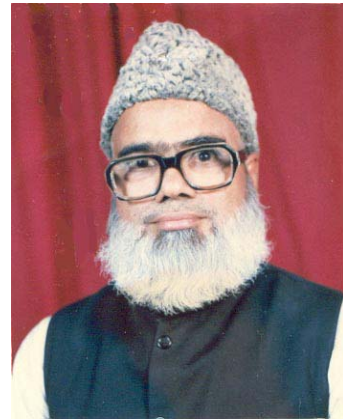


In Memory of Prof. Abdul Ahad Khan

By Sohail Malik, 83140/Qasim House

During a frosty Texas evening, I sat down with an agnostic friend of mine with a warm brew of Java at the local coffee shop. This evening, as it had become customary of our friendship, the conversation turned from mundane things to a heated debate about faith. Andy, my agnostic friend and I are on opposite ends of the spectrum about role of religion and its impact on human evolution. During this discussion I asked how he could define the purpose of our lives without borrowing from religion and his answer was something I will never forget. According to Andy, the purpose of human life is simple. We are born into this world to touch other human beings. If we have a positive impact, we are good human beings and if we affect others around us negatively, then we are evil. While I do not buy into this simple philosophy, this criterion provides an interesting insight when I reflect upon the lives of people I have come across.

Abdul Ahad Khan Sahib was a complex individual shouldering a great responsibility of touching the lives of many impressionable youths that were entrusted under his supervision. His profession demanded that he play a role of a teacher, a friend, a guardian, a mentor, a father, a disciplinarian all the while juggling the challenges of raising his own family. His legacy without doubt is profound; his influence the catalyst that transformed so many of cadets that were fortunate to be his students. Judging by an agnostic's criteria Ahad Sahib more than fulfilled his purpose on this earth by molding so many of us into honorable men.



When I was asked to write a short essay to be published in the Petarians Golden Jubilee Souvenir writing about Ahad Shaib was an easy selection. Nevertheless, I found it extremely difficult to find words that would do justice to his legacy. Ahad Sahib was an indulgent person with contrasting capricious temper. He woke up every morning to make sure we became better human beings by each passing day. He was man unequaled in his commitment to the cadets and his commitment to his profession was unparalleled. Drunk with the inanities of teenage years we made fun of him, mocked him, tried to defy and disobey him. Yet, his unyielding desire and efforts to mold us into honorable human beings demands that we respect and honor him. He may have left us but his legacy thrives in the souls and personalities of all those who passed through the gates of Petaro. His memory is alive in our psyche, his principles guide us in our daily lives, his teachings define our personality, and his love and compassion serves as the beacon of humility, selflessness and sacrifice.

The sad and sudden news of Ahad Shaib's death hit me on a personal level. My association with Ahad Sahib was a personal one (he was our house master for 5 years at Qasim House). Our days began with him yanking covers off us for *Fajr Namaz* and ended when we whisked pass him at the gates of Qasim House after night muster. In

between were surprise visits during evening “prep” times, occasional yelling for untidy beds and dirty shoe racks. The teenage rebellion in us found his dictatorial demeanor galling at times and we complained endlessly about his strict adherence to the rules. But there were the times when you were in a real bind and had no hope left, he would surprise you with his compassion. Whether it was trouble with college administration or personal family crises, he would go out of his way to help you like you’re his own son. Today I can rarely recount personal caning, scolding or beatings he gave me in my 5 years at Petaro. However, I can vividly describe how he defended me when I almost got expelled or when he unleashed his wrath on college doctor when he did not render proper medical care.

Ahad Sahib cared to no end for all his students. His honesty is legendary, his hard work exemplifying, his teaching methodology unconventional but highly effective. He was an accomplished academician and excelled at making a dry subject like chemistry interesting. He did not have an ego, admitted when he was wrong, and defended his position like a warrior when he was right. Ahad Sahib was human, with his own faults and shortcomings. Nevertheless, he was more than perfect as a teacher and undeniably one of the few individuals who gave their lives to make Petaro the great institution it is today. He touched every person that came in contact with him positively and that alone should define his legacy.

It’s been almost 24 years when I walked into those gates of Petaro for the first time. At times I sit down and reminisce about my personal journey through this maze of life. With all my shortcomings and failures, my victories and accomplishments, I realize what a profound effect he has had on my life. I never take anything for its word; I have a craving to dig into details. From issues relating to religion to purely academic pursuits, I cannot help but question what, when, why and how. This has worked wonders for me. It has made me a better person and most definitely a better academician. Ahad Sahib was the one who (along with few other great teachers at Petaro) lit that fire and nurtured it and to this day it burns. What a fool I was to think I would have been better off being in another house with more lenient teachers. For whatever I am today I thank God for giving me the privilege to be under Ahad Sahib’s tutelage.

Ahad Sahib, you will not be forgotten and will surely be missed. May Allah rest his soul in peace....