

Interview with Mr. Hassan Rezaei

Interviewer: Fatima Framarz

We were very happy to have you, Mr. Rezaei. You put in a lot of effort.

Question: Let's not start too broadly. If you are comfortable, would you like your name and surname to be used, or not?

Answer: Yes.

Question: So, what is your name? What is your surname? Where were you born, and in what year?

Answer: My first name is Hassan, and my surname is Rezaei. I was born in 1972 in Ghor Province, in the district of Lal o Sarjangan.

Question: Since you were born in Ghor, what do you remember about your family history? Did you know your paternal and maternal grandparents were alive when you were born?

Answer: I do not remember my maternal grandmother, but I remember my paternal grandfather very, very faintly — actually my maternal grandfather. My paternal grandfather had also died even earlier, so I do not remember him. My family consisted of my mother, my father, my brothers, and one sister. We are six brothers and one sister. That was our family size.

Question: Do you remember any specific childhood story that was passed down to you from earlier generations? When we are children, there is usually some story we do not fully understand, and people say it came from earlier generations, or from the grandparents.

Answer: Well, I can only say one thing: my father was a storyteller and had a great many stories stored in his memory. When I was a child, my sister, who was close to me in age, and my younger brother — the three of us especially — used to insist every night that he tell us a story, and every night he had one for us. The stories he remembered had names and titles, and some of them were very long. It might take an hour or an hour and a half to finish one story. I do not know, but maybe that created a foundation in my personality later, because I became very

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interested in literature, even though I did not formally study literature. But I became very interested in it and really enjoyed literary texts. Especially in Persian, I used to read Saadi, Hafez, Mowlana, and others a lot. That kind of foundation was created in childhood.

Question: Can you describe the community you grew up in, the family you were born into? For example, what did your parents usually do? What was their main occupation? Before that, how did they know each other? How did they get married? Did they ever tell you about that?

Answer: Well, I think that after my birth and childhood I belonged to a middle-class Hazara family. My father was neither wealthy in that sense nor poor in the way some Hazara families were, who struggled with poverty and hardship. There is a term in Hazarajat for people who are better off: they are called *bai*. My father's name was Musa, and people used to call him Musa Bai. In that sense, we belonged to a middle-class Hazara family. Maybe by other standards that description would not be exact, because in my view "middle class" depends somewhat on income, living conditions, and access to life's necessities, but at least in Hazarajat it seemed that way. We were not one of those families that had very severe hardships in childhood. What is interesting is that my father had two or three special qualities. One was that although he was not literate and could not write, he could read, and he did read the books he had. He read the old books he owned a lot. His second quality was that he was a calm man. Despite the environment there, he did not beat us physically. I do not remember ever being physically punished by my father in childhood. His third quality was that he wanted change to come. He wanted change and migration. That is why he migrated and actually took us to Iran in childhood. We migrated to Iran before the 1979 revolution, and we remained there for years afterward.

Question: While you were in Afghanistan, was his work farming?

Answer: Yes, he was a peasant. He usually worked on a landlord's land. The regions of Ghor are almost like that. There is usually a landlord in a village, and the land belongs to him; the peasants rent land from that landlord under a specific agreement, cultivate it, and harvest it.

Question: Did your father and mother ever tell you how they met? How they married?

Answer: No, their marriage was traditional and arranged — a managed marriage, as we say. Of

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course, my father told me the story once or twice about how it happened with my mother. They were neighbors in the same village, and my father had actually wanted to propose to my mother's older sister, as we would say. Then that older sister told him, "No, I'm already married. My husband isn't here." He did not know she had a husband and that her husband was away from the village on a trip. She said, "My husband is away, traveling, but I can propose to my sister for you, or bring it up at home, or mediate and raise the matter at home." And that is how things moved forward, and then my father ended up marrying the younger sister.

Question: So your father was a bit of a tradition-breaker too, given that he was calm but also somewhat unconventional, because he himself..

Answer: Yes, well, my father had in fact lost his father when he was 16 years old. He lost his own father at age 16, and his father had also been relatively well-off by Hazarajat standards. But the wealth had already been lost before he inherited it, and he had no experience with it, so the wealth was gone. He had also had another unsuccessful marriage before my mother. He had another marriage that ended in separation, and then he married my mother.

Question: If you are comfortable, could you tell us the names of your family members and brothers? We usually prepare a short family tree for everyone we interview. For example: you, your father, your grandfather, and your brothers. We just need the names.

Answer: Our brothers, from oldest to youngest: my first brother is named Ghulam Sakhi, and he now lives in Italy. The second, again from older to younger, is Mohammad, who lives in Iran. The third is named Rasool. The fourth is my sister, Zainab. The fifth is me. After that comes Isa, and then Ahmad. That's it!

Question: What do you remember from everyday life in Afghanistan's society, both from your childhood and from the time you returned from Iran to work? Could you give us a picture of your childhood home? What were relationships with neighbors like?

Answer: I remember two or three childhood years in Hazarajat, and then we became migrants in Iran. The two or three years I remember, we lived in a village that was very small. It was one village with two parts — two sections; the lower village, where we lived, had only two

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households, if I remember correctly. One was my family and the other was another family with us. Our relationship with that other family was very good. It was like brother and sister. To be honest, after my mother died in that region, the woman in that house helped us children a lot — she helped our family. For a while she used to bake our bread, I remember. Our relationship with that family was very good, truly excellent. We had less contact with the upper village; relations there were very emotional. Everyone addressed each other with affectionate titles. For example, there was someone in that upper village whom we called **Khudadad Akhund**. His name was Khudadad, and he was a mullah, so we called him Khudadad Akhund. He would always call my mother “sister.” Then one day my younger brother — at that time I was still slowly understanding things — came to our house, picked up my younger brother and said, “My dear, sit with me and I’ll give you **gur**.” It was very hard to find **gur** at that time; only very respected families had **gur** to give. There was also brown sugar, so to speak. When he said that, my mother had to go to her own storeroom, where she kept **gur**, and she would crack it there. In my childhood mind I used to think, “This mullah is so clever! He says it in a way that makes my mother have to bring him gur.”

Question: So, he wanted it himself?

Answer: Yes, of course. He wanted to tell the child, “Sit on my lap and I’ll give you **gur**.” That was the kind of intimate atmosphere in those areas. It is worth making a comparison here, maybe it will also be useful for you socially. That close relationship that existed among the villagers, among Hazara people, where they addressed each other with affectionate titles and familiar names like brother, sister, uncle, aunt, and so on, did not exist outside their own community; it was much more hostile, much more severe. For example, in my childhood I remember two or three clashes between the nomads and the villagers in our area. One morning, very early, when the sun had just come up, I had gone somewhere — I do not know why, maybe to the stream to wash my face, or maybe not, I do not remember exactly. I went and saw that we had a dog, a family dog, and the nomad dogs — they were returning in the autumn, it was the month of Tir, they were on their way back — attacked our dog. In my childish panic I ran home quickly to tell my father or my older brothers that the nomad dogs had attacked our dog. In our area we called them “nomad dogs.” By the time I got home, my father and my older brother Ghulam Sakhi were

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running toward me. I told them quickly that our dog had been attacked by the nomads' dog, but they paid no attention; they just kept running in that direction. Later, as a child, I was amazed that they did not even pay attention to what I said, and did not give an appropriate reply. I was upset about it. But a fight had broken out between the nomads and the villagers. The nomads, on their way back, usually did not take sufficient care of their herds, and the herds entered people's fields. When people reacted, a fight broke out between them. So there had been a conflict between the villagers and the nomads who were returning, and rumors spread — in that confusion a rumor spread that my older brother Ghulam Sakhi, who was perhaps 18 or 19 or 20 at the time, had been shot. Because they had guns, and they were firing one shot after another. My mother was apparently sick at the time, in poor condition, and in that excitement and concern she came out of the house and fell into the stream. The women helped pull her out. But Ghulam Sakhi had not actually been shot; it was only a rumor. Later when my father talked about that day with my older brother, he said, "No, I wasn't shot;" he said a shot was fired, there was a clod of earth under our feet, and it hit that clod. When it hit the clod, the ground under my feet gave way and I fell. Then he got up again. At that time they were talking about attacking from above, because the upper side had the advantage; they were throwing stones, and the others were firing from below. My brother says, "Let's attack all at once and take the gun from them." My father said no, it wouldn't work; the distance was too great, and if we attacked to take the gun, they would fire again. In short, the clash had started in the morning and continued until noon or maybe after noon, perhaps until two or three in the afternoon; I do not remember the details exactly. But the incident was later told as a full story, and I remember some of it from that time too. The second incident happened in the same village I mentioned earlier, the one with two parts. This happened in the upper part of the village. Again, there was a conflict between nomads and settled people. The nomads and nomad shepherds had put their herd on the grassland or the cultivated land or whatever productive land it was for the people, because they collected grass and dried it for winter, and maybe they had left those gathered grasses there for their sheep. So there was a clash with a number of villagers whom they called **muzdur**. A **muzdur** in Hazara usage was someone who worked for wages. For example, they would make an agreement that in summer they would collect grass in exchange for a wage — wheat, grass, and they would even

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gather grass. So these were laborers, unlike peasants who only farmed. Peasants did the farming work — wheat and such. Laborers usually did mountain work. They went to collect grass and do things like that. Anyway, not to get too deep into the exact description, these laborers gathered five or six people and beat up two nomad shepherds. And they beat them badly. Then the nomads complained, and a government inspector came. The government too was seen by the people as being on their side, and they thought, “What are we? We are disarmed in this matter, we have no power. The government doesn’t listen to us.” People were suspicious of the government and did not trust it. Usually the officials who went to Afghanistan’s regions were corrupt too — people who were after money, bribes, and such were common. They came and made a report that was entirely one-sided. That report said that two nomad shepherds had been beaten by villagers or by settled people and injured so badly that they ended up in hospital. And that report had serious consequences for the village. If it were officially raised in Bamyan, or in the district or provincial authorities, it would have had a very heavy cost for the people of the village. But one well-known person there, whose family held the position of **dargha** — in fact his brother was the **dargha** — saw that the situation was very bad. In the middle of the houses there was a small open space. He took a stone from there and struck his own head with it. He hit his own head, fell down, and started bleeding, and people immediately reported to the officials who had come to prepare the report that our enemies had hit him, that the nomads had hit him. That incident made the pressure on them greater. In the end the matter was somehow settled. If that man had not done that, that village would have suffered very serious losses, because the nomads had the upper hand in that case. Those were two incidents that happened in my childhood, within a year or two, and everyone saw them. At most I was seven, eight, or nine years old. I do not really remember anything from before the age of five. That is roughly how it was. What I wanted to say is that in Hazarajat — in the Hazarajat that I experienced in childhood — relations among the people were emotional and good, full of solidarity. But relations with outsiders, especially the nomads who came to the region and stayed there in spring and summer and then left in autumn, were very bad, and violent clashes always happened.

Question: You said that if the **dargha’s** brother had not hit himself with a stone, what the nomads did could cost the region a lot. What kind of loss was it usually? A monetary fine?

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Prison?

Answer: First, a report was made, and the report was naturally one-sided, and the village was entirely considered guilty, which was to some extent true. That caused greater oppression against the village in the center. People did not really want to be oppressed, have their work disrupted, and have a few of them taken away and jailed for some time. And secondly, the reporting officials had an opportunity to pressure them and get more money — more bribes, so to speak, a larger amount from them. That caused the amount to be reduced. They took money from the village. They also took money from the nomads. But they did it because both sides had injuries. You were injured, they were injured. You fought, you acted wrongly, so both sides should pay the penalty.

Question: Because the nomads let their sheep graze on the crops, was there no punishment? Did Hazara people never report them? Didn't they complain?

Answer: No, that would go nowhere. Do you know why? It was because of the government policy during Daoud Khan's time. The government policy under Daoud Khan was to stop people in settled villages from cultivating in the mountains and highlands. Its argument was basically this: land beyond the stream should not be cultivated by anyone. The first reason, they said, was that those were public areas — public mountains — and public mountains were not private property. The second reason was that nomadic life is itself a form of livelihood, and that livelihood should continue alongside other livelihoods. It is one kind of livelihood, after all. What else were the nomads supposed to do? The government had this argument. So, according to that logic, public mountains were nomad grazing land and should not be cultivated. When people said that the nomads had come and put their herd, their sheep, onto our crops, they would say, "No, the crops were above the stream, and we went into the mountain areas; those were natural grazing lands. Why did you cultivate them?"

Question: But the thing is that Hazarajat is entirely mountainous. In that sense, places like Helmand, Kandahar, and Maidan Wardak are all plains.

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Answer: Well, that was the government's contradiction. Daoud Khan's government, without thinking or having a plan, if it prevented people from cultivating beyond the stream in mountainous areas, it was basically destroying people's entire livelihood. So what were they supposed to do? Without any land-distribution policy — without at least giving these people substitute agricultural land, and then telling the nomads, "Okay, now go and use your own grazing lands" — instead of doing that, they put pressure on people not to cultivate the high areas and provided no alternative. That was the vacuum in Daoud Khan's policies that people complain about. People say it was discriminatory. This discriminatory policy, so to speak, meant that you had worked hard on your field, and just as it was nearing harvest, you would come one night and let sheep graze there and destroy our year-long effort. That created conflict. Daoud Khan moved ahead with an unwise plan that made people deeply angry. It even became famous in Bamyan that the governor of Bamyan reportedly said that if nomads did not take their sheep and livestock onto the crops of Hazara people who cultivate above the stream, then he himself would go and graze as a cow. And this saying spread from mouth to mouth. It shows the kind of harsh, unwise strictness from the central government that defined no alternative. Very well — if you claim that you want to protect the land, for example, if that was the government's reason, that if we cultivate mountain areas then after a while soil erosion will mean no grass grows there anymore, or floods cannot be controlled, then fine. You want to prevent flooding and control erosion — but what about the people? These people are a population. They need a livelihood; they need bread. In the end they have to live by their traditional farming and the traditional work of that land. That was the gap in Daoud Khan's policies. On the other hand, Daoud Khan's government was based on a nationalism that thought it should become universal, answer everything, and absorb identity differences from here and there into one big identity so that, as they said, a single nation would emerge — which did not happen. With discrimination, with injustice, with wasting the labor and one-year harvest of a people working the land and then losing it all, that does not create cohesion, national unity, or a single nation. Instead, it intensifies hostility and resentment. Unfortunately, the village-settler and nomad conflict during Daoud Khan's time became a deep, festering wound for the Hazara people, who remember it badly. If there had not been the extremist policies of Daoud Khan's era, maybe today the Hazara people

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would not have this judgment that they were treated so unfairly and that their land, crops, and labor were destroyed. The labor of a whole year is wiped out. Maybe they would not have that view now.

Question: In your view, was this only a political vacuum, or did Daoud and those who followed this policy intentionally want to treat Hazaras unfairly?

Answer: It is hard to say that a ruling group deliberately pursues a discriminatory or unjust policy against a section of the country — whether from any ethnic group, tribe, or lineage — but it can certainly be said that there were policy gaps in the Kabul government, and there was the personal mindset of Daoud Khan and those around him, who were in a hurry for, so to speak, Afghanization to happen as quickly as possible, so that everyone would become one nation and no one would say, “this area is mine and that area is mine,” or “who is this from and what is this?”

Question: Everywhere for everyone?

Answer: Everywhere for everyone? Yes — with the policies they themselves adopted, which, as I said, were unjust and wrong. If Daoud Khan really wanted to say that people should not ask, “Why did you come from the south, why did you come from the north?” — fine. Nomads came from the south; nomads who mostly came from the east and south, though unfortunately there was no clearly defined border, but let us accept that they could come from anywhere. A nomad could come from the east, a nomad could come from the south into Hazarajat, and a Hazara should not say, “Why did the nomad come?” Very well — a Hazara should not say that; a Hazara should go to the east or anywhere else, and everyone else should also not say, “Why did you come?” But in practice that was not how it was; in practice that never happened. A Hazara could not simply stand up, take his wife and children, go to Khost, buy agricultural land for himself, and live there. It was impossible. That is why you cannot find a Hazara family in Khost in the last hundred years. The last hundred years were supposed to show nationalism — to show that these people are one people. If a nomad comes to Hazarajat, then a Hazara should also go to Khost. If a nomad comes to Hazarajat, then a Hazara should also go to Jalalabad, open a shop, do

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business, activate trade on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, go buy land, develop land, and no one should have the right to say, “Why did you come here from Hazarajat?” But in practice none of that happened. That shows the failure of state planning. Now you asked whether it was deliberate — whether there was intent or not. I am not so cynical as to say there was definitely deliberate intent; but I am cynical enough to say that they did not take proper care of the people’s lives and concerns. Because if these people had land, we would say land is there, but the population has grown. A family that was one person forty years ago has grown to ten people. Their children have grown up. One family has become five families, then ten. So the population is increasing. Some of them overflow into the cities. Others are forced to cultivate areas that the government thinks should not be cultivated, in order to save themselves. So what happens to policy for the people? The government had no policy. Meanwhile the plains of Helmand and Kandahar and other regions were empty.

Question: In your childhood and in the time when you worked in Afghanistan, what customs, rituals, or festivals were most important? For example, was weddings more important? Was death and burial important? How important were Nowruz, Ashura, and the two Eids for Hazara society?

Answer: In childhood, I remember that we welcomed Nowruz with special joy and enthusiasm. People usually wore new clothes, and the young people held a series of competitions; they did horse racing sometimes, and sometimes played ball games and other activities. Sometimes they danced — local dances, one of which was called **pishpo**, which some women did and some men also performed. Nowruz was celebrated with joy and excitement. As I remember, when we were children, we were very excited about Nowruz. The excitement of Nowruz in childhood was wonderful. But yes, there were also funeral and burial ceremonies, which were ordinary ceremonies but still had a lot of participation. Many people attended; the cost and expenses for people were usually high. Usually they observed the seventh day and the fortieth day after death. On the seventh day they would hold a Qur’an recitation gathering, and on the fortieth day they would hold a larger gathering, inviting everyone — acquaintances and close relatives — to mourn the deceased man or woman. As for the holidays, they observed Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. Eid al-Fitr, as I said, had a lot of excitement because everyone wanted to know whether

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the moon had been sighted or not, and how it had been seen, and by whom. Toward the end of Ramadan there was usually a lot of argument about when Eid would be and where the moon was seen and who had seen it. They also observed the Islamic Eids — Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha, during which they would usually sacrifice animals. People would sacrifice sheep. Those were the things I remember from my childhood that created feelings, excitement, and emotion in us during that childhood world. And those things were customary. People celebrated them in a very calm and, so to speak, worry-free atmosphere. Unfortunately, unlike now, there was no war and upheaval then, or at least there was much less. A special sense of peace was felt in the observance of those matters.

Question: How important were Muharram and Ashura?

Answer: Ashura is taken very seriously in Hazarajat, and I witnessed that in my childhood. Usually people mourn until the 10th and 11th day, and on the 11th there is apparently a **alam kashi** procession, and the young people beat their chests and recite mourning poems. Muharram was taken very, very seriously. Usually for ten or eleven days of Ashura, all the way to the last day, there is food called *nazri* — Muharram offerings. When we were children, we were very happy because there was food we liked: meat, rice, and different kinds of dishes prepared for the nights of Muharram. There was plenty of it, and in our childish world we were happy that these things existed. Muharram is taken very seriously in Hazarajat, and I witnessed it in my childhood.

Question: Was the *nazri* prepared by the mosque, or by families? For example, not every family is at the same financial level. One family can make rice, another cannot. What did they do in that case?

Answer: I think there were two aspects: some of it was compulsory, and some of it was voluntary. First they allowed volunteers to say which night they would cover and what they would make. For example, two or three families would get together and say, “This night is ours; we will sponsor it.” Then they would prepare rice, meat, or whatever they could. If that did not work, then in a larger meeting — I do not remember exactly how the meeting worked because I was still very young — later, as I heard it, a larger session would be held at the mosque or at the

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village pulpit, and people would gather and decide how Muharram should be organized. If they realized that volunteering was not enough, they would say, “This house, that house, and that other house should do it together,” or “This family should take this turn.” That is how the division was made. In any case, whether voluntarily or in a kind of mandatory way, they held the commemorations.

Question: I also spent my childhood until age 18 in Jaghori. In Jaghori, people were supposed to keep a reserve for Muharram — for example, a sheep, a goat, something kept aside for Muharram. For those who did not have that, there was something called *nan bote*, which was common; yogurt, oil, and bread. No one would ever say, “I do not have it.” Even if they did not have it, they would arrange it somehow, with debt or something. I do not know exactly how it worked.

Answer: One thing I remember, I should add, is that people in Hazarajat are very religious. Religion has a very deep influence in families. There were families — for example, in the same village where our family lived, there were two families in a small village — who had *waqfi* livestock or *waqfi* sheep. They could not even pronounce *waqfi* properly and would say *wakhmi*. The *wakhmi* or *waqfi* animals were like this: a senior family member, on their deathbed, would make a will that they had dedicated a certain number of their sheep for a cause — for example, for Ashura. Every year, one of those sheep had to be slaughtered on Ashura, or for whatever occasion it had been assigned to. I remember that my family would say that all of those animals were *waqfi* or *wakhmi*, meaning that an elder had said, “These sheep are for this purpose.” Then they were free to use them. Every year they would slaughter one of those sheep kept as a kind of reserve for Ashura, and they did not feel any shortage. That kind of arrangement existed in some families.

Question: Were there other special family or social rituals that marked important life stages? For example, something for children? Something for young people and middle-aged people? Did such things exist, or was everything shared by everyone?

Answer: No, well, you know, what I remember is that during my childhood, school was becoming more widespread in the Hazarajat where we lived. Ghor, for example, is more remote

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than many other parts of Hazarajat. School was becoming more common, but alongside it there was the traditional *maktabkhana* — a mullah gathering children in a mosque, pulpit area, or anywhere else and teaching them reading, Qur'an, and such things. As children, if they went to school, it was usually because they had to. Families were not really in favor of children going to school. If they did not go to school, then families would put the children in those *maktabkhana* places instead. I myself went to *maktabkhana* for two years as a child, where we learned the Qur'an and then read from books like Hafez under the mullah. There was such a program for children. But for adults, they planned things themselves; there was no organized long-term planning in advance, at least not in our areas, or I do not remember one. The only important structure for adults was the agricultural season. When it was work season — spring and summer, spring for planting, summer and late summer for harvesting through autumn — and also the gathering of fodder and plants, those were the busy months, five or six months when no one had time for anything else beyond the routine work. Winter was the season of inactivity in Hazarajat. The only small task was that if snow came, people would clear the snow and take care of their animals — feed them, give them water — and the rest of the time the young people were idle. In more recent years, young people increasingly went to the cities, large cities, or migrated to Iran for work and labor. But if that did not happen, the young people would spend more time in leisure and entertainment such as various games, like **ganzhul-bazi** and other games they made up for themselves. They passed their free time with those things. But there was no special program that I could say existed for adults, at least not in our region, or I do not remember one. There was one for children: either school or *maktabkhana*.

Question: Do you remember any stories, songs, proverbs, or sayings from your parents or grandparents that you could share with us?

Answer: The stories — my father was a storyteller. He told many stories, and I remember them. I usually remember at least their titles. But songs and proverbs, no, not really. I did not see my grandparents. Only my maternal grandfather, as I said, I remember to some extent, and I do not remember any special proverb from him either. But I remember my father's stories very, very well. Religious stories and non-religious stories. If you want, I can mention the titles of two or three of them and explain them briefly?

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Question: Yes, one that is especially expressive of Hazara identity, if there is one.

Answer: One story he used to tell us was called **Jawsar Palawo**. It was about a person who, when he was born and came out of his mother's body, had a grain of barley on his head. He grows very strong and eventually becomes a hero, defeating everyone. When Jawsar Palawo grows up and becomes a young man, his mother realizes, "I cannot keep him here, because every day he is breaking other children's heads in the alley. I am worried about him." So she prepares food for him — a packed loaf of bread — ties it to his back, and says, "Go, my child, and chase your destiny." Then the child goes. On the way he meets three people: one who is uprooting forests by the roots and says, "I am tired from the strength I have." Then Jawsar Palawo says, "Leave that man of the forest alone; come, let us wrestle. If I become stronger, you will be my servant, and if you become stronger, I will be your servant. That is the rule: whoever becomes stronger makes the other person serve." So Jawsar Palawo immediately throws him to the ground, and he becomes his servant. He goes on and meets another person standing by a flood, with the flood raging and roaring, who says, "I am exhausted by my own strength." He tells him the same thing — "Come, let us wrestle" — and that one also becomes his servant. Then he meets a third person rolling and lifting huge stones, who says, "I am exhausted by my strength." He too follows the same pattern. In the end, Jawsar Palawo falls under the power of some kind of magic, sorcery, or whatever it is, and is captured by a sorcerer who is only one span tall but has a beard forty spans long. As my father would say, "He is one span tall and his beard is forty spans long." That one-span sorcerer drags him behind him whenever he wants, and Jawsar Palawo falls into an underworld, an unknown world through a hole, a well, or an opening. Then all kinds of adventures happen in that unknown world, and eventually he escapes. That was a story that could take an hour or an hour and a half for him to tell us. He also told many religious stories. My father had a book called *al-Mu'jizat*, a book about the miracles of the Imams and the Fourteen Infallibles. It contained many different stories, including how a person named Qanbar, the servant of Ali, became Muslim, how the Battle of Khaybar happened, how Ali took part in those battles, and how the battle with Amr ibn Abd Wudd happened. In those stories there was even the Bamiyan story, although my father did not tell it to us in full; it exists and is very extensive, and the story of Bamiyan and the Muslim conversion of the people of Bamiyan were, I do not

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know how, linked to Imam Ali in a legendary way. Those were the kinds of stories we heard in childhood, and most of them were told to us by my father.

Question: Was there also a story about Band-e Amir, that Imam Ali came and threw his sword?

Answer: Yes, that story is actually a general story that my father told us and others would also add to. It formed a mental picture in my childhood, and later it was completed. My father told it like this: a beggar came to Imam Ali in Medina and said, “Help me with something.” Imam Ali said, “I do not have anything right now, but I have a solution for you.” The beggar asks, “What solution?” He says, “There is a king in a place who is not Muslim; take me and sell me to him under the name Qashmsham, and use the money to solve your problem.” The beggar agrees, and Imam Ali miraculously asks for a cloud. The cloud comes, he rides it, and takes him to a specific place. Through this miracle he brings that man to Hazarajat, to the Bamiyan region where the king of the infidels rules. The beggar goes and tells the king, “I have a servant who can solve your problems, he is very strong and a hero, a swordsman, and I am selling him because I need to.” The king asks, “What is this slave’s name?” He says, “Qashmsham.” The king says, “I have three conditions. If Qashmsham can do these, I will buy him at any price you want.” He asks, “What are they?” One is that he must build a dam so that the Balkh river, where his son ruled, will not flood the land every year. The second is that he must kill the dragon in those regions. The third is that he must bring Ali to him with his hands tied, because Ali is his enemy. The beggar says he can do all three — these are easy tasks for my slave, he is a very great hero. The king asks, “How much do you want?” He says, “I want gold equal to his weight.” Imam Ali, being so heavy, of course brings as much gold as he can, but it still is not enough to equal his weight. In the end he says, “Fine, give me the weight of one of his feet in gold, that will be enough.” The beggar takes the gold and hands Imam Ali over to the king of the infidels. The king says, “Go — your first duty is to build the dam.” Imam Ali goes to the dam and sees people working to block it, but they cannot do it. Imam Ali draws Zulfiqar from its sheath and tells the people, “Move aside, go sit in a corner so you do not get hurt.” There is a mountain in that region; he strikes the mountain with Zulfiqar and blocks the dam. The water dries up, people cheer, they get excited, and then they inform the king that your new slave has blocked the dam and we are relieved. Then the story continues: “Where is the dragon?” Then the story goes on

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about how Imam Ali introduces himself as Ali, how he captures and binds it again, and how he converts the king of the infidels to Islam through his miraculous power and strength. That is how the story continues.

Question: What foods, handicrafts, or important activities were part of the everyday life of Hazara people in that time?

Answer: Food in Hazarajat is very interesting. Most food combinations are made from flour and dough — like various kinds of halva. We have red halva, white halva, *liti* halva, and *talkhan* halva. I do not know what else... there are many kinds of halva. Some have special names, and some may not even count as separate categories of halva. But red halva and white halva are part of that family. White halva was so important in the Hazarajat I experienced that seasonal laborers, who are called *muzdur*, would make it part of their contract with employers: for example, one night or two nights a week they had to give them halva — meaning white halva. Not red halva. Red halva is much harder to make and much more labor-intensive. They ate the white halva happily; it had lots of oil. That halva was so beloved that if, for example, they were promised halva and instead were given meat and rice, they would not accept it. If they were promised halva and instead were given soup, they would not accept it. They would argue and get upset, saying, “Our contract is this, and you did not honor the contract.” That was for food. Another dish that was very ceremonial and refined, and usually given to very respected people or to a family that had a bride and groom, was **nan malida**. In the local language people say *nan malida* — bread mixed with oil. They take wheat bread, break it up, like bread in broth, then mix it with clarified butter and stir it until the oil is fully absorbed into the bread’s texture. That clarified butter absorbed into the bread makes it very delicious, almost like cake. It is usually a fancy dish, given to respected people. Other foods were those made from dairy, yogurt, and such — like *qoroti*, bread with yogurt, or milk-and-oil dishes. Or they were made from flour, bread, and dough, like the various kinds of halva, bread, and *nan bote* that you mentioned is customary in Jaghori. It is not a custom in our place, though. We do not even know what *nan bote* is. But there it is customary. Usually food is based on those combinations. As for handicrafts, clothing — especially women’s clothing — was something women worked on a lot when we were children. For example, women who sewed dresses would try to include various kinds of

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embroidery. Then on those dresses they would sew a kind of coin-shaped decoration; in Hazara language at that time we called it *balgag* or something like that. They would sew them in rows on the collar of the dress and in other places, neatly arranged. And if not *balgag*, then above that they would use silver coins — coins they called *qajari*, relics from the Qajar period — and sew them onto the dresses in a specific row and arrangement. That decorated women's clothes very beautifully. They made all kinds of hats for both men and women, hats with special threads passed through layers of cloth, and they decorated them with special pom-poms. They also made a kind of handbag or item called *tabraq*. Women would make those too. Sometimes men used them for work or when they went out to work or farm. In any case, those were things that were mostly for women, and they were related to embroidery and handicrafts done by women.

Question: What about carpets, sacks, and so on? Rugs?

Answer: Yes! Not carpets, no. I do not remember that people in the Hazarajat I knew wove carpets, but they did weave **gilim**. My own family wove gilim; I remember that. There was another thing called **masheh**, made from sheep wool. **Masheh** or **bark** was used for making coats, trousers, and vests for men, and some tailors made them very elaborately and stylishly. It is very warm, yes, *bark* is warm. Weaving **masheh** or bark was also famous in Hazarajat. Even in the stories I mentioned earlier, the ones my father told us, there were stories about **masheh** weaving and bark weaving; in many of his stories one of the women's occupations was precisely mashio weaving.

Question: I do not know whether you remember the answer from the previous time, but maybe you can use the period when you lived in Afghanistan. How did the Hazara community express its identity? How did they show others that they were Hazara?

Answer: In my childhood, the Hazara community called itself Hazara and expressed itself through a Hazara identity, but the difference was that this identity was understood with a religious coloring, meaning as Shi'a. I think that back then when people said, "We are Hazara," they meant, "We are Shi'a Muslims." In Hazarajat they identified themselves in that way. The issue is that Hazara as an ethnicity was less prominent than Hazara as a religious identity. But later, after I studied and went to Afghanistan and Kabul, I realized that people's understanding of

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identity had changed a lot. Now people understood Hazara as an ethnicity, not as a religion.

Because for example, there are some Shi'as who say, "We are not Hazara," and Hazaras also say of them, "They are not Hazara." But they are Shi'a, like the Shi'as of Kandahar, like the Shi'as of Herat. Some other minorities, like the Baluch and others, and the Qizilbash, did not define themselves as Hazara ethnically. But in the Hazarajat of my childhood the matter was different. I think that people who called themselves Hazara meant that they were Shi'a Muslims.

Question: They prayed with their hands open.

Answer: Yes, they prayed with their hands open, loved Imam Ali, and things like that. It did not mean that they were referring to an ethnicity.

There was an identity shift, a **shift** in identity, from the childhood period we experienced to the later period, when political struggles had emerged and media had arrived and people had gained education and literacy. Now they define their identity differently.

Question: You said you lived in a small village, with only two or three families, and they had close relationships. How much did that closeness extend to other Hazara communities? What did you share with others outside the village? Was Muharram shared? Were funeral and burial ceremonies open to outsiders? How much of this was celebrated within the same village, and how much was shared with others?

Answer: I do not remember, during Ashura ceremonies, that in those two or three years people had left that village and gone to another village for chest-beating, mourning, and lamentation. Or that people from other villages came there — I do not remember that. The mourning stayed within the village. But ceremonies like funerals, burial, and weddings were fully regional. That is, when a death occurred, people in a wide surrounding area would hear about it; they would be informed, invited, sent letters, or notified in some way so they could attend. And when a wedding happened, it had the same regional character. It could include several villages — maybe 20 or 30 villages or even more. It depended on the family's reputation and wealth, and other factors too. A famous family might involve an entire district in the invitation. A less famous family would settle for a few villages. But in any case, it went beyond their own village. However, I do not remember Ashura going beyond the village. Mourning ended in that same village.

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Question: Did you or your family, as Hazara people in Afghanistan, ever face specific problems or hardships that made you think, “I have these problems because I am Hazara”?

Answer: Look, in childhood I do not remember problems being created, because at that time we only came to Kabul and migrated. Certainly there were problems, and older family members sometimes remembered them. But in the later period, after I finished my studies and returned to Kabul for the first time in 2003, and then went to Bamiyan and worked at Bamiyan University, I was in a situation of literacy and education and could not be openly discriminated against. Still, I felt there was a cultural distance. How should I put it? Other communities sometimes looked at Hazaras with sympathy, sometimes with pity, sometimes they did not trust them, and sometimes they simply ignored them. What was interesting was that when I went to Kabul, I told a friend that Hazaras had lived in such social isolation, had such an experience of social isolation, that now there is not even a joke in Kabul against Hazaras — nobody comes and tells a joke like, “A Hazara is like this.” A joke about them. I felt there was a kind of silence, and that silence about the Hazara community seemed heavier than anything. Of course, a lot had changed too: social and political struggles had happened, wars had happened, ethnic clashes had happened — everything had happened. Because of those events, fewer people dared openly to show anti-Hazara attitudes, at least not in front of us as educated people. But in the deeper layers of society there was a mixture of pity, neglect, forgetting, indifference, and all of that. I felt all of that existed. For example, when I was first working in Kabul after Bamiyan, I was at the Ministry of Justice. Even though our colleagues respected us, and later I became very good friends with some of them, that distance still bothered me — I seemed different, in my own eyes and in the eyes of others, and that sense of difference was painful to me. Society did not have the capacity to try to eliminate that feeling of difference. Let me give you an example: Mr. Ramadan Bashardost was very popular among other ethnic groups. Usually his support in parliament was not purely Hazara support; it was not ethnic support, but support from all people. Hazaras voted for him, and non-Hazaras voted for him too — whoever agreed with his ideas voted for him, and people were very happy about it. But when Bashardost ran in the presidential election, his vote share was extremely low. Very low. That means the popularity he had — if that heavy silence in society that I just mentioned did not exist, the silence where others stop themselves and do not

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speak well or badly — if that did not exist, Bashardost should have received a high vote.

Because he had already sufficiently energized people politically and drawn people toward himself; he had created attraction, enough for people to think, “This is a worthy person.” So why did he get such a low vote in the presidential election? The reason is the silence of others, the silence of non-Hazara people, when it comes to whether a Hazara deserves to be president or not. That silence works against them. It stops them from going any further and says, in effect, “That parliamentary vote we gave you was enough.” So in the later stage, when I went to Afghanistan with open eyes and worked there, and had good colleagues from different communities, I realized this was the issue: Hazaras are still not a society that can fully mix with others and be accepted as such by others. There are moments when the difference becomes visible, like in the Bashardost example I mentioned. Then it becomes more prominent: “No, that’s enough. You do not need to become president.” That was the feeling I had. In Kabul that feeling existed, but I did not directly experience blatant injustice or discrimination in a direct, firsthand way.

Question: This time, what were your family’s biggest worries, especially instead of going back to Afghanistan, since you took the long road to Canada? How much fear was there of the Taliban? Was there fear that you would end up stuck in Iran again?

Answer: When I went back to Iran in 2021 after about 18 or 19 years of working in Afghanistan, the fear of the Taliban was extremely high at that time. Honestly, we could see no way of going to Afghanistan. My fear and my family’s fear were extremely high; everyone was afraid.

Question: Where did that fear come from for you? Was it only because of working with the previous government, or did being Hazara add to it?

Answer: Yes, yes! Being Hazara was also an added reason, because it was clear that there were groups among the Taliban — maybe their leaders were not that extremist — but there are extremist groups within the Taliban who, if you said, “Are you ready to kill a Hazara?” would easily say yes and feel no guilt or conscience about it. During the 17, 18, 19 years I worked in Afghanistan, we saw this kind of behavior, and to some extent it had been normalized within extremist and fundamentalist groups. In areas where Hazaras were present, they were exposed to much greater danger than other people. Of course, if they caught other people, it was not as if

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they treated them nicely — the Taliban were a criminal terrorist group that mistreated everyone — but at least toward non-Hazara people they would say, “What reason do we have to kill this person?” They looked for some minimum justification. For a Hazara, that was not really a question for them; whether they could find a reason or not, this existed in reality and created fear for every Hazara. After I left Afghanistan in 2021, returning to Afghanistan was impossible for the reasons I mentioned. The fear and terror that had been created made it impossible. Staying in Iran in a long migration process had also become impossible. I studied in Iran, lived there for twenty-some years, but I had no official or legal base there.

Question: Your children were also born there, presumably?

Answer: All of my children, including my wife, were born in Iran. My wife was also born in Iran. Sometimes we joked and said, “We three are Iranian, and Dad is Afghan,” when they were children. I was born in Afghanistan, but I lived 27 years of my youth and adolescence — from childhood through youth — in Iran, studied there, and got an education there, yet I had no clear legal or official status. When I went to Afghanistan, I had a migration card; that was canceled. I was considered undocumented, and my children’s residence documents had to be renewed every year, which became very tiring and difficult for us. In the end, we were forced into another migration. The hardships were of course real.

Question: Could you explain briefly? Because this process of entering Canada matters a bit to me.

Answer: Well, we got Brazilian visas in Tehran; Brazil was giving humanitarian visas. We got Brazilian visas. Then we stayed in Brazil for four months. After Brazil, we went toward the United States, North America, Mexico. Eventually we went to the United States, and from there, because our sister was a Canadian citizen, it was arranged according to Canadian law that we would enter through the border, and we entered Canada through the Peace Bridge.

Question: During that long journey from Afghanistan to Iran to Brazil and then to Canada, was there one especially memorable thing that stayed with you? Or when you entered Canada, what did the feeling of inner security feel like?

Answer: Despite the migration problems and the route and all that, the worries and problems we

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experienced again in Iran were no less than the problems on the route. Unfortunately, in Iran they treat Afghan migrants very badly, especially those with Hazara features. We had a lot of trouble leaving Iran. For example, one day I went to the Afghan Council, a place set up by the Ministry of Interior; it is officially called the Afghan Migrants Coordination Council, but people shorten it to the Afghan Council. I contacted them because I was following up on our departure process from Iran; we had applied to leave because we were going to leave Iran. I asked the responsible person a question because I had not understood the explanation he gave. When I asked again, he got very angry. He got angry, and since I had lived in Afghanistan and, for the last 18 years, it was strange to me that an administrative official would get angry over a question, I reacted and said, “Why are you getting angry now? I did not say anything bad — why are you angry?” He cut the phone. After about an hour he called back and said, “Go, your work is done; report to such-and-such place.” Also in Tehran, when we arrived, we had to hand in our cards; they gave us a letter, in my view, so that we could reach the airport and leave the airport area. We handed in the temporary migration card we had. My daughter was not allowed in at the administrative entrance because she was wearing clothes that they did not consider sufficiently modest and they were strict that she must have a chador. We were delayed a lot, and they said some harsh things too, like, “In your own country, can you walk around like this, the way you walk here?” In any case, we were bothered there too. What I mean is that the short time it took us to get our exit documents from Iran — so we could leave Iran — was as stressful as the entire route. Still, the route we came on was a migration route; it had its own problems, and those problems are understandable. We are migrants; according to international conventions, we were forced into migration, and of course it has difficulties. Not having legal status, not being able to handle many official matters, that was understandable. But we had lived in Iran for a long time. We had a background there, a very clear background showing that we had lived there for several years. Instead of making things easier so we could leave more comfortably, it caused a lot of stress and worry. In any case, that ended and we left. The problems on the route were not problems created by a government or a specific group. They were the natural problems of a migration route. We did not encounter any special moral problems.

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Question: On that difficult route you had, was there any tradition, prayer, belief, or experience that helped you make the long journey to Canada?

Answer: Well, this is a route that mostly migrants from the region take. I mean migrants from South and Central America go to North America, right? They usually know the routes and understand the language. If you are among them in their caravan, it actually goes reasonably well. For example, in Mexico, exhaustion from the road and the condition of being constantly on the move caused me to suddenly collapse in one place. I fell to the ground. Because we had been on the road and in boats day and night, Spanish-speaking people from different countries immediately arranged a taxi to take us to a place. That taxi took us to a central place for migrants — a migrant registration center — and got us there. There, a police officer at the registration center helped us go to the hospital and get some medicine and continue treatment. We did not see anything especially bad or unjust there.

Question: If we come to today, what does being Hazara mean to you in a multicultural Canadian society?

Answer: In a society like Canada's multicultural society, which accepts and fully encourages multiculturalism and pluralism, there is no worry about, for example, me saying what my ethnicity is and what problem I might face. I do not face a specific problem. So being Hazara here is just as defensible and honorable as being from anywhere else, and it is accepted. Diversity and plurality have been dealt with in such societies. But in societies like Afghanistan or Iran, unfortunately, because they have not been able to resolve plurality or accept diversity, being Hazara itself creates psychological consequences. This has happened in Afghanistan and in Iran. In Iran, for example, an Iranian sees a Hazara as "Afghani" and projects onto Hazaras all the mental stereotypes and negative judgments he has about being Afghan; he identifies Hazaras as Afghan and usually does not distinguish between them, and because they have anti-Afghan stereotypes, they use all those stereotypes in their judgments against Hazara people. Other people in Afghanistan usually do not distinguish much either. For example, I have a memory: the first time we went to register ourselves at Iran's immigration office, so they could issue us identity cards, it was after the Iranian Revolution, I think in 1979 or 1980. We were standing in line with another friend of ours, who was not Hazara. He was Afghan but not Hazara, from another

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Afghan group. The official came and, in his own accent — his Mashhadi accent — said, “We are not giving it to you; why are you standing here?” Our fellow countryman asked, “Why are you not giving it?” They argued, and he left. An hour later he came back and again the same official told him, “I did not say I would not give it to you; why are you standing here?” Our fellow countryman said, “We are not Iranian,” and the official would not believe him. Whatever he said — “I am not Iranian, I am Afghan” — the official said, “That is strange; you are not Iranian?” He did not believe it. This had caused the burden of being “Afghan” — culturally speaking in Iran — to fall on Hazaras too, and that pressure really did come onto them. Now I, and my children too — who lived there from adolescence onward, from age ten or eleven, and went to school and university there — are dealing with the psychological consequences of this kind of treatment. I think all people like us are dealing with the psychological consequences of this kind of discriminatory treatment. Because when you live in a country where you do not enjoy equal rights and a halo of weakness and fear is drawn around you — for example, Afghan-ness in Iran, or Hazara-ness in Afghanistan — that creates a particular psychology. Unfortunately, it affects people. I am sorry that this happened to the Hazara people in Iran and, farther back in Afghanistan as well, and that the psychology of these people has been damaged and disturbed. This psychological pressure — “you are not acceptable, you are rejected, you are not accepted, you have no rights, you are in a lower and inferior stage” — inevitably has destructive psychological effects. I even witnessed being asked two or three times how I could speak Persian so well. I would say, “Well, our language is Persian.” The first time I encountered this was in the year I took the university entrance exam.

Question: For Hazara youth in Canada, who are children now and will gradually grow up, what Hazara traditions would you like them to preserve?

Answer: Honestly, I am in favor of integration in any society. Look, we have our own ethnicity, and we live with that ethnicity; sometimes we are proud of it, sometimes not. But the important thing is that we also live in a larger society that has its own values and ways of life. First and foremost, I think Hazara youth should take integration with the host society seriously. The idea of separation — thinking, for example, “we are different” — is meaningless and has no justification in a free society like Canada for separating ourselves from the larger Canadian

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society because of cultural differences. Cultural difference does not mean separation or isolation. If we live in an oppressive society, we say, yes, you must insist on your own aspects so that you can resist oppression. But in a free society like Canada, there is no need for us to overemphasize our local values or make them overly prominent. Rather, we must fully respect the values of the host society and the society in which we live, of which we are members and citizens — naturally, everyone becomes a Canadian citizen after a while. That does not mean we should ignore the broader universal framework. We also have human and universal values. Human and universal values tell us not to forget our past either. We come from a background, from a society, from a country where some of our fellow believers, fellow community members, and ethnic kin are caught in the negative consequences of ethnic issues, fanaticism, and various forms of discrimination. We must not forget that we come from that society, and those universal values that help us must also help them. Therefore, within universal values, even if we are in Canada, America, or Europe, we can and should fully defend the human rights of the people to whom we belong and from whose background we came. And these free societies have opened the door for us. So the situation is this: as Hazara Canadians, we should respect integration with Canadian society and become part of it, because we are Canadian citizens. At the same time, as people who come from an unfortunate background, we can continue our human struggles for human rights and ideals, and we can help those who have been left behind so that they can enjoy human and universal values too. Women's rights in Afghanistan, especially under the current regime, are very important. We must not, at least as men, forget that there is very serious and inhumane and unnational pressure on women in Afghanistan. Pressure on minorities is very serious too. These days you can see that our Ismaili minority is under very serious pressure, and some fanatics want to forcefully “re-convert” them. There is pressure on Shi'a Hazaras because of the background of the rulers, who see themselves as belonging to a particular ideology and loyal to a specific religious ideology. We must not accept this pressure. We must first defend women's rights, then minority rights, and the cultural rights of people — and this does not concern Hazaras alone. All those who have lived within the Afghan social background, who come from that background, or who live in that country, have the right and the duty to fight discrimination in all its forms. Hazaras are no exception, and Hazara youth are no exception. They must fundamentally do two

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things: be active members of Canadian society and also want universal values for their country and place of origin, and even fight for them.

Question: The next question I wanted to ask was about your children, grandchildren, and the next generation in general — what is your message for them, those in Canada? I think it is something along the lines of what you already said. But if there is something else?

Answer: Yes, exactly. Look, every generation has its own needs, ideals, and aspirations, and no one has the right to impose their own ideals or those of their generation on another generation beyond that generation's own aspirations and values. It is each generation's right to determine for itself how it should live. But as far as Hazara people are concerned — people who come from a certain background and live in a free world — they must seriously keep these two points in mind: first, the host society should benefit from their potential, capacity, and skills, and in return they should make proper use of the host society; second, the universal moral values to which they are committed should also be taken into account. The combination of these two makes the Hazara Canadian: someone who does not forget his background because of a bad background, and who tries to help his own people who have been left behind so that they can have a more humane life.

Question: What is your message for other Canadians? What is important for them to know about Hazara history and culture?

Answer: Fortunately, countries like Canada try to understand. In the short time I have been in Canada, I have realized that people in Canada have made great efforts to understand properly. First, it was based on this proper understanding that they said, "Very well, if you are a Hazara immigrant, we understand what situation you had, what background you had." This kind of distinction does not happen in non-free countries. For example, in Iran — and I have migration experience in Iran — this distinction was never made; on the contrary, they treat people with a bitter background even worse. Fortunately, Canada and a society like Canada, which is open and free, have a better understanding of the social experiences of different peoples. We saw and continue to see campaigns against the genocide of Hazaras, and even members of the Canadian parliament helped make that voice heard more clearly. The seriousness and sensitivity of this

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issue by the Canadian parliament and high-ranking Canadian officials is commendable and worthy of praise. Because we understand how much happiness, joy, and relief comes to people when they are properly understood, rather than being misunderstood and perhaps oppressed in some way. It is fortunate that Canada is on this path and is trying to develop a proper understanding of Hazara society. I think Canada can, as a free society, become one of the best and strongest free societies in North America and in the world in taking practical steps to support oppressed people. It can even allocate funding for research on groups with such backgrounds. That would allow it to acquire useful scientific knowledge and use that knowledge for effective policy-making. Canada has very strong capacities to do more in these areas, and I am certain that, given the path it is taking and the understanding it has already shown, in the coming years we will certainly see those capacities develop, and Canada will eventually even allocate funding for research projects on Hazaras and Hazara issues in Afghanistan. Women's issues in Afghanistan are extremely important. Canada can act very effectively in this area. Women are among the most oppressed groups in Afghan society today, and we must not allow that oppression to continue. To whatever extent we can reduce the oppression of women in Afghanistan, to that same extent we are helping human rights. One step we take is one step for human rights; two steps we take is two steps for human rights. Therefore, both Canada and all Afghan men should know that saving women from today's oppression is in fact saving Afghan society from oppression — the entire society. So help the minorities, help the women, help the Hazaras. You are societies whose mission is, in a sense, humanitarian. And that humanitarian mission can help you in other areas too, even in economic and social areas.

Question: Very good. Is there anything you want to share that I did not ask?

Answer: I think one point can be added that also relates to Canada: integration, especially the integration of Muslims, should be taken seriously by Canada in its society, and ways should be found for integration — from scientific research to various social, psychological, and other consultations, and the necessary social empowerment and re-socialization — so that the Muslim community, which comes from a different culture, can develop a proper understanding of Canada. It is very important that Muslim communities understand their environment correctly. Unfortunately, because of experiences of oppression and various forms of freedom being taken

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away, as well as discrimination, injustice, and social isolation, Muslim communities have a particular psychological condition, and they need healing through some form of re-socialization. The situation of conflict and violence in many Islamic countries has disturbed people's mental state, and this psychological disturbance can sometimes produce negative results in developed countries too. But if they are helped through integration programs, they will fit into society better and understand the values of that society correctly. Correctly understanding the values of the host society — Canada especially, since we are talking about it — will bring great social, political, and economic benefits to Canada. I understand this because I studied sociology; I know integration has weaknesses.

Thank you!

Hazaragi / Hazara-leaning terms and phrases

- سوال / جواب — question / answer.
- هزارهجات — Hazarajat, Hazara homeland.
- محرم — Muharram.
- عاشورا — Ashura.
- نذری — devotional offering food.
- علمکشی — ceremonial banner procession.
- سینهزنی — chest-beating.
- نوحهخوانی — mourning lament recitation.
- نذر — vow offering.
- وقفی / وختی — waqf, endowed / dedicated.
- نان بوته — a customary food in some Hazara/Jaghori areas.
- مکتبخانه — traditional village school.
- ملا — religious teacher.
- گنجولبازی — local game.
- پیشپو — local dance.
- جوسر پالوو — folkloric hero/story name.
- پالوان — wrestler / strongman.
- گُر — local food item or sweet reserve.
- آخند — religious title.
- قریش — span/folk measure.
- قشمشم — story character name.
- المعجزات — religious story book title.
- وطندار — fellow countryman.
- خوشال — happy.
- مردگی — funeral/death ceremony.
- کفن و دفن — burial rites.
- دست باز نماز — praying with open hands.
- شیعه — Shi'a identity, in the older Hazara self-understanding.

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- هزاره‌گی — Hazara identity / Hazara-ness.
- کوچی — nomads.
- دهنشین — settled villager.
- دارغه — village agent/administrator.
- مزدور — wage laborer.
- علفچر — grazing land / pasture.
- دست بالا — upper side / tactical advantage.
- اوغو — nomad-related local label in speech.
- پاسواد / سواد — literate / literacy.
- قزلباش — Qizilbash.
- خاوری — Khavari, a self-label used by some Hazaras in Iran.
- دست بسته نماز — praying with folded hands.
- بچه — child, common in oral speech.
- بند — dam.
- ذولفقار — Zulfiqar, Ali's sword, in the story.
- قروت / قروتی — dried yogurt food.
- نان مالیده — bread mixed with butter/oil.
- روغن زرد — clarified butter.
- حلوائ سرخ / حلوائ سفید / حلوائ لیتی / حلوائ تلخان — traditional sweets.
- برک — thick wool cloth.
- ماشیو — wool cloth.
- بلگگ — coin-like dress ornament.
- قجری — Qajar-style coins.
- تبرق — local handbag/item.
- جوال — sack.
- بروی — go, in local oral form.
- تکسی — taxi, used in local mixed speech.
- شورای افغانه — Afghan migrants council, local shorthand.
- چه دلیلی ما داریم — a local oral phrasing meaning “what reason do we have.”

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- فزیک هزارگی — Hazara physical features.
- چادر — chador.
- مدرک اقامتی — residence document, in migrant speech.
- **integration** — English loanword used in local sociological speech.
- **background** — English loanword for social origin/background.
- **ethnicity** — ethnic identity, used in analytical speech.
- **Cultural / universal / humanitarian** — English loanwords and academic register mixed into the interview.

If you want, I can now turn all **three parts into one single polished English transcript** without the questions/answers broken up, or I can make a **strict glossary only with the truly Hazaragi terms** and exclude broader Dari/English borrowings.

Hazaragi / Hazaragi-leaning words

- عاشورا — Ashura.
- هزارهجات — Hazarajat.
- عزاداری — mourning.
- علمکشی — carrying the mourning standard/banner.
- سینهزنی — chest-beating ritual.
- نوحهخوانی — reciting lamentations.
- نذری — devotional food offering.
- دوغ — yogurt / yogurt drink.
- پلو — rice dish.
- اجباری / داوطلبانه — compulsory / voluntary, used in local oral contrast.
- منبر قریه — village pulpit / mosque platform.
- بازیهای متخلف — various games; local speech.
- پیشپو — local dance name.
- بیفتون / بیکار implied in seasonal idleness.
- گنجولبازی — a local game.

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- مکتبخانه — traditional village school.
- ملا — religious teacher.
- المعجزات — title of a religious book in the narrative.
- جوسر پالوو — local story title / folkloric hero name.
- پالوان — wrestler / strongman.
- گُر — an edible substance, here likely dried mulberries or a local sweet; used in Hazaragi speech.
- خداداد آخند — “Akhund” as a local title for a religious man.
- قریش / وجب — folk measurement terms used in storytelling.
- قشمشم — local story name / character name.
- چیل — forty; in the phrase “forty spans.”
- نذر محرم — Muharram offering.
- وقفی / وخی — endowed / waqf, with local pronunciation.
- محرم — Muharram.
- نان بوته — a customary Jaghori food.
- مزدور — wage laborer.
- نان مالیده — bread mixed with butter/oil.
- روغن زرد — clarified butter.
- قروتی / قروت — yogurt-dried dairy food.
- شیر روغن — milk with oil/butter.
- بلگگ — coin-like dress ornament in Hazara speech.
- قجری — Qajar-era coins/ornaments.
- تبرق — a handbag or carry item.
- جوال — sack.
- گلیم — woven rug/mat.
- ماشیو — wool cloth.
- برک — thick woolen cloth.
- دست باز نماز — praying with open hands.
- هزارهگی — Hazara identity / Hazara-ness.

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- شیعہ — Shi'a, as part of Hazara identity in the older sense.
- کوشی — nomads.
- دهنشین — settled villagers.
- دارغه — village agent / administrator.
- سینہ زنی — chest-beating.
- نذر — vow offering.
- خوشال — happy.
- مردگی — death/funeral ceremony in local speech.
- کفن و دفن — shrouding and burial.
- علم — ceremonial banner.
- آخند — religious title.
- قریش — measure/span in folk speech.
- گنجول — name of a game.
- پاسواد / سواد — literate / literacy.
- قزلباش — Qizilbash.
- غور — Ghor, locally pronounced in the transcript.
- آرزو in the sense of migration and change, a recurring oral theme.