

Interview with Mr. Shukrullah Rezaie

Interviewer: Fatima Framarz

Question: I am very happy to see you, Mr. Rezaie. Welcome, and thank you for agreeing to speak with us. To begin, let us start with your name and details. Can we use your real first and last name for this interview, or not? In what year and where were you born?

Answer: My name is Shukrullah Rezaie. I was born in 1956 in Jaghori.

Question: Do you remember anything about your family history, such as your paternal grandfather and maternal grandfather?

Answer: Yes, I remember. Of course a person remembers these things. I do not remember my paternal grandfather, but I remember my father and my mother.

Question: Do you remember anything that was passed down from your paternal grandfather to your father and from your father to you as a tradition — something you can talk about?

Answer: There is nothing very special that one would really think about. The things that were common in our society — everyone had them. What I remember as a distinction about my own family is that we were an orderly and polite family. Under my father, all of the boys and all of the girls were raised in a disciplined household. My father had a kind of authority — not harsh, not oppressive, but he was in charge. So the children and the whole family grew up moral, religious, hardworking, and industrious. There are many small memories like that.

Question: What was the society you grew up in like? Was it like your family, or was it different?

Answer: The village life was a little different, yes, somewhat different. It was basically a closed society, tied to a culture and to customs. When distance increases between places, cultures and customs change a little too.

Question: What was your father and mother's main work? How did they earn a living?

Answer: In the village, the main work is land work: farming, agriculture, planting trees and seedlings, those kinds of things.

Question: What did you usually plant in the land?

Answer: The main crop was wheat, like everywhere else. Then barley, depending on need. Potatoes, onions, and the kinds of things that were customary at the time. Maybe now people plant more things, like cauliflower, leeks, and cucumbers. But in those days it was mostly wheat, potatoes, onions, and pumpkins, including the large kind of pumpkin, not the green ones people have now. Mostly wheat. They planted enough wheat so it would feed the family and also leave some to sell. Cash was scarce, so wheat, along with sheep and cattle, was what brought in money. The rest went toward clothes, medical expenses, travel, and such things.

Question: You mentioned cattle and sheep. Along with farming, did you also keep livestock?

Answer: Yes, we had both farming and livestock. In the villages, that is how it was.

Question: So cattle, sheep, and calves? Something like that?

Answer: Yes. In our area, keeping sheep was a hundred percent common, goats maybe ten percent — that was not really a big thing. Donkeys, excuse the expression, were for work. Male and female cows; female cows were for milk, and bulls were for plowing. Every family that could afford it had at least one bull; if another bull was needed, they would borrow one from someone else for field work, what we called **palgho**. “You take my cow, I take yours,” so both cows could do the work together. Sheep were good because people would usually kill and dry one or two in winter, or sell one or two and use the money for tea, sugar, clothes, and so on.

Question: When you say plowing, did you need plowing for every crop, and did you always need two oxen for it?

Answer: Plowing was usually for preparing the land for planting and agriculture. We would plow once or twice in the summer to expose the land to the sun so it would be ready by Tir. Then, when Tir came and the land was ready, planting was a whole system. First it would take water; after a week, it would be time to plow again, then sow the seed, then plow once more so the seed would mix well. Often it was plowed twice. It depended on the field and the strength of the oxen. Then we would level it and carry on with the planting.

Question: Excuse me, you said your area was entirely sheep-keeping. Can you tell us exactly where in Jaghori this was?

Answer: Our area was called Tapqos. A village of roughly three or four hundred houses.

Question: Do you remember what the marriage custom was usually like? If you remember the stories of your parents, or your own marriage — nowadays young people choose for themselves and then inform the family.

Answer: I have a story about this going back almost forty years, and I have both heard and seen it. Marriage depended heavily on the age of twenty-two, because that was when a young man was expected to go to military service. In our culture, until a young man completed military service, neither the parents thought of marrying him off nor did the boy expect marriage. In the early period, around a century ago or at the beginning of conscription, military service was seen as something frightening. Some people disappeared there for one or two years and never returned. Some were strong and smart, and they completed it. Slowly, things got better. In short, before military service was completed, marriage was not really discussed. When a young man returned safely from military service, everyone was happy — the father, mother, brothers, and sisters. In truth, the family would say he had become a man. The young man himself would feel proud. Even the villagers would come and celebrate, saying not to let him remain unmarried. After that, the proposal process was simple and traditional. If a mother could secretly keep an eye on a girl, she might observe her son and the girl for six months or even a year before the boy returned from military service. Then she would discuss it with her husband. The husband would then make the move. Because the economic situation was also like that, the father would say, “Just give me a scarf,” maybe even a packet of sweets, or maybe nothing. She would put the scarf in his pocket and go at night, either alone or with another good person, to propose. They would go to someone’s house, maybe in our village, maybe farther away, maybe to the house of old friends or relatives. When they arrived, the hosts would welcome them, saying a friend or relative had come to their home. There would be long conversation. In the end, the relatives would say, “I have come carrying dust and sweeping tools.” Then they would discuss the matter a bit. They would not say things like “my daughter is too young” or “my daughter chooses for herself.” That sort of thing did not exist. Then they would say, “At night, God is merciful.” The

night would pass that way, with sleep. Sometimes they would go to the daughter's side for a consultation with the mother and the girl. The girl's acceptance was only this one thing: if she stayed silent, they said silence meant consent. That was the phrase. I do not remember a case where the girl explicitly argued back and said no, or cried in objection.

Question: So, what did crying mean?

Answer: Crying meant that maybe she wanted something else, maybe she did not agree, maybe it was too early, or maybe she was far from her father's house. Because in the past, distance mattered a lot. There were mountains. For example, people from Tapqos did not know Luman. A relative of mine from Luman was very far from us at that time. I would ride a horse with my mother to Luman. In short, it was very far. That was the situation. After that, the group that had gone to propose would spend the night. In the morning they would see what the family's answer was. If they brought agreement from the girl's family, everyone was happy. If agreement did not come, they would become distressed. When they brought the agreement, tea would be served, they would drink it, then the matter would be discussed and accepted. When it was accepted and announced, they would take the scarf from their pocket, or go to the girl's side and request her, then place that scarf over her head and, as they said, "cover" her. That was called **khundi** (to take possession of). If they did not accept, the girl's family might not even know that a scarf was in the suitor's pocket. No one else knew either. Only one trusted person would be told, "Do not tell anyone." It was very heavy for him if someone had gone to ask for the daughter's hand and she had not been given in marriage. A rumor would spread. That was the custom of proposing. For young men, before military service, marriage was simply not an issue. After agreement, the matter of getting the groom involved, or what he should do, was not discussed much. But in some way they would start visiting each other, and the engagement and marriage contract did not exist at first. Later, at a ceremony they would do the marriage contract. Before that, they would go sincerely to the future wife's house, sit there for an hour or two, often more. They would bring a simple bundle — maybe a small bottle of perfume, maybe a little rosewater, nothing more than that. There was no toothpaste, no fancy cream, no Lux soap, maybe just one handkerchief. Things were different. Then they would continue this way and decide the bride's share.

Question: When did they decide the bride price?

Answer: It was decided in that first proposal. Before the scarf was requested, they had already fixed that amount. That was the set bride price. Some other things later became much larger, as you and I know, but back then there was less of that. The bride price was fixed, and the wedding costs and obligations were the responsibility of the groom's father, as they are now. But where would the three lakhs (300000) come from now? Or even two lakhs? There was no money. Back then the hope was that the sheep would get fat, the donkeys would be free from work, the cows would be free from work, and perhaps wheat would be sold. They would gather a little cash and a little in kind — for example, a young bull might be worth ten thousand rupees. You would take that to the relatives as the bride price. Or maybe one or two sheep plus one or two loads of flour or wheat. In this way, over one or two years, during the seasons when the harvest came in, they would settle the bride price. Once the bride price was settled, the wedding preparations began, and then the expenses were reduced by going to the bride's house. The villagers would gather, and then the bride's family would reduce the costs, saying: this is how much the house can manage, this is how much it costs, and how much can you bear? There was not much pressure, not much fuss. The expenses would be reduced, for example twenty seers (1 seer= 7.5kg) of flour would be brought. One or two sheep, or three sheep, and a pail of oil. That counted as part of the expense. When they went, the meal was usually night bread, because meat was not eaten every day. The wedding meal on the next day was meat stew. About fifty or a hundred people would gather, and since there was no space in the house, it was customary to divide the group among the villagers. One household would host five people, another ten, another more, another fewer — according to the village arrangement. The guests were divided that way. In the morning, those who were hosted there would have breakfast. That was also the custom. In some places, it was agreed that even the bread for the guests breakfast had to be divided among the villagers, because one house could not cook for everyone. They would bake a special bread. In some places they would agree that the five or ten people who drank tea in the morning should also eat bread there. Tea, sugar, sweets — those things were not considered; each household would contribute according to its ability and honor. But the dry bread — the piece that a person ate with a handful of dough — had to be there. After that, the rest of the bread would be collected and brought together to make dough. They would eat bread on the wedding night, and meat the next

day. After that, when people had eaten, there was not much entertainment, not much time to sit and pass the time. In some places there was horse racing, but nothing else. There were singers who recited ghazals. Two people or one person would sing ghazals. There were no drums, no surnai, no modern bands; later, gradually, drums and microphones appeared. Then at one point everything became noisy and lively. If there was a loud sound, people would say the relatives had made a fuss. “What are the relatives doing now? They want to be paid over the agreed bride price.” Some interpreted it like that, saying the daughter was so upset that she empties her heart. In short, the bride’s family might also oppose it and say they would not give the groom’s brother the approval. The daughter’s family might also protest that way. Then one or two fair-minded people would appear and settle the matter. I was at one wedding where everything had already been settled, and the guests were waiting for the procession to begin. Everyone was watching, and the groom’s people had taken the horse’s saddle and reins. Everyone knew the marriage had reached the decisive stage. That was the situation, and the mediator came and persuaded the other side to yield. He said, “Brother, give our person here to us; your house is full of people, people are waiting, and you are acting as if you are some powerful ruler.” He talked them down. Then some people became a little shameless and brazen, and on that day they would send over a horse or a donkey. That was called *kapcha*. They would hand it over, and the bride’s family could not say anything. Nothing else could be done. They would say they had been caught by *kapcha*.

Question: Did everyone ask for the overpaid bride price, or only some people?

Answer: No, not everyone. Only some people did that, not all.

Question: For the people who asked for more, did the relationship later become damaged?

Answer: It depended on how the people managed it. The root of the matter was becoming relatives; they always said becoming relatives is from God. Some people held grudges. Relationships became bad. Others were good and forgot about it. Forgetting would soothe the heart and remove bitterness.

Question: Did you marry in Jaghori? And was that before military service?

Answer: Yes. In our time, I married before military service. We were five brothers and I was the fifth. After I got engaged, about a year passed, and then, since the situation was favorable, my mother took action. They had the wish that the youngest child should be married off last. So I was married. About three years after the wedding I went to military service.

Question: Some people, as I recall, used to go to Iran to earn money for wedding expenses. They would work there one or two years and come back engaged. Did that become common later?

Answer: Yes, around 1956, as far as I remember, going to Iran became common. In those years — not from 1950 but around when Daoud came — many migrants, well, not migrants exactly, many workers went to Iran. When they went there, they only worked in brick kilns. They did not work in the city. After one year they would come back with gifts for the household. That became a good pattern of going and returning. Iran became, let me say, almost 80 percent of the source of income. People brought a lot of money from there, not only for marriage, but for life in general.

Question: Can you add the names of your father and grandfather alongside your own name, so we can sketch a very brief family tree?

Answer: My father's name was Ghulam Reza and my grandfather's name was Ali Reza.

Question: Besides the wedding, what else stood out strongly for you — Eid, Nowruz, Muharram, and Ashura?

Answer: If I tell you a story, it is connected to economics and to people's thinking. There was a master, a blacksmith. Behind his house was a big mountain. There was a valley, and in winter a huge amount of snow fell. At that time there was also plenty of water. But this master thought that the snow should be taken and stored in the valley, perhaps for use as summer water. He used to tell the people of Jaghori that we have little land, let us go to Uruzgan, go to Siah Chub, go to Helmand, and take land. He wanted this because we had little land. Since he was a blacksmith, he gathered pieces of iron and wanted to build a mill, because grinding grain there was very difficult. Aside from the riverbank, there was no mill in other places, and even the big grain storage that supplied a family of five or ten for seven or eight months was very important. Such grain storage would grind a family's wheat over two days and one night. There were no cars and no roads then. They would gather ten or twenty donkeys, and that was not free either. They

would gather the sacks; the sacks themselves were made from that same rough material. No one would give you a sack without that rough weave on it. The master was thinking about making a water mill, a bull-powered mill, but he did not succeed.

Question: Did the master want to use a bull, like in plowing, for the mill as well?

Answer: Yes, something like that — like oil pressing, mustard seed processing, what we call **gini**. If you have seen it, it is a large stone with a hole in the middle. Another large stone fits over it, and in between you put the mustard seed or turnip seed. Then there is a bar, about the length of a spear, and on one side a wooden beam is attached to a bull or donkey. The bull or donkey is tied to it, and then it moves on its own, while the wooden bar turns the stone and grinds the material. The oil drips out into a glass or bucket. That was the thing. I remember that story; may that master rest in peace. He passed away. The snow was over, the waters were abundant, then the drought came. Around 1962 or 1963 a mission came to build a dam. That was the best place for a dam. The elders were consulted, and they said no, no, we have enough water, thank God. Building a dam here is not needed. Then the dam was moved to the other side of the mountain, to the Ootqol area. They said if you build that dam, our houses will be flooded. If it is built, it will flood our homes and land, so you should go somewhere else. But the other side responded firmly. That period also passed and the dam was not built. I do not remember the name of the mission. Then the drought and water shortages started after that. Even during those years there was a lot of drought. Over these two years, or maybe three years, thank God, 31 dams have been built in Jaghori, and one dam was built right here where we are. A few days ago a YouTuber went there and said the water level has reached 19 meters. That is the point: the thinking and vision of that master led to the dam. We say we wish he were alive to see what a dam can do and what other dams there are. Controlling water is so beneficial for people, for agriculture, and for life. That is the issue.

Question: When you were in Jaghori, what was the daily routine like? If there was work, school, or anything else — for example, what did you personally do?

Answer: When we were in Jaghori for a time, we went to school. Besides school, we also did household work little by little, because we were children. They would tell us: go do this work, go do that work. That was how it was. As we grew older, like our brothers and our father, we

became busy with field work here and there. After that, from around 1957, we were completely in Kabul. For one year we were in the homeland, for two years we were there, studied there, then came to Kabul in winter. In short, our feet were in Kabul. My second brother was in Kabul, my third brother was in Kabul, at his house. So it went on like that. Later, around 1965 — no, before the revolution — my father was in Kabul. It was all back-and-forth.

Question: When you were in Kabul and Jaghori, how much schooling did you complete?

Answer: We studied up to grade 12, then came to Kabul to continue, but did not continue.

Question: You did not go to university?

Answer: No.

Question: Did you finish school in Jaghori?

Answer: Yes.

Question: In Tapqos?

Answer: No, the first seven years were in Sang-e-Shanda, then in Sang-e-Masha.

Question: How did you travel daily between Tapqos and Sang-e-Masha?

Answer: There you would get a room, and then others did too. If someone could afford it, they went. You could not do that from Tapqos.

Question: Did you go at the beginning of the week and return home at the end of the week?

Answer: Yes, we rented a room.

Question: When you were half the day in school, did you spend the other half on household chores?

Answer: Yes, we did household work, grazed sheep, grazed cows, brought firewood from the mountains — all kinds of tasks. There is a lot of work in the homeland, many different kinds of work depending on the season. In the season, harvest wheat, harvest barley, dig up the soil, feed the cows.

Question: While you were in Sang-e-Masha for those seven years, how did you manage food and other needs?

Answer: Food was available from the market, the bakery, and such things. We lived in shared lodging, like roommates. There was no other kind of place. You would rent one room for 30 or 40 rupees, and everything was there. Those who had moved ahead had stoves and called them stoves. In those days they called them stoves. Then later we could not go to Kabul.

Question: Do you remember a story about room-sharing? How many people usually lived together? Was there a turn for chores?

Answer: In shared lodging, of course, it was natural. There was a schedule for work. Since these were mostly students, things were not bad. No one behaved badly toward another; they were respectful. If one person swept, another washed dishes. Whoever took the lead, the others learned from him and were happy.

Question: Did you split the costs?

Answer: Yes, of course. Since it was shared lodging, we split the costs.

Question: Until you were in Jaghori, what was the relationship between your village or region and other Hazara regions like? How did you connect with them? And if you were close to non-Hazara communities, what was that like? Did you invite each other to weddings, memorials, and ceremonies?

Answer: These relationships were mostly shaped by a few things: geography, ethnicity, blood relationship, and also ethnicity and blood relationship — those two again. Our village was ethnically closed. We had distance from people in other areas, but closeness with our own people. I myself criticized this and said it was not good. There was also discrimination based on religion and ethnicity, and even within our own village people related to one another in that way.

Question: Can you give an example of this discrimination? For example, what did they do with the nearby people and the distant people that made you criticize it?

Answer: For example, if someone nearby was a neighbor, I would say a neighbor has rights.

Question: For weddings, feasts, and invitations?

Answer: Yes, in short, there should be a mutual reach — you stretch your hand toward them and they can stretch theirs toward you. There should be a relationship instead of a wall. But when you only interact with your own ethnic group, that itself is discrimination. That is discrimination in itself. For example, when my father died, there was a custom that the money, the shal, and the turban placed on the body would later be divided by four elders sitting at the grave. They would divide it among the clerics, the mullahs, the pulpit people, and so on. I challenged this. I said in this era of revolution, we have seven martyrs in the area. Those martyrs' families may be well off and may not need a turban, but their memory should remain alive. They should be respected and remembered. After that, we have poor people and orphans; those should be given to them. Why give it to a certain mullah or sheikh who is old and does not need it? That person is about one hour away, far away. Why should the neighbor who is not from that clan be deprived of the pulpit share? He should receive it. The neighbor is also a person. He should receive it. In short, I broke that taboo. Many people — the so-called educated ones — complained, though mildly. Many others praised it and said I did a very good job. Very few had the courage to do that.

Question: When I was little, I always heard my mother say, “From a hundred relatives, one neighbor comes first.”

Answer: Yes, yes, that is a saying. It is a proverb.

Question: But I did not understand what it meant.

Answer: Very good. Relatives are also friends, of course. “From a hundred relatives, one neighbor comes first.” Elsewhere it is said, for example, that first comes your homeland, then your brother. But your brother may be far away. That neighbor of yours, that homeland of yours, will reach you day and night. You will reach them, because you are always close. This, in a way, is a proverb about closeness. It is also like Islam — there are verses and traditions about it.

Question: During your childhood, what customs or celebrations were important to you? For example, we did not celebrate Nowruz, only Sizdah Bedar, then Muharram. Which of these was important in your area, where everyone prepared in advance? Or Ramadan and so on?

Answer: Even though Nowruz was not a major event in the villages, it was not a special ceremony in a separate place. Spring itself made people smile, and people smiled back at spring. You would see a new day for yourself. You would look at the flowers, look at the greenery — it was not a formal ceremony. Eid was different. Especially Eid al-Fitr after a month of fasting was a great joy for children and adults. People put henna on their hands, wore new clothes, and that was a very new thing at that time, maybe 50 years to a century ago. Those were the ceremonies. People had neighborhood groups, village groups. A few villages together would do things a little differently. They would gather and eat together there. Or one house would host one night, another house another day. That was called village food, or Eid food.

Question: Was there a fixed food, or could everyone bring whatever they had?

Answer: The food was nothing other than bread. It was simply bread. Later, slowly, rice pudding also became common, like bread but made with rice instead.

Question: So one was bread with yogurt and oil, and the other was rice with milk and oil?

Answer: Yes, rice, milk, and oil — that was the difference.

Question: Which one was more popular, rice pudding or bread?

Answer: Bread has survived to this day. Bread is now becoming common even abroad. I did not see rice pudding that much.

Question: My late mother did not like rice pudding at all. She never ate it and did not like it. She liked bread.

Answer: Some people liked it, some did not. But rice pudding was appealing in a way because it was not produced in the region itself; it was bought. In those days there was not much distinction like “this grain goes for rice pudding, that grain goes for rice.” It was expensive or cheap depending on the time. People simply bought rice. They would either make rice or rice pudding.

Question: And what about Muharram?

Answer: People treated Muharram with great seriousness. Muharram had a group of reciters — they were called *Zakir* ذاکر. Usually there were two, three, or four younger ones, not the older ones, under fifteen. They would gather near the pulpit with the mullah and the students who recited elegies. Around sunset they would be distributed to the houses by the mullah. Houses were arranged in advance, so the same ten houses would host food. The number of people was roughly known. Then the mullah would do a little more organizing. In houses that were wealthier, more people would be sent; in houses that were not, fewer. Those people would be divided up. Fifteen or twenty minutes at a time, these children would go from place to place. It was a happy occasion in its own way. The schedule was fixed. “It is my turn for house so-and-so.” “It is my turn for house so-and-so.” “I will go to house so-and-so.” Those fifteen people would go, five or six or seven would eat there, and then everyone would gather again near the mosque in the evening.

Question: Was the food only for the reciters, or did women and older people and men also take part?

Answer: No, the main group was the reciters — the reciters were the focus. Then the reciters would eat, and people around them would also eat. Some neighbors and friends would be invited too, as a contribution. After the food was eaten, people gathered in the mosque again. This gathering was called **khando**. It started with the children first — elegies were recited, “deh bache” were recited, and then a mullah gave a speech. After that, chest-beating began. They would beat their chests for two or three rounds. Each round lasted twenty minutes, maybe half an hour, or fifteen minutes.

Question: There were two kinds of chest-beating, right? One with chains, and one where people beat their chests in a circle.

Answer: As far as I remember, chain-beating was not common there. It was only the men. The chest-beating was very respectful. No one laughed; everyone was mournful. There was no joking or rudeness from young people. When the chest-beating ended, after one or two rounds, depending on the time, around eleven at night or perhaps two-thirty in the morning, the oldest mullah or sheikh would recite a long, beautiful prayer. People sat facing the qibla and said amen. Then everyone went back to their homes. Over time, these ceremonies became more developed.

Roads were built, cars came, and motorcycles came to mosques and pulpits. Then groups disappeared.

Question: Do you remember any proverbs from that period? One you already mentioned was “first comes your friend, then your homeland.” Anything else like that?

Answer: Yes, I remember proverbs, but right now they are not in my mind. Maybe later, as time passes. Let me tell you a story instead. I do not know whether this story is a war story or has political coloring too. It happened around the time I was born. In Otqol, there were five or six shops called the Otqol market. There were no shops in Jaghori, or if there were, there were only five or six in that area. For example, the Ghujur market did not exist then. Stone-Masha existed, because it was the district center. These shopkeepers used to break their fast in Ramadan in the shop. At night they would sleep in the shop, because there were no thieves. But about an hour away there was a region called Oghana or perhaps Orzgo (Urozgan), where nomads would come — kuchis. The kuchis would come every day to this market. There were only five or six shops, not many. At night, those shopkeepers would be attacked. Or it was after iftar, three o’clock or four o’clock, maybe five. They would be killed in that way. The attackers themselves would do it. People found out. When people found out, they launched an attack at night. Not with guns, not to kill. Rather, they attacked so that they could steal. They would take livestock, sheep, and other things. They had no interest in women or honor. They did not set out to kill people there. No one was taken prisoner; only the animals and property were taken. They would then move quickly in every direction so no one would know.

Question: Did this happen in Jaghori?

Answer: Yes, in Jaghori, in Otqol. They would do this there. I think they killed a number of people and concealed it very quickly so no one in Kabul would hear. Later the trail led all the way to Pakistan. This and that, up and down. A month passed and the news reached Kabul. At that time Daoud was prime minister. Daoud became very angry. He was furious. But there was no way to find out who in Jaghori had done it. So they found Senator Nader Ali Khan. Senator Nader Ali Khan was among a group of Kabul landlords and notable people. Some were government people, some were officials. Senator Nader Ali Khan was very clever. He said that whoever had been summoned and whoever came knew what was going on. He quickly

understood that our countrymen had done this. When he came, he stood before Daoud. Daoud, as if holding the glass on the table, struck the table with it and told the senator that these were your people and I would crush you. He threatened him, like Trump saying he would smash things, saying that he would strike and crush them because of what they had done. He said all sorts of things, and Daoud was angry. The senator said, “You are right, sir, you are right, sir, you are right, sir.” At times he had gone too far. “A king has the right to kill his own subjects.” He had said some such things. “You are right, sir, you can kill your own people, destroy them. You have the power to gather people and burn them.” In the end, he had said a lot to calm him down, and said, “Give me a chance. Give me some time so I can find a solution.” Then he returned to Jaghori. Around that time, General Musa Khan was in power in Pakistan. General Musa Khan made a phone call telling them not to sign anything rashly.

Question: Who did General Musa call?

Answer: To Daoud, telling him not to sign anything rashly.

Question: And who told Pakistan about it?

Answer: It was probably the underground network of relatives who knew. The relatives spread the news. Maybe the senator himself learned it, or he went from Jaghori to Jaghori immediately. In those days there was no telecommunications for everyone, no devices like that. There were government telephones, but not much else. He sent someone quickly. Then it reached Pakistan, yes. If they moved in the morning, they would arrive by evening. Maybe not even evening, but the border was easier then. The warning reached there. After that, the issue calmed down somewhat, and several people were exiled because of my case. One of them was Sheikh Wahidi from Otqol.

Question: Is Sheikh Wahidi from the current Wahidi family — Razzaq Wahidi?

Answer: No, they are not that Wahidi family. That was a different Wahidi family from Otqol. Another one was Sharif Khan Pilot. Sharif Khan Pilot was a revolutionary man. These people were exiled to Baghlan for a few years. Then the issue calmed down.

Question: The nomads had come and someone was killed. They had gone and brought sheep. It was not enough for people to think you were killing people.

Answer: I said, isn't this an Ismaili community? Their insistence would not become public. Strange, isn't it? Everyone knows they have sectarian insistence, but no one knows exactly what it is. We say this is our code. They brought it, killed, and as the elders tell it, they brought it, killed, dug a hole in the ground at night, and buried it so no one would know the trace.

Question: Did the nomads come to Jaghori too?

Answer: Yes, the nomads came to Jaghori. The nomads had goods. The nomads had a very bad history. When they came to Jaghori, they brought all kinds of goods from Pakistan, and people needed those goods. They brought clothes in many colors, called sunduf and koti-chap. Women and men used those clothes to make outfits. Those who did not have clothes waited for the nomads to come. The nomads brought camels loaded with goods. Then there was tea — tea called choy gurz. And black sugar. Some other things too. That was the main part. They sold one item after another to people along the route. After they passed through, they sold goods and took payment on credit. They would write it down with profit and loss.

Question: If people did not take the goods, what would they do?

Answer: It was said that if people did not buy, they would go wherever their heart wanted, go to people's doors, and leave the goods there, saying, "Next year I will take money from this house." And no one could stop them or tell them to take it away. No one would say, "Who are you to force me to buy this? This is not my work, take it away." There was no such thing. In short, they had a kind of political power.

Question: Was this their Pashtun strength, their strength as awghus, that made people afraid?

Answer: Exactly, exactly. They had political power in reality. There is another short story from the time of Amanullah, almost a century ago. Amanullah fled, and Bacha-e Saqao came. War began, known as the Saqao war. The awghus attacked Jaghori. Amanullah had fled, and a Tajik had become king and taken the throne, so why were they attacking Jaghori? At that time, the role of Persian-speakers became more prominent. My late father used to tell the story: "We were young, we were young, and when the machine guns fired, we could hear the sound clearly from the middle." The rifles they had then were eleven-shot, tajdar, mashki, danpar — that kind. Those were not wars like today. It was about hilltops, trenches, and marksmanship. That went on

for a while. Then these phrases spread among the people, or someone deliberately planted them in people's minds: "Do not say anything, the awghus are coming." I do not remember from before that. But there is another very interesting story. Jaghori was under the shadow of Qalandar. Qalandar ruled there in the era of petty kingdoms. Qalandar was in the areas of Khak-e Iran, Daichopan, and those places. Jaghori up to Baghchari was under his rule.

Question: Was Qalandar an ethnic group?

Answer: No, it was made up of different groups. They simply had power, an army, horsemen, and the oghus supported them too.

Question: Was Qalandar Hazara but supported by awghus?

Answer: Yes, supported by oghus. Then the people of Jaghori and Bagchari would go, so to speak, to the khan to ask for things and bring him gifts. Twenty or thirty horsemen would gather — the elders, from everywhere there were elders: elder of Boosid, elder of Ghajur, elder of Luman, so-and-so arbab, so-and-so arbab, all of them would ride horses and bring taxes. They had demands and went to ask about them. Once, I do not know what shortcoming they made, but a group of 20–30 people went to Qalandar Khan, and Qalandar Khan did not punish them. He ordered that their shoes — people sometimes wore shoes for riding — be filled with dust, that they be turned upside down, and that the horses be driven away.

Question: Why?

Answer: As punishment, because they had disobeyed. I do not know exactly what they disobeyed. After that, the people could not say anything. Their shoes were in disarray, they rode their horses back, but they came to Jaghori upset, humiliated, and ashamed. When they reached Stone-Masha, one smart man said, "Let us hold a meeting here." He said, "These days and nights are over for us. We can no longer live under Qalandar. What should we do? We should take a khan from Jaghori itself." So who was the khan? They found a man named Safi Beo. Safi Beo's house was in Chalbooghto. He had sheep, livestock, wealth — a rich man. The people approved him and said this is good. So those 20–30 horsemen went to his house. When they arrived, he had a very smart wife. She understood that when the people from Jaghori came there, it meant some important matter was at hand. She took her husband up the mountain. The husband did not

go back; she took them to the guesthouse. He had a guesthouse and such things. He had a fortress. Then when they sat down, he served tea, and then the husband came. When he came, the lady said to him, "This group that has come to your threshold, accept whatever demand they have." She said, "Do not worry even if they stay one night or two nights. Their horses have fodder, grass, and all that. They have so many sheep, so much ghee, so much stored grain. Their wife had stores too. Do not worry. They have enough barley for their horses." Then the husband said that his young son was missing. The son was small. If his boy came and served them, then he would accept their words. If not, he would know he had no support. His brother, because the son was not present, how could he answer these people? He still did not know what was happening. When he went to the meeting, they welcomed him, made him sit, and had him take part in the celebration. Then they told him they wanted a khan here. After a little back and forth, he said yes, accepted. His brother also came. He told his wife to go home. Then the brother came out and handled the work. Their horses were very tired. In short, they respected the people. Sometimes it was customary to put a turban on the head of the one who was to become khan, meaning now you are our khan. Then he said this khan will not stay in that mountain; he must go to the plain. You should give me a place on the plain. Before the man even left home, he would say yes, yes, by the time he got to old Stone-Masha. They would not choose a place to build a fortress there. In a rush, they would gather the elders from here and there — the other tribal elders — and build the fortress without even placing the first stone. The work would start quickly, stones gathered from everywhere, cattle gathered, mud baked, very fast. Only on the day they placed the fortress gate, Qalandar's army would arrive. Qalandar had already heard. He would say, "Did you escape from under my hand? You are one of my satellites, not someone who escaped from under my hand." Then war would begin. It was not a war like today with bombs, shells, and all that. It was a war where each side held strategic points, had eleven-shot rifles and such, and kept firing. Whoever raised his head got shot. That was the kind of marksmanship war it was. It went on for one night and one day. One man who had taken a good position and was a good marksman would shoot him. He would shoot him, and that would be the Jaghori side. At the same time, one of their horses escaped and ran into the middle of the fortress. It ran into the middle of the fortress. It told Qalandar Khan that your luck is gone, you must go. Then it became

clear that the khan was from this side, Qalandar's khan. After that he was defeated. He was defeated, and Jaghori's khanship began from that time.

Question: You said Qalandar was from Uruzgan?

Answer: Yes. Qalandar was an ethnic group, and its geography was in Uruzgan.

Question: So he is from Jaghori?

Answer: Yes, scattered, very scattered. Like at that time when they became displaced, now they are all over Afghanistan. They are also scattered abroad.

Question: Who was Senator Nader Ali Khan?

Answer: That story comes here, no. It was Safi Sulto, Safi Beo. When Safi Beo became khan, his name became Safi Sulto. When did he become Safi Sulto? Because he had one son who was very agile, a very skilled rider. During the reign of Amir Sher Ali Khan in Kandahar, this Safi Sulto took ten horsemen with that son and told him to go report to Amir Sher Ali Khan that Jaghori had become independent. That report was true. He went there where there was a horse-racing program and a festival and such things. Then he became involved in that festival too. That son, who was a very good rider, went and showed his riding skill. He impressed the local Oghus greatly. They wondered who he was and where he came from. Amir Sher Ali Khan also wanted him. He wanted him, and then in his report he mentioned Safi Sulto and Jaghori's independence. After that, gifts were given and Safi Beo was told he was now Safi Sulto. From that Safi Sulto came a series of other khans: for example Nader Ali Khan, Amir Sher Ali Khan, Nader Ali Khan, Rais Abdullah Khan, then Ahmad Ali Khan, another branch, Bostan Ali Khan, Rajab Ali Khan, and Sharif Khan. All those khans descended from that Safi Sulto.

Question: So Senator Nader Ali was a descendant of Safi Sulto?

Answer: Yes, a descendant of Safi Sulto.

Question: And then he became senator, in Kabul?

Answer: Yes. Later he became a senator, but he was young then. It was long ago. The time of Qalandar and Jaghori was, God knows, maybe two centuries ago. That was in the time of Afghan rule in Kandahar. It was very long ago. Honestly, we do not know the exact history precisely.

Question: You mentioned earlier that Safi Beo's wife said his people should have whatever they wanted and not worry about food and such. In Hazara communities, who usually managed financial matters? What role did women play? For example, the man worked and brought money home, then did he manage it himself or did his wife manage it?

Answer: Honestly, women like that were rare. Rarely could a woman manage things, have a broad worldview, or have education. Very rarely would you find one. In general, it was in the hands of men. Men held almost eighty percent of the absolute authority, and maybe twenty percent was handled in consultation with the wife and the children for major matters. That was the father's role.

Question: In gatherings like weddings, the food was soup and bread. What foods did people eat in daily life?

Answer: If you ask truthfully, that bread was eaten dry and only for dinner it was soft. Otherwise, in the morning, at noon, or on long days, they would eat three times — one in the morning, one at lunch, one mid-afternoon, one late afternoon, and one at night. Mostly workers ate that, and it was dry. Only at night was it soft.

Question: Dry bread with tea, or with yogurt?

Answer: Dry bread and tea, or yogurt and buttermilk. Some people had yogurt too.

Question: What were the main handicrafts? What kinds of manual work did men and women do?

Answer: There was a lot of handicraft work. For winter, people had to wear **kero** shoes. Kero was made of wood. A carpenter made them, and some people made them at home too. My mother used to make twenty or thirty pairs in winter. She would give two or three to friends as gifts. The carpenter made them. Mostly these were for winter.

Question: What was kero made of?

Answer: Kero was made of wood. Two pieces, with a flat clean top shaped like a footbed. Then two sides were drilled, and a hole was made between the big toe and the side toe. Then strong straps were tied tightly so they would not come off. That was it. Some examples are even seen

today. It is not that exact kind, but the straps remain. That was how it was. Mostly farm tools — like the shovel, spade, sickle, and wooden leveler — were made by the people themselves, or to some extent by ironwork. Every house had things like that. People in Canada today maybe had axes, hoes, plows, knives, chisels, saws, hammers, sickles, and such things — all roughly complete, though never fully complete. Borrowing among neighbors was very common. If you needed something, you borrowed it. Borrowing is morally and religiously very good. People practiced that.

Question: My mother used to weave baskets a lot — baskets and chila.

Answer: Bless you! In our winter idle times, it was more or less the same. Some people, when they went to fetch fiber, would more or less secretly bring **tal** (bamboo) and weave baskets. Some people did not realize the owner had not given permission. They would weave the basket. That was winter work.

Question: My aunt's daughter was from Lab-e Darya, on the Sang-e-Masha river that passes below our area. She would bring tal from the riverbank, and from those peaches they would weave baskets and chila all winter.

Answer: Yes, those people from Lab-e Darya could also carry loads on donkeys.

Question: What did women do most of the time when they were not busy?

Answer: Women did a lot of work. One of their main tasks was with sheep wool. They would first wash it, clean it, and prepare it: black, white, all of it. Then they would make shawls and sacks, and a whole chain of work followed. First they would comb it, then **tisipchu** it, then **totak** it. You know totak. Then they would make **payd** and work with stone. They would make payd into one-meter pieces, and around the ring they would work it like a thread. Then stones would be processed. Those stones had a stone pipe. They would tie the thread up there and collect it. It would become this much. Then they would lift it, and it would turn into something else — it would become something like felt, finished. After that they would make a rug, and some rugs were made to weigh two seers, three seers, or five seers. Or they would make sacks. Rugs and sacks were the most common.

Question: Did they also sell?

Answer: Yes, they sold too. When wool became stone-like after processing, they would sell it too. Yes, I remember. Women did those things. They also patched the clothes that people wore, especially in winter. When clothes became torn and worn, they would mend them, and then remove the seams and knots around the neck and work on them with a machine, so they would become strong again. In short, it was a very important job. There was not a tailor in every house.

Question: While you were in Jaghori, you knew you were Hazara, and on the other side there were Pashtuns and nomads. What showed that you were Hazara? How did you show that you were Hazara?

Answer: Even though that issue was not very prominent then, what mattered was that one asserted one's identity. If you say I am Hazara, or you say I am Shia, or if you mention my district, Jaghori, then yes. It was not highly tense. There was no open tension. But I must say this: when schools started in Jaghori, intellectuals came out of the schools. These intellectuals raised these issues. Then these intellectuals and their ideas gradually turned into a political movement called Shoula-e Javid. Then fear spread among people that if my son went to school, he would become a disbeliever. People had moved away from Shoula-e Javid. Many of the people were poor. When the census people came around Tir, they were often forced to keep children out of school. Some groups from the region did this.

Question: They paid money so their children would not go to school?

Answer: Yes, they paid money so their children would not go to school. That happened for a while. Then one day a man named Rais Abdullah Khan, the first head of electricity in Afghanistan, came to Jaghori and campaigned, saying: "Study, go to school, and even if you write on your door, 'May God not forgive you,' still study." He said, "Go to school, but punish me in the beginning." He even told them to write on the door that God would not forgive him. Then a few mullahs also appeared. There were not many real religious scholars. It was the simplicity and fear of the people. Then the young people who had become school people were also radical. From the time of Shoula-e Javid to the People's and Banner parties, they could not really manage people in a way that created a proper path of service for them.

Question: What was their extremism? Who did they oppose? The mullahs?

Answer: Yes, religion, people's beliefs, scholars — even God, all the way to God! Even God!

Question: Did you do business or trade with people other than Hazaras, aside from the nomads selling livestock?

Answer: In the community, yes, there was trade. Based on that familiarity, there was one matter. Another matter was that if someone wanted to buy a cow, sheep, donkey, or anything, they would go around the villages. They would ask, “Do you have a cow? Do you have a donkey? Do you have a horse?” They would buy those things after going around one place for a night or two, or even days. Other things were also bought this way. For example, a person would come to your house and buy your wool. The shopkeeper would come and buy oil, eggs, and goods. There was a trader called **sawdagar (seller)**. His name was not Ahmad or Mahmud. He came as a trader. That trader was different. He had two guns and a bag. He would go from one village to another, from house to house.

Question: We are reaching the point where both you and your family faced special problems in Afghanistan because you were Hazara, right? Small or big, anywhere?

Answer: Yes, at times we suffered verbal abuse. Before conflicts became intense, there was a very hidden conflict within society. Hazaras had been given insulting names; I was called some of them too. If we spoke, they would call us Hazara mouse-eaters, Hazara nose-pinched, and later even **qalfak chapat** was added. These things were experienced not only by me but perhaps by every citizen.

Question: “Nose-pinched” is understandable, for people whose noses are small; “mouse-eater” maybe because Hazaras supposedly had no food and ate mice. But what did qalfak chapat mean?

Answer: That was later, during the period of the armed groups — I do not even like calling them mujahideen; they were armed groups — they said qalfak chapat. I would like to know what qalfak chapat means too.

Question: It should mean something understandable, but it is not clear.

Answer: I do not know, by God, I do not know. It is just a term they invented. Discrimination was discrimination. I will tell you one story of discrimination. We were in Kabul when news came that Jabar Khan was to be executed that day. So we gathered and went to Pashteh-ye Dih Mazang. There were many people there. I was very young. I had nothing to do and was very interested in these things; I wanted to hear the news and understand events. At that time I was very small. I went and from far away saw the execution. Jabar Khan was a man who used to take Hazaras in Kabul City and say, “Go work.” He would take them to the mountain quarry, make them carry stone, and that would be the end of it. No one would hear about it. He did this for perhaps six months, perhaps a year, perhaps five years, until it was exposed. When it was exposed, he was arrested. The government had a policy. Whether or not he was under some network, when people found out, the government arrested him. When they arrested him, he was imprisoned. Later there was noise that he had been released. He was released; he had been innocent. No one could prove anything against him, or else he was mentally unstable. If not, then his killing would be proven and he would go to the mentally ill section. At that time there was a parliament, a council. Among the Hazaras were Haji Nader Turkman and Sheikh Sharifi of Hootqol, Hootqol, Jaghori. He was a sheikh. He was in parliament. Sheikh Sharifi was the top speaker; no one in parliament could speak like him. Neither the sheikhs nor the university people could rival him. Haji Nader was also formidable. In short, during one parliamentary session, Haji Nader took that chair and struck it against another. Everyone got up — you saw a parliament fight. What is happening? What is happening? He said, “I have become mentally disturbed.” Then a number of people understood where the conversation was going. In short, there was a lot of noise in parliament, and that person had to be imprisoned again. They arrested him again. After that, I do not know how long he was detained, but then they executed him, the one I mentioned earlier. After that...

Question: What people was that man from?

Answer: He was an Awghu, a Pashtun. Yes! Then I heard, it was spread among the people, that people had gone to the shrine of Abul Fazl, where they had taken a vow meal, and then they died after returning home. What is that? What is that? It is said that Jabar Khan’s sister, after his

execution, brought poisoned halva there and gave it to the people. Only non-Hazaras were there. They ate it and died. That was one version. In short, it was discrimination.

Question: Did they poison all Hazaras collectively so they would die?

Answer: Yes, yes! In the name of Hazara, in the name of Shi'a. In fact, I myself believe that discrimination is fundamentally on religious grounds. Ethnicity is secondary. Today people emphasize ethnicity more, but ethnicity is not the main thing. The main thing is religion. In any case, there you are. I was curious at the time. There was Radio Afghanistan, and there was a loudspeaker in Zarnegar Park. There was no television, no radio for everyone. If there was some special news, we did not know. But for important news, people gathered in Zarnegar Park and listened. Some people did. I went and listened too. When I went and listened, a man was giving a very prominent and good speech. Then someone asked me, in Persian, "Do you know who this is speaking?" I said no. He said, "He is from your people." I said, "I do not know him." I was very young. I said, "I do not know him." He said, "He is a parliament member, one of your people, Mr. Sharifi." That was when I got to know Mr. Sharifi. From that day I knew him — the day Mr. Sharifi persuaded King Zahir Shah, saying, "Come and see this harsh and mountainous geography of Hazarajat; I guarantee your safe return." After a while, Zahir Shah agreed. Later there were rumors for a long time: the king is coming, the king is coming... In the end, Zahir Shah was brought to Jaghori. People had gathered on the state bridge, men and women, and they had prepared pastries and sweets and everything they knew how to prepare, because the king was coming. At that time I was small. I did not take part, because from Tapqos I could not have reached there on foot. My father had a horse and had gone. Later we heard that the king had been brought there, and there was a state bridge, and there was a small club — they called it the club. It was government property. They had hosted him there. I do not know whether they took him to the market or not. After that they had taken him through the Malistan route. The plan was to show Hazarajat to this person, so he could see that these people are poor, living between mountains and valleys, with no roads, no schools, no life, no facilities, no welfare. I do not know how much he traveled; I do not know the exact route. I think he went from Malistan to Daykandi, from Daykandi to Jaghuri and Behsud, and from there onward, because there was no transportation then. It was said that a Ford wagon had arrived. That is the story. Those issues of discrimination, poverty, and the activities of those parliament members at the time — they were

real servants. When I was little, I would go to the Wazir Akbar Khan area. I liked it there because the roads were paved and the buildings were luxurious. In front of those buildings, outside the gate, Hazara children would play; they were small. I wondered why Hazara children were around these luxury houses, wearing torn clothes, poor! That question was in my mind. Why is it like this? Why is it like this? Until I finally got to the military post and asked, “What is this? What is the reason?” They said these Hazara people are the ones who live in the corner of the yard of those houses. One room! The woman and man both work before dawn for that family. That family is a Mamedzai, a foreigner, or perhaps a minister, or a deputy, or a trader — in short, they are wealthy and own houses. These people work; the man works like a man, the woman works like a woman, and two or three people are not enough. At that time, houses were also divided among people. Then I understood that those were not the children of the owner of the house; they were the neighbors’ children. That was the story of people’s lives. In short, discrimination, poverty, injustice, and oppression were widespread.

Question: Why did you and your family leave Afghanistan, and how did you leave? If you mentioned it before, we still need it recorded.

Answer: Honestly, in the first round we escaped from the Taliban. Then NATO and the Westerners came to Kabul, and the Taliban were lost. I had sent some people, my children and grandchildren, for study, and we became two households. My son was in Pakistan then. We went back to Kabul so the children could study, and they were getting to the point of work when the Taliban came again. When the Taliban returned, that fear drove not only me but millions of people into flight. We fled, and in the end I resisted for a while, by God. Then, because of my daughter, whom I loved, I said not to let harm come to her, so I accepted her words. I accepted her words and felt danger overall. In the name of Hazara, in the name of Shi’a. Not only my daughter — she was only the first concern. Myself too, and everything else.

Question: Why was your daughter in greater danger first?

Answer: She was, so to speak, working with NGOs. Otherwise that company of theirs was not part of the NGOs of the last twenty years. It was there in Afghanistan before that too. I do not know the exact name well, but I know that among those NGOs formed during the twenty-year period, almost half were thieves. They took the money that came and stole it. They did not do

real work. This was not Oxfam; Oxfam was the old one, and it existed under the previous government too. But under the name of NGOs, for example under the national army or national police, what massacres did they commit? Even people who worked with foreigners, or studied at some American university, experienced all kinds of things.

Question: Was the journey easy? Was it easy from Afghanistan to Canada?

Answer: The journey was fine to a point, back then people could move around.

Question: Were passport and visa required or not?

Answer: Yes, they were required. And even without passport and visa, people came with just their ID cards, because the situation had changed and affected the borders. It became very crowded, very crowded. We reached Quetta.

Question: When you moved from Kabul and crossed the border to Quetta, did you also pray and believe in prayer to make the journey easier?

Answer: Of course.

Question: What does being Hazara mean today for you, here in Canada, in a multicultural society where there are people of every religion, sect, language, and nationality? What does being Hazara mean here? Do you not interact with other ethnic groups? What do you do?

Answer: From my perspective, one thing is ethnocentrism, and another is ethnic friendship. Ethnocentrism in Afghanistan caused the destruction of the people, the destruction of everyone. Actions were met with reactions. That is condemned. But ethnic friendship is not only not condemned in Islam, logic, and history — it is reasonable. It is even endorsed. Everyone has the right to their own rights. It is a matter of rights. One should love oneself, one's family, one's society, and go as far as loving one's own ethnic group and countrymen, as long as it is not chauvinism. Not in the sense that "everyone must be from us." Like the Pashtuns in Afghanistan do this: if the ministry is Hanafi, power, position, money, authority, decision-making all belong to the Pashtun, to the terrorist, and they destroy other cultures and destroy other historical monuments. That is unacceptable to anyone.

Question: What story or tradition do you hope Hazara youth in the future will preserve? For example, what would you want them to continue?

Answer: I believe this people called Hazara — especially the Shi‘a people — emerged from the basis of beliefs. This identity, whether Hazara or non-Hazara or anything else, cannot be removed from people’s minds. And ethnic friendship is not condemned either. Hazara and Hazara, Shi‘a and Shi‘a, should be like body and spirit. Any Hazara who condemns Shi‘a is not a Hazara; any Shi‘a who condemns Hazara is at fault and is not truly Shi‘a. Intelligence, management, and progress happen when you have both. We should try to create harmony and understanding between these two names and identities. Otherwise, you destroy one another. That is how I see it. Beyond Hazara Shi‘a, we also have non-Hazara Shi‘a among the Hazaras and non-Shi‘a Hazaras. If there is true understanding — scientific, informed understanding — then that is good. Unfortunately, most things today are not good. They are self-interest. They proceed on self-interest.

Question: What is your message to Hazaras, something you wish young people would preserve? If you had the chance to tell them one thing, what would it be?

Answer: My message to some Hazaras is this: if you want to elevate Hazara, not lower it, then revive it, bring it into discussion, and do not stand against its beliefs. You cannot remove these beliefs from people. These beliefs are not superstition. They are beliefs. They are not superstition. If you can truly serve people well, then you should respect their religion, their identity, their history, and their culture in the same rank. Yes, that is my message. Today those who repeat “Hazara, Hazara” in a dry, rigid way get nowhere. And those who remove religion and beliefs get nowhere either. They are neither guardians of religion nor do they bring people to prosperity. The only thing that should be preserved is identity — religious identity. Any organization that is formed, that operates abroad, that receives international aid, and claims to serve Hazaras should not separate Hazara from Shi‘a or Shi‘a from Hazara, and should not create conflict. It should try to remove conflict.

Question: What worries you, and what gives you hope about the future of the Hazara people? What are the two things you see?

Answer: What is hopeful for me, not only for Hazaras but for all the people of Afghanistan, is awareness — awareness, science, knowledge, and tolerance. Whatever you want for yourself, you should want for others too. As long as people are ignorant, as long as people are in the hands of foreigners, as long as people are projects, there is no hope except destruction, defeat, and killing. That is the worry. We are not only disappointed in Hazaras, but in 99 percent of the people of Afghanistan. Especially this group currently in power: they talk far beyond their capacity and have bitten off more than they can chew. At the same time, those who speak in the name of religion are lying. Those who speak of service are lying. Those who claim to be anti-colonial, anti-Western, and so on are lying. It is all a project.

Question: If you had a message for other Canadians, not Hazaras, what would it be? What should they understand about Hazara history and culture?

Answer: My general feeling is that people here in Canada, and elsewhere in the West, live inside a good human system, a good moral system. Their governments work for them; they act for themselves and for their own benefit. I say migrants who come among them should be like them. That is what is said today too — there should be no discrimination. There should be no discrimination. As for some government programs helping migrants, giving support here or there, I cannot say much more than that.

Question: These programs help migrants, whether they are Pashtun, Hazara, or Tajik. But maybe Hazaras are much poorer, coming with nothing at all. And they are very hardworking.

Answer: Yes, there was a time when all migrants, from Afghanistan or elsewhere, came here as migrants. The Canadian government gives extra consideration to some people who were victims of terrorism, genocide, or trauma. At least in participation, at least in the programs they want to run, some can do the work that a normal migrant who is not actually a victim of terrorism cannot do. There should be a difference. Hazaras are still subjected to ethnic discrimination, they are subjected to religious discrimination, and they are also people who have not betrayed others and have not betrayed anyone here either. Betrayal is not part of these people. We hope that both the government and the people understand this — just understand these people. Do not recognize everyone simply as Afghan. Do not recognize everyone simply as Afghan. If one Afghan is a Pashtun criminal or a Tajik criminal, a Hazara should not be blamed for that crime.

Question: Is there anything that I have not asked, something you would like to share?

Answer: No, nothing else!

Question: If something comes to mind?

Answer: Honestly, nothing special is in my mind right now. I only say that institutions like yours, if you do such work, should expand it, with trust in God and with help from the people, the people of Canada, your own Hazara people, and funding from the government. Make it bigger. If you make it bigger, your work will become bigger too, and it will spread, and the future will be good, a bright future. These things will become text, institutionalized, history — all of that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Rezaie.