Jaghori. The driver told me, "You have to pass through Chok-e Arghandi under the truck, otherwise the police would catch you." After we passed Chok-e Arghandi, the truck jolted and the load shifted, and the load almost crushed me. It nearly killed me. I yelled from beneath the sacks, and I said, "You killed me, you broke my ribs, you put me under them." Then they pulled me out from under the load, took me into the truck with the others, and gave me a coat over my head, saying maybe no one would bother you anymore. Then we came on. In Ghazni the truck did not stop. We came all the way to Tamki. When we arrived in Tamki, I stayed there for a while. But then I had already bought two houses, sold one, and bought a tractor. I bought a tractor and worked in agriculture with it.

Question: Then when did you go back to Kabul and sell the house?

Answer: I did not go back to Kabul, because I had been taken under *iatiyat*. I gave it to another person; one of my uncles was there. I told my uncle to sell one of them and use the money to buy me a tractor, because I was unemployed there. I had no land, and I could not do farming. Farming is very hard work. A tractor is good. So he sold it, and even that was not enough. I bought the tractor for six lakhs¹ (600000), and three lakhs of it was on installments. I worked and worked until I cleared the installments after two or three years. Then I saw that the tractor had also become too much; my work was not enough in Tamki, there was not enough land in the area for a person to work. So after that I went back to Iran. I did not come home for four more years. Then I came back and bought a millstone, and I bought a saw machine. I went and bought it from Anguri and brought it to Tamki, and installed it in Dehrazai bazar. Then I bought

¹ One Lakh is a hundred thousands.

May 30, 2026

one or two more things, a camel-neck saw and a millstone. The millstone was for grinding wheat, and the camel-neck saw was for cutting wood. I took the wood skins and the back pieces of the wood home and used them as firewood so the house would stay warm and we could bake bread, and so we could grind the wheat and have enough food. I had no land, yes. Then I worked with that for a while. Then the portable mill appeared, which would go to every house and grind the wheat. After the portable mill, no one brought wheat to me to grind anymore. Then for a while we stayed like that. Then fighting and conflict among the groups started. Insecurity increased, so in 2005 we were forced to take the road to Pakistan. When we took the road to Pakistan, I sold the camel-neck saw and the millstone at half price, and that became our travel money and we went to Pakistan. When I went to Pakistan, I rented a house there for one lakh rupees. We lived there for a while. There was not much opportunity for work. There was no work in Quetta, it was very difficult. I myself went to work as a bread-baker's apprentice and worked in a bakery there, and I used that to support the family. They paid me 100 rupees a day and gave me five loaves of bread at night. I brought that home and we used it for our living expenses.

Then we stayed like that for a while. After that I went to the United Nations office (UNHCR) and registered myself as a refugee. I registered as a refugee case with the United Nations because it was impossible to stay there. From 2005 until 2010, we stayed there. Sometimes I worked, sometimes I was a bakery apprentice, sometimes I did stone work. There was road and bridge construction there; construction work would come up, and I worked there. I worked there until 2010 and 2012. After that I submitted my case to the United Nations, and the UN case kept moving, kept moving, kept moving until 2023, and then in 2022 we were finally accepted, and we came to Canada with my wife.

Question: If we go back to your military service, you said your leg was broken, you went to the hospital, but nobody cared there, and the hospital was also in Qowā-ye Markaz. What was the name of that hospital? Is it still there or not?

Answer: Yes. It was the military hospital of Qowā-ye Markaz, commonly known.

Question: Was it only for soldiers?

May 30, 2026

Answer: Yes, it was for soldiers; it was a military facility.

Question: In the meantime, when you worked in Kabul for a while and then went to Tamki and from Tamki went to Iran, when did you get married? When did you find your wife?

Answer: As for finding my wife, it was the day my father came to Kabul and said, “My daughter has grown up; I’m going to marry her off.” I said, “No, I don’t have money. Marriage is difficult when you don’t have money; a wife is of no use without money.” He said, “My daughter has grown up; if she marries elsewhere, I’ll be left empty-handed, and then I won’t be able to get you married.” Then he said, “I’m going to give her in exchange for you.” I said, “Alright, since you are deciding it, I have no choice.” I did not know that girl you mentioned. He said, “I have liked a girl, a girl from our own ethnic group, this one,” meaning my wife. Then he said, “I will marry this one off to you.” I said, “I have not even seen her photo, and I have not seen her myself — you know best, it’s your decision.” In any case, because of necessity, I had to let it go — meaning I had to let my father decide at home so that tomorrow I would not complain that she was bad, or this or that. I thought, if you chose her and I were to complain later, I would not accept that. Yes, if I took a girl into my house and tomorrow you tell me, “This one is bad, leave her, do this or that,” I would not accept such a thing. But if she was a good girl, then I would stay with her, of course, just as I am now. So he said, “Fine.” Then he came, and later I came home, and they got us married. She had been engaged earlier. Then after that, six months later, you brought her home through a wedding. After that, life was not really good — life was not easy — and then you became indebted, so I took the road to Iran and went to Iran.

Question: Half of your military service was in the period of Zahir Shah. When Daoud Khan staged his coup, were you a soldier then?

Answer: Yes. When Daoud Khan staged the coup, I had done eight months of military service during Zahir Shah’s time. Then after Daoud Khan’s coup, I did another 16 months during Daoud’s period. Yes, I spent three months in air-force transition, then I came home. During those three months they were not really paying much attention to the soldiers, so I stayed there for those three months. Nobody even asked where you came from, why you slept here, what was wrong with you?

May 30, 2026

Question: Was there no doctor there?

Answer: There was a doctor. No one asked.

Question: So was that lack of care the same for everyone, or was it because you were Hazara?

Answer: Honestly, it was more so for Hazaras. It was more against Hazaras, and also against Uzbeks, yes, and against Tajiks too. But especially against Hazaras. At that time, when we were in the unit, they forced us to go praying. They used to say, “Pray with your hands folded; you must pray the congregational prayer.” Yes. On the first day I went, that man with authority would not place a Hazara in the unit; officers would take them as a service man — they would say that Hazaras are honest or someone good for work at home. Then they took me and sent me as a service man. I refused, and they beat me badly. They beat me so much, God knows how much. Then when he hit me at home, I said, “I’m not a service man.”

Question: What was the service man doing?

Answer: The service man did housework — washing dishes and bowls.

Question: In whose house?

Answer: In the house of the officers.

Question: So from soldiers who had gone to serve the government, they would take them and make them work in their houses?

Answer: Exactly, they would make them work in their houses. Those officers would each, according to their own choice, choose Hazara people. They would take them to their homes. Some had two, some had one. They took Hazara people more often. They took them to their homes to wash pots, cook, sweep the house, clean up, water the area around the house in the morning, polish the officer’s shoes in the morning, iron his clothes — that was the kind of work a soldier did. The officer’s daughters would only call out, “Soldier!” Some would beat him, some were decent and did not beat him. But mostly they mistreated them. Their wives, their women. When the soldier arrived at their house, you had to prepare their tea, prepare their sugar, prepare the chair and table. Then when he came, as soon as he took off his shoes, you would clean his

May 30, 2026

shoes, bring them and place them there. In the morning you would put water by his feet. You would take him out through the doorway, and then you would come back and have breakfasts.

Question: Was this service man assignment, like the military service in the unit, also for two years?

Answer: Yes, it was for two years. After two years you would get your discharge from the unit. Or the officer himself would bring it. Some of them, if they were good, would not even keep you in the unit; they would bring the discharge to you right there, and then you would go home, and they would say goodbye. In your place, they would bring in another man already. But I said, “I’m not a service man, I’m going back to the unit.” They said, “Why?” I said, “I came for military service. I did not come here to be the servant of your house.” Then he got angry and beat me badly. After he beat me, without any consultation, without any discussion, I just packed up my belongings and left his house. I left and returned to the unit. When I got back to the unit, they said, “Why did you come back?” I said, “I’m not a service man.” At that time that man himself came. A captain.

Question: Was he Pashtun or Tajik?

Answer: He was Tajik. Then when he came, in the same conversation he said, “Beat him badly and then let him go. Don’t assign him any work.” Then they brought a cable in, put me face down, and beat me a lot. They beat me so much that I did not scream, did not call on God, did not do anything. I had only one handkerchief in my hand; I bit it with my teeth and lay face down because they beat me that much. They beat my thighs. I said no more words after that. They beat me a lot, terribly. Then they took me up, but I could not stand. Finally, one or two soldiers helped me up. Those two soldiers got me up; then I stood on both sides, but I could not remain standing, so they put me on a chair. Then they said, “Why aren’t you a service man?” I swore, “To God who has no partner — I am not going to become a service man, no. I’m not a service man. Even if you hit me, I’m not a service man. I’m willing to be killed, but I’m not a service man. I am a human being, you are a human being, and I came for military service; I did not come here to be the servant of your boy or your girl or your woman — good or bad, all of it.” Those boys used to say, “Hazara, rat-eater.” They said, “Hazara rat-eater,” you understand. Then

May 30, 2026

there in that place I swore that by God, who has no partner, I am not a service man. If you do not keep me in the unit, if I go to the officer's house, I will run away. I will leave through the back door. Who can make to do the military service? Then that man said, "Well, that won't work; leave him alone, let him keep his soul, bring him back here and give him back his clothes." I was in civilian clothes at his house. Then he gave me clothes, and I started military service. Once I started military service, for six months — no, not six months, for one year, in that first year after I had just arrived, I had already spent one week as a service man, then after I left that, for that first year I was in a tent house, a room in the forest, and I had to patrol all night with a torch. Then the guard would come — this authority officer would come; then, if he did not give notice at night, he would come close, and then I would say, "Don't come near, I'll hit you once and next time I'll beat you properly," and they would go back. They would not come near. For one year, until I became disciplined in the unit. Then at night I had one hour of guard duty, then I would come and rest. That is how military service went in those difficult times. They brought people and told them to go pray with their hands folded. In the tent house there was much more hard labor. They would say, "Go with a shovel and dig up the bushes, gather them, carry them over there, this side, that side." Day to evening we did labor. That was the hard work. They gave us no importance. From beginning to end, we had no importance.

Question: How many sisters and brothers do you have?

Answer: I had four sisters, one of them has died, and three are alive. We are five brothers.

Question: Which child were you? Which brother were you in the family?

Answer: I was the oldest of all.

Question: So that's why your father wanted you to marry first, earlier than everyone else?

Answer: Yes, I married early. I was the eldest, after all. The eldest child has a lot of responsibility and burden. Most of the farming work depended on me. I went through many difficult years and saw a lot of hardship. At that time there was war in the Lumu (Luman region in Jaghuri) station; we were there in our homeland. The tractor could not take the road through Torguleng and Anguri. The road for cars was completely blocked. In that situation I would take

May 30, 2026

the tractor, do work in Anguri, and then come back at night. I would go at night and return at night.

Question: What war was that? The internal party wars or...

Answer: No, it was during the Soviet invasion that came to Lumu, during the jihad period. Then, after that Jihad was over, civil war started, and the wars of Nasr Organization, Nahdat, Harakat, Sepah, and others were going on in the region. In our region, the Soviet war became very intense in Muqur; there was almost a full day of fighting there from morning to evening. Later, during the civil wars, most of it was in Nai Qala, the Gowra area, and the Zardalu area. It was not in our area.

Question: During the Soviet wars, did you stay at home? Were you displaced?

Answer: We were displaced during the Soviet war. At night we would go toward Pidah, Barik, and Dibdai. At night I would put the wife and children on the tractor and take them toward Dibdai and Pidah. We would go there and stay for months or even weeks. Sometimes one would leave home suddenly or take whatever was available and go. Then you could not return home on your own.

Question: When you went to those places, did you live in the tractor, or in relatives' houses, or in mosques or somewhere else?

Answer: At first, we lived in the tractor. Then in some places there were caves, and in those caves we lived. We would park the tractor in front of the cave, and if there was some work nearby, we would go there from the tractor and work. If there was carrying, or labor, or some other job, we would do it there. Sometimes we were in the tractor, sometimes we slept in the caves.

Question: When you left the house, did you take household items with you? For cooking for example?

Answer: Yes, we would take the pot and bowls, and oil, because who knew when we would be able to come back. Yes, forget the hardships — I did not really have many happy memories from that life.

May 30, 2026

Question: Leaving the hardships aside, what cultural traditions from earlier generations remained with you? What was valuable to you?

Answer: Honestly, the Hazara cultural traditions from my time — my father had sent me to school. School was like this: I had an uncle who had stayed in Iran for 16 years. Then my father went and brought him back. He was married and had a daughter.” When he brought him here, they used to tell me, “You won’t make it. You won’t learn, you won’t learn to read, you won’t learn to write. You are the nephew of so-and-so, the grandson of so-and-so, and it was like this and that.” My father’s brother said those things. Then I completely lost hope and said, “Probably he knows better— I won’t learn.” Slowly I became discouraged and left school. I never went back to school. For a year I worked for my uncle as a laborer for 60 seers of wheat, a pair of shoes, and one set of clothes. Then they did not even give me the money, neither the pair of shoes, and one set of clothes. My uncle said, “This rustic fellow did not work, how come he didn’t work and so on?” He refused to give it. After that I became very bitter inside. My uncle had a major fight with another person, so I went to Qara Bagh district and found work in a place. It was a construction work. I went to a contractor, asked him to hire me, and said I would come work here for a daily wage. He said, “You are too weak, you cannot work.” I said, “It’s fine, just take me.” I worked with a shovel, moving soil here and there, bringing the soil forward, pushing mud ahead, with my shovel standing there. Then he hired me, and said he would pay me 35 rupees a day. He said, “We won’t give you lunch; go eat lunch in the bazaar.” I said fine. Then I worked there that day. On the day he hired me, it rained at noon. I came running to the bazaar because he had said, “You have one hour to buy food and come back.” I said fine. I ran and ran to the bazaar, and the bazaar was far. I came and with the two rupees I had, I bought tea; one rupee was for tea, two rupees for bread. I took the bread and tea and ate them, then ran back there. He said, “It rained; go, you’re not needed.” I asked, “What about my today’s wage?” He said, “You did not even work half a day.” He did not give me the money. That pain is still in my heart, and I still never forget it. My time was very bitter; I even cried. They did not give me my money. They ran me around until noon. They kept me running from morning until noon. Then they still did not pay me. I came back bitter. In our homeland, things were like that. I could not do farming, no one would hire me as a farmer, and no one would hire me as a laborer because I

May 30, 2026

could not do labor. Yes, that was how it was. Then when the road to Iran opened again, we went to Iran.

Question: Before you were still young, what did your father and mother do? How did they earn their living?

Answer: My father worked with my brothers. There were four brothers; all the work was on my father. He would get one out of four seers. He was like a peasant. When the threshing pile was ready and they were threshing, he would take the grain and bundle it up. My father would get, for example, one out of four baskets, or one out of four bowls — one bowl out of eight bowls. His brothers would take away the wheat entirely. During winter we would eat nothing but bread. My father would go to Pashī region, to Jaghori region, and bring back broad beans and mung beans, and we would grind them into flour and eat them. Those days were very hard on us. Life had become very bitter. I used to say to my father, “If you go and do peasant work somewhere else, maybe you’ll earn more.” He would say, “You are a young man — your heart is not softened for my brothers; don’t separate me from my brother.” In the end he would say, “Let my brothers help me,” but they would say he hit too much, that he fought too much, and my father would get angry, sometimes he even beat me. He would say, “You cannot help me with this much.” The work you do is fine enough. Because of the insecurity at that time, sometimes during Muharram we would pass Muharram behind closed doors. Sometimes during Muharram, if the Awghus were around, we would pass it in a different way. When the nomads came, everyone would leave there because we were not allowed to recite.

Question: Did the Awghus not allow Hazaras and Shi’a people to observe Muharram?

Answer: Yes, even praying with hands open was not possible. If a Awghus came to the mosque, everyone would pray with their hands folded.

Question: The mosque was in the Hazara village. When the Awghus came, were the villagers afraid of a single Awghu traveler?

Answer: Yes, one single Awghu frightened Hazara people, and they would pray with folded hands. We were not close to the Awghus. When the Awghus came, we all prayed with folded

May 30, 2026

hands. Even when we went to Qara Bagh, Ghazni, or Kabul, we would pray with folded hands on the road. We could not pray with our hands open.

Household life, customs, and childhood

Question: When you were still a child, and when you went to school, which festivals made you happiest — Eid, Nowruz, or Muharram? Which one did you enjoy most?

Answer: Eid al-Fitr was very happy. People would put henna on their hands and exchange Eid greetings. Eid al-Adha was also like that. But Nowruz was not really celebrated until the road to Iran opened. People did not celebrate Nowruz properly then. The joy was more around Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. People put henna on their hands, wore new clothes, visited one another, and exchanged Eid greetings. There was happiness. They celebrated these Eids a lot. After the road to Iran opened, they saw that Nowruz was celebrated strongly there, and after that people began celebrating Nowruz too.

Question: How was Muharram?

Answer: Muharram was also like that. Until people went to Iran, everyone practiced *taqiya*. After people came back from Iran, they became freer. In the mosque, for example, a group would go and recite Muharram. They would spread carpets and hold the Muharram recitation with great dignity. There was vow food, and if a household had a sheep or goat, they would make a vow of it, slaughter it, and then give food. It stayed in the house. Some people who did not have wealth — for example, if they had no sheep, no goat, no cow — they would make *tipshi*. Back then butter oil was good. They would make *tipshi* with clarified butter. If they did not have much, they would make it for two households; if they had more, they would make it for one household.

Question: When they slaughtered the sheep or goat, would they usually prepare a stew?

Answer: Yes. For example, there would be me, you, and others in turn. If there were ten households in the village, each household would take its turn making food. One night you, one night me, one night someone else. They would feed the whole village, young and old. It was very close-knit, very good, very kind. People did not hold grudges. If there was conflict, it lasted a

May 30, 2026

day or two and then things became good again. People did not keep resentment. It was very good back then.

Question: You said that people without sheep and goats made *tipshi*. What is *tipshi* made from?

Answer: It is made from bread. Flour is kneaded into dough, then rolled out well and made into a flat bread, then baked in a *tandur*. After that it is broken into pieces, placed in a dish, yogurt is warmed, and then it is poured over it with oil or butter. Then people would sit around a large bowl and eat it. Ten, twelve, even fifteen people would sometimes sit together. Small children would be placed in front of their fathers, and they would make a place for the *tipshi* near themselves so the children could not reach too far. That is how it was. Little ones and adults would sit around one *tipshi* together.

Question: So *tipshi* is the same as *nan-bota* Jaghori?

Answer: Yes, *nan-bota* Jaghori and *tipshi* are the same thing.

Question: During the ten days of Muharram, was there a vow meal every night?

Answer: There would be a vow for ten days, or twelve or thirteen days. Sometimes, if there were many households, the vows could continue for twenty or twenty-five days. People made vows with great joy and happiness and ate together. On *Ashura* day they would make *shir chai*. Then they would prepare oil-based food and bring it to the gathering. Each house would bring a tray with tea and sweet tea, and they would take it to the *majlis*. Then both children and adults would drink the *shir chai* and eat oily bread, recite prayers, and then go home.

Marriage and weddings

Question: These relationships were within the Hazara community. How were weddings usually held?

May 30, 2026

Answer: In the old days, someone would go and ask for a girl's hand. The father of the girl would be told, "Give your daughter to my son." Sometimes that person would accept, sometimes not. If they accepted, then one or two people would go and say, "If you are giving your daughter, then tell us about the **bride-price** and wedding arrangements, the ceremony and accounts. What is the custom here? How much clothes do you take? How much **bride-price** do you take? What is the tradition?" They would say, for example, give me ten pairs of trousers, or give me 30,000 or 20,000 or 2,000 for **bride-price**. It was all arranged that way. After that, when it was settled, they would go and *shal* the bride. Two or three people would go and *shal* her, then they would make sweets, and then the marriage contract would be read. Sometimes the nikah would be read a few days later; sometimes it would be read right then. They would bring the mullah and read the nikah. Then they would ask, "When will you have the wedding feast?" He would say, for example, one month later, or two months later, or when the grain is ready and the harvest comes in, then we will have the wedding. When the grain was ready, they would go and grind twenty *ser* of wheat, saying that was the wedding expense. Some people would say, "This wedding needs two meals: one at night with meat, one in the day with *tipshi*." For example, on the wedding night they might slaughter four sheep. They would slaughter four sheep, bring two tins of oil, and then have the wedding. Then those four sheep, one tin of oil, and twenty *ser* of flour would be used, and the wedding would happen. That night the guests would sit, and in the morning they would eat *tipshi*. Then the bride would be escorted home. That was the wedding. The bride's father would give, and if he was wealthy, he would slaughter two sheep. When the guests arrived, he would serve them a stew meal. If he had no sheep, then they would make *tipshi*.

Question: In the father of the bride's house, was there usually a henna night or a wedding night?

Answer: There was no special night like that. Someone would simply bring a handkerchief, and sometimes people would bring henna.

Question: Any money in exchange for receiving henna?

Answer: No, They would put henna on the hands and tie a handkerchief around the hand. Some people would put ten rupees or twenty rupees on the side of the bowl of *Naan-malida*. Then the

May 30, 2026

Naan-malida would be given the next morning. When the bride went away, she would be given the ***Naan-malida***. In the morning, when the bride went off, there was a bowl of ***Naan-malida*** there. For example, the bride's father would take a basket to the house of the groom, and from one house to another the ***Naan-malida*** would be distributed. In our village, where there were ten houses, the groom would go to ten houses and leave 10 or 20 rupees by the bowl of ***Naan-malida***. At the house of the groom's in-laws, 10 or 12 of the groom's friends would eat ***Naan-malida***. Those 10 or 12 people would also go with the groom to other houses. They would also leave 10 rupees or 5 rupees in the bowl of ***Naan-malida*** at those houses. Then at the in-laws' house the groom and his friends would also put money in the bowl of ***Naan-malida***. That was the custom. The customs were good, not bad. Then when the bride was brought home, women would come and sing, make ululations, sing folk songs, and the men would sing too. It was all very good. The night would pass into morning. They would eat the wedding feast. Some people would also make a procession. Some would slaughter sheep. In those days chickens were made as the welcome animal for the bride. Sheep were not usually made for the bride then; they slaughtered chickens. The chickens would be held and placed behind the bride. The owners of the horse that had carried the bride would take them home and cook them.

Death and funerals

Question: If someone died, how were burial and washing the dead carried out?

Answer: In the old days, if someone died, and if they died at night, by morning they would slaughter a sheep, cook it in a pot, bake bread, and then tear the dough into pieces and mix meat into the dough. That would be taken along with the body. It would be taken to the grave and divided there. Everyone at the grave would be given some of the meat and bread and would eat it. They would call that food "with the way." Then by the time it came back home, people would eat tea and bread, and the next day there would be a ***fateha*** gathering. Then a cow would be slaughtered, dough would be made, and people would gather for the memorial meal. They would eat the meat soup — beef or sheep soup. In those days that was part of the funeral custom. Later, that custom was reduced. In some places it disappeared, in some places it remained.

May 30, 2026

Question: If someone did not have a sheep, what would they do?

Answer: If they did not have a sheep, they were forced to buy one so that they would have something to take along.

Question: For the *fateha*, if someone could not afford it, would relatives help?

Answer: At first, some people could afford it, some could not. Then people began helping each other a little. The system started that if a house had only half a seer of bread or maybe 100 rupees, they would help and the *fateha* would be held. That became normal for everyone. The rich and the poor were helped equally. If someone died, the family did not need to spend alone from their own house.

Question: Was this custom helpful for people who had wealth too?

Answer: Yes, whether someone had a lot or not, everyone contributed. It was good for everyone. First, it brought unity. Second, it was also a kind of collective support. Even the *fateha* of the poor would be held.

Childhood, work, and identity

Question: What stories, tales, or anything do you remember from your parents?

Answer: Honestly, I don't remember them very clearly. Because back then, when they used to say proverbs, I did not pay much attention.

Question: What kind of food did you usually eat every day?

Answer: Honestly, food was not like that. There were days when from one Friday to the next Friday, we would eat only one *tafe*, like buttermilk or water. Dry bread and tea were the main meals. Once a week we would say that from this Friday to the next Friday we would eat one *tafe* like that. In the year, on another year, they would say slaughter one sheep for the year. Those who had wealth would slaughter one. Those who did not have wealth could not even do that. They were poor.

Question: What kinds of handicrafts were common? What did people make?

May 30, 2026

Answer: Handicrafts included pillow covers, and there was another kind of large garment like a man's traditional shirt that women wore. Older women wore it, not young women. The collar had embroidery and side tassels. It had small knots and tassels. There was also a kind of pyjama with a wide leg and a narrow collar, and one side had tassels. It was also two-layered in a sense. They would wear it with a belt. Older women wore it too. The edges were decorated with black embroidery. The sleeve ends were cut with scissors, with a long, stretched look. In the house, cushion covers were hand-stitched, jacket covers became common, handkerchiefs were made, girls' caps were hand-stitched and made with tassels and fringes. The foreheads were decorated with rupees.

Question: What did the men do in handicrafts?

Answer: Men made plows, yokes, spades, baskets, cradles, and four-pronged tools. Some people made water mills.

Question: In your community, how did you express Hazara identity? You said you lived in an area where Pashtuns were your neighbors. How did you show your identity as Hazara?

Answer: We were not that close. It was almost an hour away. We just continued our own life. But when it came to the mosque, people would pray with their hands folded. They also stopped reciting Muharram. Later on, that stopped too. If they came, they would go; no one would interfere with their ceremonies.

Question: What were Hazaras afraid of when they came?

Answer: They were afraid people would say, "Why are you praying with your hands open?" So they prayed with their hands folded so no one would say anything. That was the reason. They were not afraid of being served food or anything like that.

Question: Did you have trade, buying and selling, or dealings with other communities like Pashtuns?

Answer: No, not much buying and selling with them, because people were afraid. Friendship with them did not help much. One person there in our area who had a close friendship with a Pashtun. Then one person named Muhib and another named Ali Rahim. One night their Pashtun

May 30, 2026

friends came up to the high area, to their house and stayed there. In the morning they had said, “Come, let us cross through the Hazara region.” They excused crossing the Hazara region and asked them for a company. They told them to wait on the mountain slope, or they had gone somewhere far away, or they had closed off the road. Then they said, “You sit here, and we will go from far away...” because they had guns. They shot one person and killed another. They were friends! They stayed in their house at night. They took these people making excuse, saying, “Take us across the Hazara area and through Takhchi, and bring us to the Afghan region.” They took them on the road and killed one of them and the other ran away. That was the situation. People were afraid. There was no trading with them.

Question: Why did they do that? Why were they killed?

Answer: These Afghans! These Afghans! At night they would come and take people’s property from their houses in Nia Qala. Just like in Tamki, they would come at night and steal cattle and animals from people. People were powerless against them. In those days there were old rifles, lead bullets. They would go and bring those people from the hills. They would remain there, and when they said the Hazaras could no longer come there, they would go and sleep there, but the Hazaras would follow them, shoot them there with guns and take back their cattle and livestock. At night, Afghans they would come and take livestock from sheepcotes of Hazaras. It was like that. Those Afghans were so bad that, honestly, it’s beyond words.

Question: Did you personally or did your family ever face problems in Afghanistan because you were Hazara?

Answer: No, not personally. We came from there, and then we arrived in Quetta. It can’t be said one day or another day. We came.

Question: Can you explain more fully why you left Afghanistan?

Answer: Because those Afghans threatened us a lot. They would threaten us every day, coming to make excuses and saying, “Give us your gun, because you are in that group.” My cousin’s son was in the Naser organization, and they would say, “You were in Naser, hand over the guns you

May 30, 2026

brought, hand over the soldiers you brought.” Because of all kinds of excuses, we were forced to flee and come to Quetta.

Question: Was the journey easy? Overall, from the time you left Tamki until Quetta and through all those years in Quetta, was it easy or hard? If there were difficulties, what were they?

Answer: It was hard, very hard. It was very difficult because there was no work in Quetta. My own body was weak, and I could not work. Stonecutting, road work — Pakistan has many problems. They did not have machines, not even proper tools; road and bridge work had to be done by hand. In those days when I worked, my hands would become blistered. I could not do it. If I worked one day, I would get sick the next two days. The heat was also intense. Poverty is very difficult. Then I told you that I had been a bakery apprentice and worked in a bakery. They gave me five loaves of bread. They paid me 100 rupees a day and gave me five loaves of bread. But even that bread was not enough. I brought it home, and nothing else was there.

Question: How many children did you have?

Answer: I had seven children. I had to feed all of them, provide for them. Then I sent them to school. I told them they had to go to school. Except for one poor daughter. She did not go; she did handwork, sewed clothes, sewed caps, and embroidered scarves. I sent the boys to school.

Question: What does being Hazara mean to you today?

Answer: Being Hazara now is a good thing. Because right now, since I am here, I feel very good and happy. I wish this had always been the case for us, and that we had never left our region. If we had not left Afghanistan, we would not have come here. For some of us, it is very difficult here. Afghanistan was good.

Question: What stories and traditions do you want Hazara youth born in Canada to preserve?

Answer: Honestly, my wish for the young people is that they should not lose their Hazara culture and traditions. They should pay attention to it, even their mother tongue should not be lost. They should learn the language. They should also learn other languages; men should know

May 30, 2026

all kinds of languages. But they should not lose their Hazara cultural language. That is very good. One day it will be useful. The world is always changing.

Question: When you look at young people, what gives you hope and what makes you worried?

Answer: One thing that gives me hope about Hazara life is that some of them are very good. They pay attention, they study, and their thinking is toward work and life. They have Hazara traditions. Some of their children and daughters study, go to university, and that makes me very happy. We are very pleased with them. But some of them leave school, some do negative things, and that makes me a little sad. Negative things like smoking cigarettes, using hashish, or doing other wrong things, not studying, not working, not treating their parents well — there is a lot of that here. Yes, I am not happy about that.

Question: If you had one message for other Canadians about Hazaras, what would it be? What would be good for them to understand?

Answer: My message about the Hazara people is that they should think about their own life, their own education, and their own work. They should avoid negative excess and not do harmful things. Always do positive work; that is better. They should think about the future and keep the future in mind.

Question: And what message do you have for non-Hazaras?

Answer: For non-Hazaras, I would like to offer special thanks to the people of Canada. Canadians are very good people, kind and humanitarian. They accepted us. I am deeply grateful.

Question: Is there anything left that I did not ask, but that you want to talk about?

Answer: Honestly, you asked a lot. I don't know what is left and what is not left. I honestly don't remember anything else.

Thank you!