#### DRAFT CHAPTER

For 'The Green Pen: Essays by Environmental Journalists in South Asia' (working title)

Sage India (forthcoming)

# **Uphill and downstream in Pakistan**

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# **Mainstreaming environment**

It was Saneeya who first introduced me and many Pakistani journalists to the concept of 'environmental journalism'. She had been my editor at the *Star Weekend*, the magazine section of Karachi's daily evening *The Star* and, fed up of the "the red scribbles from upstairs", left in early 1988 to join the communication unit of the Karachi office of IUCN, the World Conservation Union<sup>1</sup>. Those were the Zia years<sup>2</sup>, and writers of a progressive, liberal bent were often banned. We'd smuggle them on the pages under pseudonyms (some had several reincarnations) until the powers-that-be discovered their identities and booted them out again. Politics, journalism and gender were interlinked in a way that was peculiar to Pakistan in those war-on-communism-through-jihad years when the Zia regime was promoting the green flag of radical Islam to drive the red Russian bear out of Afghanistan.

What does environmental journalism have to do with the Afghan 'jihad'? There may not be a direct link, but between them America and Pakistan (with Saudi Arabia and a few others) had turned a nationalist war of liberation into a religious crusade, and this permeated everything in Pakistan – particularly journalism and gender, which environmental journalism bridged. Women were at the forefront of resistance to the military regime and its efforts to push women back into 'chadar aur chardewari' through a conservative, retrogressive media policy and a series of discriminatory laws. Many women activists were also at the forefront of efforts to bring the environment into focus in Pakistan. Along with Zohra Yusuf, our Editor at the Star Weekend until she was 'kicked upstairs' as she put it, Saneeya Hussain was a member of the Shirkat Gah Collective, a women's resource centre which catalysed the Women's Action Forum, the umbrella group of women's rights groups and activists that so fiercely resisted the Zia regime. They were among the first Pakistanis to participate in people-to-people contact with environmentalists in India, despite the official hostility between the two countries.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> World Conservation Union Pakistan –see <a href="www.iucnp.org">www.iucnp.org</a> for useful publications and archived material

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Gen. Ziaul Haq took over power in a military coup of 1977, overthrowing the elected prime minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> A slogan used liberally at that time. Literal meaning: the 'veil and the four walls'

When Saneeya joined IUCN, she set up the pioneering Journalists Resource Centre that trained and encouraged journalists in environmental reporting<sup>4</sup>. As Ismail Khan, a young Skardu-born<sup>5</sup> journalist put it, "Never before had a systemic process been set in motion to sensitize media on environment and development; more so, never before had an attempt been made to unleash potential of the media to trigger policy reform, institution building and engineer socio-political commitment for a cause."

Ismail was among the many journalists Saneeya deeply impacted, although he met her for the first time much later, after having contributed a chapter to *Environment for All* (Saneeya's last publication as Executive Director of Panos South Asia) and taken on her old job at IUCN's communication department. He first heard of her not because of Panos or IUCN but "from senior broadcasters in remote radio stations at Skardu, Gilgit, Khuzdar, Multan and Quetta. Every media workshop or training I poked my nose into I ended up learning a little more about the charm and genius of Saneeya and how she went about diverting media attention from the politics of power to the politics of environment and the people."

In Saneeya's time, IUCN was energized by the new environmental paradigms emanating from the 1992 Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro. The IUCN was the driving force behind the formation of Pakistan's visionary National Conservation Strategy (NCS), for which the first roundtable workshop was held in August 1986 long before the government came on board when it approved the NCS on March 1, 1992. Over 3,000 people were involved in discussing the NCS process and policy which was significant for several reasons, as Dhunmai Cowasjee who then worked at IUCN explains. "Firstly, NCS provided a space for public dialogue. Secondly, it was the first time that a federal level policy involved the provincial and council levels (the Local Government Ordinance was promulgated in 2002). Third, the NCS mainstreamed environment, incorporating not just wildlife and parks but providing an in-depth analysis of what makes Pakistan tick, with a Rs 16 billion outlay. And not least, it acknowledged women as users of natural resources and provided a holistic education on interlinked issues".

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The IUCN, spearheaded by the formidably competent Aban Marker Kabraji (a member of the Shirkat Gah Collective), also set up Pakistan's Forum of Environmental Journalists (FEJ) which grew provincial branches with time although it never had much public visibility.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Skardu is situated at nearly 8,200 feet in Pakistan's Northern Areas near the China border about 110 km east of the famed Karakoram Highway that traverses the Karakoram mountain range. It is here that the Indus River receives the Shigar River waters. Skardu is also just across the border from Kargil, where India and Pakistan fought a war in 1999 which came perilously close to escalating into a nuclear disaster.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> M. Ismail Khan, 'A leader and a rebel', *The News* op-ed, May 12, 2005, http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/may2005-daily/12-05-2005/oped/o2.htm

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> For a complete history, see David Runnalls, 'The Story of Pakistan's NCS: An Analysis of its Evolution', IUCN, Pakistan, 1995 (on the web at http://www.iucn.pk/publications/tstory\_pak\_ncs.pdf)

Saneeya, as part of the NCS communication team, involved journalists in these consultations. Environment was still a new area and concept in Pakistan. Even more novel, notes Ismail, "was the idea of forging linkages of environmental policy and practice with media."

Saneeya forged such linkages not just through consultations and trainings but also through the IUCN's path-breaking quarterly *NCS Bulletin* (later the *The Way Ahead* magazine) that she edited and its Urdu counterpart, *Jareeda*, edited by the prominent writer Obaidullah Baig. These were the first publications in Pakistan devoted to the environment. Aware that editors did not set too much store by 'boring' environmental stories, Saneeya devised a way around their reluctance. She taught us that 'environment' doesn't have to be spelt b-o-r-i-n-g. On the contrary, there is usually a solid political or economic angle involving juicy corruption as mill owners, builders and industrials try to cut corners, endangering fragile ecologies and people's health. She convinced reporters to explore such investigative stories and paid them well to do these stories --a welcome incentive in the days when journalists were not as well paid as today. This allowed them to take time off from regular beats and produce reports that Saneeya edited and used as cover stories for the *NCS Bulletin/The Way Ahead*. The reporters' newspaper or magazine could then re-print it, crediting IUCN.

Saneeya pushed me to report for her magazine when I was Features Editor at *The Frontier Post*, recently launched from Lahore. When I muttered something about not having time, she suggested involving colleagues. I roped in Ejaz Haider from the reporting section and Ayesha Haroon from features. Over the next month or so we tackled the issue of the noxious 'Degh Nullah'. Several factories along this stream just outside Lahore were dumping untreated effluents into it, killing off fish and polluting groundwater, causing digestive and skin diseases among the poor villagers living nearby. Investigating and exposing the corruption behind the dumping was a learning experience for us. Unfortunately, one of the lessons we learnt was that our explosive story was not going to change the world. Our story had a limited impact and that too not for long. But the struggle had to continue.

Many of the young reporters whom Saneeya commissioned in those years are now big names. To mention just a few: Ayesha Haroon is Editor of *The News*, Lahore; Ejaz Haider is Executive Editor of *The Daily Times* and Consulting Editor at *The Friday Times*; Azhar Abbas, who did a report on toxic waste for Saneeya, heads Dawn News TV; Owais Tohid who investigated air pollution in Rawalpindi heads Geo TV's newly launched English language channel. I have edited a major weekly paper<sup>8</sup>, done a Masters in Television Documentary, worked for television and returned to academia before going freelance. All of us have come a long way since Saneeya coaxed us into doing stories we may not otherwise have focused on.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The News on Sunday, originally The News on Friday (until Nawaz Sharif in his first stint as prime minister restored Sunday as the weekly holiday, undoing one of Z.A. Bhutto's early moves to appease the mullahs).

Thanks to the way Saneeya had showed us, at *The News on Sunday* we ensured that our reporters had the resources and time to take up investigative stories related to the environment. They regularly initiated ideas, some quite groundbreaking. Khalid Hussain took up issues related to water and pesticides. Farjad Nabi and Mazhar Zaidi embarked on a trek along the Indus to do a series on the conditions faced by the indigenous Mohannas, boat-people of the river. Nadeem Iqbal tenaciously pursued concerns about the Chinese-built Chashma power plant's compliance with the country environmental laws, particularly environment impact assessment. There were fears about the plant's location at the banks of river Indus because of which any accident would cripple the country's irrigation system. This pursuit resulted in the director general of the environment protection agency being made an ex-officio member of the safety regulatory agency – the campaign was fully supported by 'our man in Islamabad' Omar Asghar Khan, who was briefly minister for environment<sup>9</sup>.

There are also many passionate environment advocates among lawyers, hunters and of course travel writers like the energetic Salman Rashid (who started out writing travel pieces at the *Star* and also became a close personal friend of Saneeya's). Environmental discourse has made its way into the columns of prominent writes in op-ed pages of national newspapers. These include visionaries like Isa Daudpota, another of Saneeya's friends and comrades-in-arms on the environmental crusades. He shrugs off the description with a typically terse "I am hardly a crusader. It is commonsensical to shout about environmental destruction."

Although not strictly a journalist, Isa has written several well-researched articles on environmental issues, most recently the controversial New Murree development in forests of the Murree Hills not far from the capital Islamabad. He and like-minded individuals have kept the issue on the public radar by consistently writing about it. Isa's most important contribution is probably his tenacious highlighting of the poor performance of Islamabad's municipality, Capital Development Authority, focusing recently on the Centaurus, a seven-star hotel and apartment complex "that will destroy the character of the city only to provide a pleasure palace for the filthy rich".

The issue of land use – large tracts of ecologically fragile land being given over to development mostly for rich people's colonies -- is often not considered part of environmental journalism. Such development projects must also submit to environment impact assessments which they often get around by paying huge bribes. Pakistan's media explosion means that there is more space for such issues even if they are not approached from the environmental angle. Even satirical shows in the new television channels pick up on them. One recent take-off on the Centaurus project was a skit on Pakistan's only English-language television channel, Dawn News, in a take-off on television news, featuring an 'anchor' talking to a 'reporter' standing at

party in preparation for the forthcoming October 2002 general elections.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Omar's death on June 25, 2002 was a huge blow to the environment and peace lobbies. His family and friends believe that he was murdered, and made to look like suicide which no one who knew him can believe. He had recently resigned as federal minister for environment, labour and manpower and was setting up a new political

the project location – which one of them posted on YouTube, March 25, 2008 (http://tinyurl.com/6s57kz).

## Three shooting stars

Even before the IUCN environmental reporting trainings in the 1980s and 1990s contributed to the heightened awareness about the issue, there was already at least one journalist who already focused on the environment with passion and commitment. Ameneh Azam Ali was senior assistant editor at monthly *The Herald*<sup>10</sup> down the corridor from the *Star* when I was an intern there – both publications were part of the Dawn Group<sup>11</sup>. I was in awe of her because she was so confident, serious and intense, and wrote so well. During the mid-eighties Ameneh was Pakistan's foremost 'environmental journalist' even before the term was popularised here.

Architect and town planner Arif Hasan who worked closely with her on several projects recalls her interest in the environment starting during 1983-84, catalysed by the devastation caused by salinity and water-logging to which he and his colleague Ghulam Kibria were trying to find local solutions. She moved on to study forests, and was among the delegates sent by Shirkat Gah to study the Chipko movement of the Himalayas in 1988<sup>12</sup> – the 'Chipko tree hugging sessions', as Ameneh's close friend and colleague from the *Herald*, Talat Aslam (now Editor *The News*, Karachi) put it. Ameneh was much influenced by her exposure to India's environmental activism particularly the pioneering work of environmentalists like Anil Agarwal who had just launched the environmental magazine *Down to Earth* with its useful handbook for journalists.

Such linkages led to the first joint India-Pakistan Conference on the Environment in Pakistan, organized by IUCN Pakistan along with India's Centre for Science and Environment. Several Pakistani and Indian NGOs, government and the media participated in this first such exchange, which aimed at regular collaboration between the two countries on environmental issues. Ongoing tensions between Pakistan and India prevented this from happening with any regularity, but some follow-ups did take place, like a month-long video training regional workshop in Bangalore in August 1989 for women in development organisations working on community issues and a similar workshop in Lahore later, conducted by the Indian trainers.

Talat Aslam remembers meeting Ameneh for the first time in 1984 when he joined the *Herald*, also as senior assistant editor. Brought up in London, she had come back to Pakistan a couple of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> The Herald was then edited by the legendary Razia Bhatti who later started a new monthly magazine Newsline, along with some colleagues as an independent cooperative.

The Star was closed down in 2005. Saneeya had earlier written of the decline that preceded this shutdown soon after the 1980s. "Some say it was because the one clear target/enemy of the paper, President General Zia-ul-Haq, had disappeared — in Imran Aslam's famous words, to rest in pieces all over Multan — that The Star lost its focus and bite. In actual fact, though, it was the loss of the best contributors to the Star Weekend that led to the magazine's demise." ('Star Trekker', in Pakistan: An Age of Violence, Sampark, London, 2004, ed Anita D. Nasar).

12 Other delegation members included members of the Skirkat Gah Collective Aban Marker, Khawar Mumtaz, and Kauser Said Khan. Another Collective member is the senior journalist Najma Sadeque who has written extensively on environment, development and globalization.

years earlier, and was in what he calls her 'angrez-discovering-Pakistan' phase. Talat had also studied in London, and was drawn by her no-nonsense, straight-forward and serious approach. Their close friendship and intellectual bond survived Ameneh's departure from the *Herald* in 1988 to join the newly set up Agha Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), doing research, contributing to scholarly journals (including *Sage*) as well as the *Herald*. Ameneh was at the peak of her youth and career in 1993, when cancer claimed her life, leaving a void in the field that has never quite been filled.

In 1992, another promising young reporter distinguished herself at the environmental beat of *The News*, Karachi when the paper was launched. Zulekha Ali made a name for herself in environmental journalism in a short career that spanned barely a year. In August 1993, she died while trying to save her friend Fizza who had jumped into the sea after a little girl who had fallen at a rocky Karachi beach. Both strong swimmers, they managed to save the child but lost their own lives in the process. Ironically, Zulekha had only recently highlighted the illegal sand excavations and inadequate beach safety because of which a dozen people had drowned at a similar beach during the festival of Eid.

In 1994 the UN Environment Programme posthumously named her its Youth Award Winner for her series of investigative environmental stories. "Almost everything she wrote triggered action because she followed up. Last July, the local town committee decided to turn the only children's park in the area into a maternity home, despite the fact that there were already several homes there. Zulekha did a story on the conversion mobilizing the community who took the matter to court. A stay order was obtained and the park was saved," notes the citation on the UNEP website.

"...Last May, a lethal chemical used in the dyeing industry was dumped along Lyari River, causing the death of two people. Zulekha followed the trial of the chemical and discovered that about 1,460 drums of the same chemical were laying in the customs warehouse. Zulekha's investigation revealed that a large number of chemicals were still dumped. This report resulted in the involvement of environmental agencies and thanks to her efforts toxic chemicals are not treated in the same passive way."

It is a strange coincidence that yet another woman who had a huge impact on environmental journalism in Pakistan also died before her time. Saneeya Hussain's contribution to this field is measured not by the stories she wrote as much as by the trainings she initiated and the stories she commissioned, not just at IUCN but also at the World Commission on Dams that she joined in 1998. The three-year Commission based in South Africa developed a new paradigm for decision-makers to resolve issues related to economic growth, social equity, conservation and people's involvement. Saneeya made a significant contribution in communicating the new framework to the public through the media. In 2002, she joined Panos South Asia as Executive Director but had to leave two years later as the Kathmandu-based job with its accompanying pollution proved disastrous for her asthma. She moved to Sao Paulo, Brazil with her husband, Luis Paulo Ferraz.

Barely a year later, she suffered what appeared to be a severe asthma attack. Although Saneeya was able to walk to the car, by the time Luis got her to the hospital, impeded by heavy traffic, she was unconscious, unable to breathe, her brain deprived of oxygen. It had taken them twenty minutes to cover the two kilometres. Saneeya died on April 20, as friends around the world kept vigil. As Luis said later, it was not asthma but a traffic jam that killed Saneeya.

"Ironically, it was the urban nightmare that we have collectively created that finally snatched her away at the prime of her career," commented our mutual friend, the Sri Lankan journalist Nalaka Gunawardene, writing on his blog on the second anniversary of Saneeya's death.

"Similar tragic scenarios unfold on South Asia's mean streets every day. Heart and stroke patients fail to reach help in time. Ambulences and fire engines, with their sirens blaring, only manage to proceed at a snail's pace. It's not uncommon for expectant mothers in labour to give birth on their way to hospitals. Then there is the slow, insidious poisoning that goes on 24/7."

## Following the process

Newspapers and radio and television channels do of course continue to highlight such issues. But more often than not, the focus is on the outcome (child killed and another loses limbs because of toxic waste at the rubbish heap they were playing in) or event (building, bridge or road being built that will cause environmental damage). The ongoing process of environmental destruction rarely gets the same attention.

An ongoing system of trainings for journalists is obviously also essential. Non-government organisations like IUCN, Panos, WWF, the Pakistan Press Foundation, and educational institutions like Peshawar University with its forward-looking media and communications department do conduct or facilitate such trainings. Most journalists who have participated in such trainings tend to eventually move on to other exciting and glamorous areas like politics or crime. One reporter who has deliberately resisted this trend is the unassuming Bhagwandas, now a senior reporter the daily *Dawn* in Karachi who has been on the environment, development and related beats for over two decades now.

I first encountered Bhagwan in 1991 as part of a group of journalists that Omar Asghar Khan and his Sungi Development Foundation had invited to Haripur in the NWFP to focus on the damage caused by the timber mafia's widescale logging and subsequent land erosion. The trip included field visits and interviews with locals as well as a workshop to analyse and discuss the issues involved. We were also later together at Ghazi-Barotha downstream from the Tarbela Dam where a proposed barrage threatened to drown ancestral graveyards. Omar was involved in organising this trip too, in collaboration with Saneeya at IUCN. The resulting media attention forced the planners to (slightly) modify the original plan to incorporate at least some local concerns. Such trips highlight the co-dependence of environmental journalists and non-governmental organisations. It's a mutually beneficial relationship – the NGOs need the

exposure that their journalist partners bring, and the journalists need the information and data. The media trainings are an additional bonus.

One of Bhagwan's early successes was in 1990, when his reporting contributing to saving the Kirthar National Park, home of rare and endangered Sindh Ibex for whose protection it was declared a national park. The government had started work on the Indus Highway connecting Karachi with Peshawar, a portion of which was to pass through the Park. The vehicular traffic would have destroyed the area's sensitive ecology and disrupted wildlife, besides giving easy access to poachers, recalls Bhagwan. "I broke the news and pursued it till the issue ended. Initially nothing moved, but eventually it gained momentum. First the Japanese government suspended their funding for the project and eventually the highway was re-routed to skirt the park, and it was saved. The population of Sindh Ibex which was small at that time, has also reached at a stable level over the years." Bhagwan was further rewarded by a certificate presented to him by World Wide Fund (WWF) International President, Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, during a visit to Pakistan shortly afterwards.

Pakistan's environmental crusaders got a huge uplift after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janerio in 1992 which stated that "the only way to have long term economic progress is to link it with environmental protection." The Summit led to governments, including Pakistan, making certain commitments regarding environmental protection acts and quality standards. Saneeya, of course, was at Rio for the Summit. All the discourse about the environment contributed to the launch, on World Environment Day, June 5, 1992 of the Green Press Forum, spearheaded by Zaffarullah Khan, then bureau chief of The Frontier Post, Islamabad. Other journalists associated with the Green Press have included Mudassir Rizvi, Tracey Wagner-Rizvi, Nadeem Iqbal, Nasir Iqbal, Faraz Hashmi, Masroor Gilani, Mazhar Zaidi and Zaigham Khan from various English language publications and Abrar Mustafa and Irfan Dar from the Urdu media. 'Green journalism' has more adherents among the English language media which tends to have a more sophisticated approach, but environment is something that affects everyone and the local language media (particularly the Sindh press and more recently, the new independent television channels) have been vocal in taking on issues that affect their constituents, like water logging and salinity, problems facing fisherfolk due to pollution and the erosion of the mangroves, or toxic waste dumping.

Environment became a proper 'beat' in the 1990s after environment protection agencies (EPAs) were set up in all four provinces, headed by a federal environment protection agency in Islamabad. The government started to involve the media, placing advertisements in newspapers and on television, and giving regular briefings to journalists in order to disseminate information and awareness about the National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQS)<sup>13</sup> that were established in 1993 (after the Earth Summit), and the new environment impact examinations and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> NEQS define maximum allowable concentrations for pollutants in municipal and liquid industrial effluents, industrial gaseous emissions, motor vehicle exhaust and noise.

assessments that were being made mandatory before any new industry or development complex could be set up. Asif Shuja Khan, Director General EPA, believes that the media's involvement and support was "crucial" in the unanimous passage of the Environment Protection Act 1993 as a Bill in 1997 by the National Parliament and the Upper House despite opposition from the industrialists. The Agency continues to involve 'green journalists' at EIA public hearings and through workshops at the provincial and federal levels.

However, the political chaos of the past few years and imperatives like 'security' have, as Khan puts it, "overshadowed the environment". The Green Press Forum also seems to have become a casualty to this neglect, as the last time its website was updated was in the year 2000. Most of the pioneering journalists involved in the initiative have moved on to areas like development, governance, civic education. As one of them put it, "You don't get promotions for environmental journalism, but for political journalism". Given this reality, there are few committed 'environmental journalists' in Pakistan. All too often, it is a handful of individuals like Isa Daudpota who take on an environmental issue and doggedly keep it in the limelight. The good news is that environmental journalism has moved out of the box it occupied during the 1990s, and now permeates several issues ranging from development, governance, globalisation and civic rights and education to politics, economy and health.

Sometimes, these individuals are not journalists, but lawyers or activists who take on causes and rope journalists in, like Haris Gazdar at the Collective for Social Science Research. Toxic dumping in the SITE area had resulted in one child's death, the amputation of another child's limbs, and severe burns to other children in early 2006. Some CSSR workers came across the case and put together a report on the issue. They got advocate Faisal Siddiqi to take on the children's case pro bono, and actively pushed journalists to cover the issue. After two years of litigation the families won the case -- a first in Pakistan's environmental history. The case highlighted the impact of the media as it "created a narrative of public importance" as Faisal puts it. "The judges knew about it which gave us a receptive ground to plead the case. The narrative continued to be constantly developed and remained in the public eye. There was aggressive moral shaming. Last but not least, the case mobilized the people – victims, families, supporters were all engaged in the struggle and formed an NGO to take the matter forward." The case also resulted in getting the factory closed down, compensation to the victims' families, and the stoppage of toxic dumping in the area.

Relatively new buzz words related to the environment over the last few years have cropped up — disaster management and climate change, catalysed by the South-East Asian Tsunami of 2004 and the earthquake that devastated Kashmir and northern Pakistan in 2005 (followed a couple of months later by Hurricane Katrina on south-eastern USA). The protective role of trees on mountain sides and of mangroves along the coast that journalists and NGOs have been shouting about for years, suddenly took on a new importance in the eyes of policy makers (we hope).

Mountain areas have long been endangered by skewed 'development' projects, widespread logging and erosion. In 1998, Kunda Dixit, who set up Panos South Asia in Kathmandu, commissioned a series of reports from for 'Tough Terrain: Media Reports on Mountain Issues' 14. The Pakistan contribution was 'Landsliding Away', a chapter in which Nadeem Iqbal and I focused on the problems caused by development work that ignores the fragile ecology of mountains. Poorly designed, badly constructed mountain roads resulted in landslides in 1998 destroying the homes of over 2,000 people in eight villages of Hazara. The villain of the piece, ironically, was a farm-to-market road connecting Balakot to Hangaree, "one of the several Asian Development Bank funded projects meant to make life better for rural dwellers. But mismanagement and insensitivity to environment and people has had the opposite effect."

Nadeem later did a follow up for *Newsline's* July 1999 issue as a result of which the ADB sent an environment expert to investigate the issue. He found that Nadeem had mentioned only three roads, while the environment laws were violated in nine other roads. Later, the Environment Protection Agency, NWFP, was forced to carry out an environment impact assessment of the ADB funded road-to-market project. Tragically, the October 2005 earthquake in Kashmir wiped out both Balokot and the road which connected it to Hangaree.

The devastation and loss of lives might have been mitigated had environmentally-friendly policies been followed in the area. Saneeya, Ameneh and Zulekha, and of course Omar, watching the devastation from another world, must have felt the pain.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Edited by Kunda Dixit, Aruni John and Bhim Subba for Panos South Asia and Asia Pacific Mountain Network, 1998. Incidentally, Kunda also authored a book which I think is mandatory reading for all journalists, 'Dateline Earth: Journalism as if the Planet Mattered', Inter Press Service, Asia Pacific, 1997