

From Home to Home

Rosalind

The decision to move to Kashmir in the early 1980s took quite a long time. The main reason was to give our three older children a taste of their dad's culture, to meet members of his family, and to immerse them and myself in our religion. The idea was that we would go for good as a family and it would help in all these aspects, but leaving my family behind was very difficult and my mother refused to come to the airport to see us off.

The children were 7, 5 and nearly 2 so the flight was quite difficult! Receiving us in Islamabad airport were two of my husband's sisters and one of his brothers. They were so happy and the younger sister exclaimed in English: "They are so beautiful!"

However, we were disappointed with the area we came to live in, even though my husband had arranged the building of the family home years before. We were told everything had been modernised, but that was quite far from the truth!

My husband and I were in our 30s, coming from a town outside Glasgow, to a new city which was very different from what we were used to: it was more noisy, quite a contrast in lifestyle, and lots of different sounds and sights.

Crows cawing noisily,

Mynahs fighting hard,

Sparrows twitter everywhere,

And bul-buls sing their bard.

*Crickets in the kitchen,
Beetles in the bed
Giant flying grasshoppers,
Blue and green and red.*

*Frogs in the flowers,
Twigs in the tea,
Lizards hanging upside down,
Defying gravity.*

*Goats in the garden,
Chickens on the wall,
Cows come in casually,
As if they owned it all.*

*Hornets humming haughtily,
Mosquitoes eating me,
At least the mango's tree in bloom,
Ours IS a nice house, SEE!*

Shortly after our arrival, things got complicated in the extended family. That caused a rift in the family and made life difficult at times. We tried to reconcile but it was not to be! Therefore, our four years living in Kashmir was a rollercoaster of new experiences, good and bad.

Eventually, due to family troubles there and a pending war between India and Pakistan, we decided to return home to Scotland, with some regret,

but great anticipation. It took a while to sort out our business there but once the plane tickets were bought we were on a high! The children were so excited and it didn't disappoint when we arrived back into the arms of my sister who jumped the barriers to get to us in the airport. We were home!

We had come full circle. Today, my two girls and my son have families of their own. We managed to integrate back into the community, and we are very close family. All my extended family are now united and have resolved our differences so everyone is happy.

Looking back to our experience in Kashmir, there were many things that might have felt overwhelming at the time. However, upon reflection, lots of those things amuse me now and make me feel quite nostalgic of our home there.

*Bul- bul and sparrow,
Mynah and crow,
Hummingbird and hoopoe,
What more would you know?*

*Orange tree, lemon tree,
Mulberry so sweet,
Mangoes in the summer,
What a fruity treat!*

*Cricket and cicada,
Hornet and bee,*

*Firefly and butterfly,
Are all here to see.*

*Tandoory, chupatty,
Biryani and kheer,
Silver-leaf topped pudding
You'll taste if you come here.*

*Won't you pay us a visit,
And stay here for a while?
We'll make you feel most welcome,
With our warm, friendly smile.*