

## MEMOIRS – CHAPTER 3 - CAREER



**By Abdulrazak Fazal** *Updated: September 2020*

**My career begins in Daressalaam that has been my home after we left Zanzibar. Firstly, I became a teacher at the Tambaza Secondary School (formerly Agakhan Boys Secondary School) but taught for just a couple of months. However noble the teaching profession may be career wise it is ill favoured. I landed a job as a Bank Accountant with NBC (National Bank of Commerce) where the post of Economist for which I had applied was occupied. I was initially designated Management Trainee and it was with the assurance of receiving severe training in accounts that I consented to the offer. I owe a great deal to National Bank of Commerce for grooming me into a caliber personnel. I was put on vigorous training in accounts, on the job as well as at the Bank's Training Wing and the Institute of Finance Management where I attended several courses and seminars. Some of those who conducted the seminars were none other than President Nyerere's economic advisers like Dr. David Green and Dr. John Loxley.**

**Being ethnic Indian, the treatment accorded to us citizens at Government and Parastatal Offices was worthy of praise. Tanzania is a beautiful country. I found the wilderness of Ngorongoro, Manyara and Serengeti more attractive than the monuments of artificiality like Egypt's Pyramids. For that matter, the whole of Africa is beautiful, and its people too. It is rightly stated that black is beautiful. I always associate black with goodness. My favourites in sports are Blacks, West Indies in cricket and Brazil in football.**

**My fellow Zanzibaris, the indigenous ones, were just super. They were so humble, modest, and hospitable. I am reminded of Mze Ibrahim, my father's Makunduchi contact, who would pay a courteous visit to our house every Sunday with 'zavadi' consisting of fruits and vegetables, even after my father had passed away. It is sad that Africans throughout Africa are subjected to exploitation while the politicians keep amassing fortunes. I still recall attending those Saturday night rallies by Hizbu or ZNP (Zanzibar Nationalist Party) at Darajani. ZNP had jogo (cock) as its symbol and the crowd agog for the occasion chanting 'voti umpeni jogo'. I even attended the ASP (Afro Shirazi Party) rallies on Sunday evenings at Kiswandui. ASP had kisima (well) as their symbol and their supporters aplenty. That might have been political awareness but there is also pretentiousness on the part of African politicians that has**

**cheated and deprived Africans of their expectations.**

**I vividly recall attending the Tanganyika independence celebrations on the night of 9th December 1961 at the National Stadium in Daressalaam and also the Zanzibar one on the night of 10th December 1963 at the Coopers ground. That Zanzibar Government lasted just a month and was toppled by the Zanzibar Revolution of 12<sup>th</sup> January 1964. On 26<sup>th</sup> April 1964 Zanzibar united with Tanganyika and the UNION was named TANZANIA. There were high hopes, but the post-independence era did not live up to the expectations of the people.**



**The wilderness of Africa- Our land rover surrounded by monkeys at Ngorongoro**



**The Zanzibar Revolution of 12th January 1964 toppled the Sultan and the Sultan's Palace became People's Palace**

**When President Nyerere nationalized houses in 1971 his intentions might have been good as his socialist policy demanded cheaper houses and lower rent so that they would be within the means of the poor. It backfired severely. Contrarily today only the filthy rich can own property and its exorbitant rent makes it inaccessible to the commoner. What an irony!**

**The whole of Africa, east to west as well as north to south, is burning. The political unrest, coups, genocides, corruption, tribalism and economic chaos coupled with natural calamities like drought or fatal diseases like aids inflicted on Africa is beyond imagination. The future of Africa and its inhabitants is foreseen as entirely bleak.**

**It is not that colonialists were good, but they were definitely better administrators and knew how to deliver goods. South Africa may be basking in the glory of Nelson Mandela, but it is a fact that its Government cannot keep up the pace of the former apartheid regime. The relinquishing of political hold on South Africa seems a blessing in disguise for the Whites (Kaburus) as economically they have most of Africa under their clutch. The penetration of South Africans into Tanzania has changed Tanzania's economic scenario. They have snatched even the good old NBC.**

**Some of NBC's policies since my time were detrimental to the economy of the country. The ujamaa (socialist) policy implied lending in millions to unviable**

projects. Also, its phasing out of non-citizens who had been earning just as much as us citizens and replacing them with expatriates at exorbitant cost was highly uncalled for. I went on to become NBC's Accountant at branch level, Zonal Controller at Zone level and eventually Economist with its Directorate of Research & Planning at the Head Office level. I was even appointed on the bank's Planning Committee and would consult on the affairs of banking and finance with the likes of Dr. Rwemamu who was Personal Adviser to Mwalimu Nyerere.

One of my good pals at NBC was former Tanzanian cricket captain Praful Mehta who opted not to come back to Tanzania after playing in England for East Africa in the 1975 World Cup. On the local cricket scene, the dominance of Upanga to which Praful belonged was under threat from USC (Union Sports Club) whose championship reign was setting in. Praful would hate being teased about Upanga's decline. I could easily associate myself with members of the other communities who I found more accessible than members of my own community. Even then I was always handy with support for USC or its players with letters in the dailies siding their cause in the disputes with DCA (Daressalaam Cricket Association) or TCA (Tanzania Cricket Association).

I may be associated with cricket, but I am a non-sports person. Many whom I meet on the way indulge me in cricketing talk. Instinctively I desire all sports activities, but I am not much of a participant. I have had my share as a spectator at Lords, Oval and Hove (Sussex) at a few international meets. Summer in England is great for sports fans. It provides real bonanza with its cricket test matches, Wimbledon tennis and Derby and Royal Ascot races. It is lush green everywhere and the Daressalaam cricket grounds like Gymkhana, Kinondoni and Burhani pale in comparison to the scenic English County grounds with their picturesque pavilions and cathedrals.



**The picturesque county ground in England**

Wimbledon is vast and almost a village. Wimbledon prides in its environment that befits the affluent who flock there not only to experience the excitement of tennis but also make purchases of its precious mementos besides entertaining themselves to costly strawberries and cream. The atmosphere at the Centre Court is electric.

Football is a real craze in the UK. Its season stretches from autumn through winter right up to spring but gets over by summer. The English Premier league gets followed all over the world. In fact, football is popular everywhere including Africa where the Africans are mad about it. East Africa's most prestigious tournament used to be 'Gossage' and Zanzibar formed its underdog. Zanzibar's most popular footballers were Hija Saleh (Malim Hija) and Shioni Mze. Once sometime in 1959 when I was at my aunt's place I had the privilege of accompanying her brother in law, the late Roshan Master, who was the editor of the weekly 'Samachar' to a Gossage match between Zanzibar and Kenya at the Khalifa ground. He held a special pass and we were made to sit in the VIP section just behind the British Resident and the Sultan's family members. Zanzibar's Majham and Boti displayed thrilling football but eventually Kenya prevailed. Elijah Lidonde, Kenya's star footballer, scored twice to beat Zanzibar 2-1.

In Zanzibar we had several football teams but Malindi used to be my favourite for it was the team of our locality. The entrance to the stadium cost ten cents and the encounter between Malindi and Vikokotoni, a la Simba and Yanga, would be the talk of the town. Whenever Malindi won, the shop of one by the name of Ashur in a corner of Malindi would distribute freely a glass of mixed fruit or fresh orange juice. I remember once as a child having followed my maternal cousin, the late Mohamedraza (Golo) Damji, who was a member of Malindi club to its party at Sheriff Musa. Malindi that season had won all the trophies that were displayed there, and its supporters danced to the tune of tarab as the celebrations continued right through the night.

However, it is cricket that has been my passion. The teams in East Africa were communal based which despite cricket's low standard made the competition fierce and enthralling. As a child I followed my brother Husain to the local matches and even made efforts to grasp the cricket commentary and 'Sports Round Up' that he would attentively listen to. He also used to receive the Indian magazine 'Sports & Pastime' that I found very much fascinating. Thus, began my love or association with cricket.

At home I would bang a rubber or tennis ball against the wall. At times it even hit the crockery displayed on the adjacent wall and broke it into pieces for which my mother would rebuke me. My maternals were the Khamis Damjis whom we paid regular visits to their Hurumzi residence. Eventually my younger

sister got married into their family and I also ended up with one of theirs. The Hurumzi gully and stores provided the spot for our tennis ball cricket matches. Sadly, the childhood cricket mats Zafar Manji and Iqbal Damji met with tragic ends.

Initially it was mere statistics of the game that seemed to interest me but gradually I absorbed its finer points such as technique, footwork, wicket and its rules and regulations. All these would monopolize my conversation with my cricket fanatic friends or acquaintances. The Jamali brothers are amazing. Their tempers flared during tense moments in the local matches. They are fanatical Pakistan supporters and would ring even after midnight contemplating the following day's play. At times when Pakistan played in the West Indies they would drive me at midnight to hotel Kilimanjaro where we could check the latest score from the telex machine that the hotel had provided. During the initial stages of the 1992 World Cup in Australia there was no television station in Tanzania and only those with satellite dishes could view live matches. We would gather at three at night to watch live matches at the residence of Mohamed Jaffri, another of those cricket maniacs.

In the early 1980s I was suffering from depressive disorder. It was going to the cricket grounds that gave solace and provided a bit of relief to me. At that time the spotlight was on AK Club's Shiraz Sumar on the local cricket scene. I wanted to occupy myself doing something and indulged in a profile of Shiraz for an Ismaili friend. That feature became the talk of the cricket circle. I was merely being impartial, but USC might have felt otherwise. Also, around that time USC had come out with a souvenir that gave no mention to Zanzibar cricket and lacked material content. I expressed my viewpoint but was met with rebuttal and taunt implying that I knew peanuts. I took up the challenge and the rest is history. Never had USC received so much publicity.

The local dailies and weeklies featured my cricket columns. My column with the Express had become quite popular. It gave me that secret thrill of being liked and recognized. Once when seated at our Elise Corner baraza a group of youngsters from Tanga were brought there to be introduced to their cricket correspondent. They could not believe their eyes as I blushed with shyness. My columns entailed me to reach the British Council every Saturday by 8.30 in the morning when their parcel of English dailies arrived. I would be the first one to grab the papers, scribble my notes and collect as much material as possible.

Such was our enthusiasm in the enthralling local competition that we did not return home during lunch time. We had formed our own group comprising all Bohoras except myself and would arrange lunch at the ground itself or visit different restaurants on every Sunday. There have been sad moments too! My companions on the ground were the three Adamji brothers (Amir, Hatim and Sajjad -Nariarwala) who remain no more. In fact, Amir's death was a

horrifying experience for me. On one Saturday afternoon as I was waiting down the road along with him for a friend Mohsin Kayzar's car to go to Burhani ground for a cricket match, Amir all of a sudden groaned and passed away. The public gathered there and in panic I rushed to call the nearby doctor who on arrival declared him dead.

The Adamji brothers were also members of the 'baraza' group. It was at the baraza where we would idle our time. My association with the Bohoras had a positive effect and the aloofness in me somewhat abated. We would arrange a barbeque program on the balcony of one of our acquaintances or go for a picnic. During Ramadhan we would sit late into the night and relish the biting, kahawa, fresh juice and ice cream that was served at the baraza. At one time the baraza group consisted of as many as 25 members. Today we hardly gather and remain just a few. Most of them have passed away.

One of my favorites at the baraza was Sadiq Mithaiwala. He was a hilarious character and would relate his funny adventures. Once he was tempted into a boxing bout against a huge African at Arnatauglo Hall to earn some quick bucks. The Asians received his entry into the ring with great applause. Then began the fight and with his opponent's very first blow Sadiq got knocked out of the ring. He had passed out, only to regain consciousness the following morning when he woke up in his bed.

I regret to state that USC were not responsive to my contributions. In that respect hats off to Agakhan Sports Club for their courtesy and acknowledging whatever few write ups I did for them with letters of thanks or invitations to their functions. What really infuriates me is that all Tom, Dick, and Harry insert their names over my write ups to grab credit for themselves.

It is not that I am exceptional but just a mediocre writer who merely builds up articles with emotion and sensation that excite or incite a section of the public. As a matter of fact in my younger days I was more attuned to the Indian language Gujarati and would read all sorts of Gujarati periodicals and publications like Chakram, Sharbat (later Begum), Abilgulal, Savita, Ramakdu, Chitralkha and several others. Our Maalim, the priestly Agha Mehdi Shustari, used to call me to his crockery shop at Kiponda and would make me translate his letters and texts into Gujarati. English language was never my cup of tea. Even in school I fared badly at it and my English teachers showed disregard for my essay writing. I was reasonably good at other subjects, but English language deprived me of a first grade in my Cambridge School Certificate examination. It gave me complex and I vowed to overcome this weakness of mine. I became a voracious reader and marveled at the writings of Somerset Maugham and VS Naipaul. In Bombay I joined the British Library at Churchgate, not much of a distance from my hostel, and read most of their novels. I would sit for hours at the Asiatic restaurant

at Churchgate sipping tea, munching khara biscuits and reading through the columns of the afternoon dailies. However, the consistency of my writing began with the papers on the research work and feasibility studies that I had to prepare while at NBC's 'Research and Planning' Department where at least a paper a week had to be presented to the Directorate.

I furthered my career joining in 1976 the 'Commercial Bank of Dubai' that was an Associate Bank of Chase Manhattan in Dubai. As its inspector I travelled throughout the Emirates staying at luxurious hotels in places like Abu Dhabi and dining at posh restaurants. Having stayed in India once upon a time the greed and money mindedness of the Indians in Dubai did not surprise me at all. Personally, I feel that behind the facade of prosperity and modernity lies his insincerity and insecurity.



**My residence around Fish Market at Dubai**





**My employers in Dubai - CBD, The Associate Bank of Chase Manhattan**

**The same refers to my own community despite their East African background. There is nothing much to boast about them. The nouveau riche is the product of all sorts of dealings. Strangely he is looked upon with rave admiration and respect. He is being sought to lead the various committees. It is really confusing, and I fail to reason out good from bad when viewing it from a moral point. Outsiders regard with detestation such displays like 'live like Ali and die like Husain' and mock us for in reality the community projects a different picture altogether. In the good old Zanzibar, there were no people with extreme riches but mere 'well to do' ones who were pious and knew where to draw the line.**

**My father was a brilliant student and refused the lucrative government job offered to him. He was in the cloth business, especially fine fabrics. His marginal profit did not have to exceed a few percent. He also dealt in kafan (shroud) for which his clientele was classified into two, the 'haves' and 'have nots'. While the 'have' paid its mere cost price the 'have not' paid nothing. In emergencies the indigenous African could knock the door even late at night and would be served readily and without reluctance.**

**Today it seems religion is sanctioned by wealth. The so called 'ziarat group' in reality is 'shopping spree in disguise'. Those with abundance throw away their donations in the form of carpets or chandeliers to show off their status and relieve themselves of their excess or burden. The holy month of Ramadhan is conspicuous not by its sanctity but the 'Korean Hall' that takes the centre stage. It is where the social congregation assumes control and chit chat and sports tournaments thrive. The 'ittefaq' observance is marked with children taking in 'Nintendo', 'carron' and such games in the mosque compound. We should**

learn from our Sunni brother for whom 'ittefaq' is renouncing everything except 'ibadaat' that he engrosses himself in and feeds on sour and simple 'iftar' and 'sahri'. Who are we stupefying!

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