

My Beloved Uncle

****Respected and Honorable Sheikh Manzoor-ul-Hassan Sahib (Deceased)****

Our grandfather, Sheikh Noor Muhammad Sahib, and grandmother, Fatima Bibi Sahib, lived in Ludhiana, India. They had six sons and two daughters. My uncle, Sheikh Manzoor-ul-Hassan, was born around 1926 in Ludhiana, making him the youngest among his siblings.

Tragically, his mother had passed away earlier, and both his sisters also met untimely deaths—one shortly after the birth of her child and the other at the age of eighteen. My eldest uncle, Sheikh Ghulam Nabi Sahib, got married and moved with his family to a separate house. My other uncle, Sheikh Yaqoob Sahib, and his wife, Maryam Sahiba, stayed with us in the same house. Eventually, Uncle Yaqoob went to Nairobi, East Africa, and later brought two of his younger brothers to join him there.

When our grandfather passed away, our family arrangement changed. My parents, along with their children, lived upstairs in the ancestral home, while Aunt Maryam and Uncle Manzoor lived downstairs. Aunt Maryam took care of Uncle Manzoor with motherly affection as she had no children of her own.

A significant event in our lives occurred when I was about two or two and a half years old, and my elder sister, Saeeda, was around four or four and a half. She accidentally fell from a window, landing headfirst on the road. The commotion outside alerted my mother, who rushed to rescue her. My parents visited several hospitals to get her treated, but no doctor was willing to take her case. Eventually, a British hospital saved her life. My mother had to stay in the hospital for three months with my sister. During this time, I came under Aunt Maryam's care, living with her and Uncle Manzoor. After returning from the hospital, my sister's condition required constant attention, so I stayed permanently with Aunt Maryam, whom I began calling "Amma."

Uncle Manzoor and I lived like siblings under Aunt Maryam's care. This arrangement provided great relief to my mother, especially when my parents moved from Ludhiana to Ferozepur. Aunt Maryam and I became so attached that I refused to leave her, and she wasn't willing to part with me either.

In August 1947, during the partition of India, Aunt Maryam, Uncle Manzoor, and I migrated from Ludhiana to Lahore, Pakistan. Holding my hand, they crossed over walls and through corpses to reach safety. After a brief stay with my eldest uncle, Sheikh Ghulam Nabi Sahib, in Lahore, we moved to Karachi. Later, Uncle Yaqoob and Uncle Ahmed Hassan arrived from Nairobi, and we returned to our home in Lahore, where my parents had also settled after migrating from Qadian. During this period, Uncle Ahmed Hassan got married.

In December 1947, Aunt Maryam, Uncle Yaqoob, Uncle Ahmed Hassan, his wife, and Uncle Manzoor moved to Nairobi, leaving me with my parents. This marked the beginning of a separation from Uncle Manzoor that lasted for years. After my marriage, I settled in London, while Uncle Manzoor moved to Canada. Decades later, in 1993, I visited him in Canada. After my two sons, Munir and Bilal, relocated to Canada, it became like a second home to me. My visits to Uncle Manzoor and his family continued, and our bond remained strong.

One day, I asked Uncle Manzoor's youngest son, Maqbool, about their time in Nairobi. He shared the following:

> "Father started working as a machinist in the railway upon reaching Nairobi. The family arranged his marriage with a very devoted Ahmadi family. As the independence movement spread across East Africa, the situation worsened, prompting many to migrate. Our family also decided to move to the UK. However, our father, who loved exploring new places, prayed to Allah for guidance. In 1965, we moved to Canada after receiving sponsorship from a company through Uncle Sheikh Mahmood, who was already residing in Brantford, Ontario. Our father's primary goal was to secure a better future for his children. He always emphasized developing a strong bond with Allah, performing prayers with humility, and relying on Allah in every matter."

Uncle Manzoor's commitment to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was unwavering. He served as the President of the Brantford Jama'at and held various other positions. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Brantford Jama'at expanded to include surrounding areas, making it a large congregation.

In 1967, Uncle Manzoor had a dream in which Hazrat Chaudhry Sir Muhammad Zafarullah Khan Sahib visited his home. Upon narrating this dream, his friends urged him to write to Chaudhry Sahib. He did so, expressing his desire to host him despite being a simple worker. To his amazement, Chaudhry Sahib replied, promising to fulfill the dream. When Chaudhry Sahib visited Canada later that year, Uncle Manzoor hosted him and received great blessings from this visit.

After retiring, Uncle Manzoor moved to British Columbia in 1981, where he ran a restaurant. He later returned to Brampton, Ontario, in 1985, spending his remaining years serving the community with dedication. Despite challenges, his faith remained firm, and he never compromised on matters of religion.

Uncle Manzoor passed away in 2014, joining his wife, who had passed in 2010. Both are buried side by side in Brampton Memorial Gardens. May Allah elevate their ranks in paradise.

The bond between Uncle Manzoor and me deepened further when his granddaughter married my grandson. This union brought our families even closer.

May Allah bless our family ties with love and happiness and keep them flourishing forever. Ameen.

****Safia Bashir Sami, London (Canada)****