



# Efforts continue to help Pakistani schoolboy in Indian prison

Lahore schoolboy Nauman Arshad was presented in the court (Judicial Magistrate III, Amritsar) on March 31 (See earlier report from *Times of India*, 'Not all who sneak across are terrorists', *Aman ki Asha* page, March 31).

On behalf of Nauman's family, advocate Asad Jamal in Lahore had dispatched two documents (NADRA certificate and BISE roll no. slip for grade nine exams, duly attested and notarised) showing his age (15) to Chandigarh-based lawyer Navkiran Singh, general secretary of Lawyers for Human Rights International (LFHRI). Mr Singh's associate VPS Bhatia confirmed to Mr Jamal over telephone that the documents had been submitted in court along with an application to transfer Arshad's case to Juvenile Justice Board (JJB). The case was adjourned to 9th April without further proceeding.

Several Indian lawyers, journalists and activists are trying to help Nauman and other Pakistani boys in Indian prison. Some news reports below.



## 'Story of a Lahore schoolboy in custody'

Thursday, Apr 01, 2010  
By Sarabjit Pandher

Nauman Arshad's plea to the Amritsar court to be allowed to call up his family was rejected

AMRITSAR: Nauman Arshad is still in his school uniform — a light blue shirt and dark trousers — and should be appearing for his Class 9 examinations right now.

Instead, the 14-year-old Pakistani boy is in handcuffs, appearing before Amritsar's Chief Judicial Magistrate on charges of being an Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agent.

On Wednesday, his judicial remand was extended by another 10 days. On April 9, the court will hear his request for a bone density test to prove his age. Nauman wants to be transferred from the Amritsar Central Jail to the Juvenile Home.

The boy's journey from the Government Comprehensive Higher Secondary School for Boys in Lahore to the Amritsar district courts began over two months ago, on January 12.

Speaking to *The Hindu* in the court complex, Nauman explained how he boarded a bus from Lahore to the Wagah border out of curiosity, since he had always had a "desire to see what the Indian border actually looked like." While wandering around inspecting the border pillars, he was apprehended by a BSF patrol.

Nauman claims that the BSF interrogated him thoroughly, while the Punjab Police subjected him to "third degree" torture. The boy has been booked under Section 3 of the Indian Passports Act and Section 14 of the Foreigners' Act. While some interrogators asked about his supposed links with the Taliban, others probed the possibility of him being a suicide bomber.

Apart from a wrist watch and a 10-rupee note in Pakistani currency, Nauman was also carrying 150 gm of almonds in his pocket.

This raised suspicions among his interrogators, who were convinced that he was trained in Peshawar along with Ajmal Kasab, chief suspect in the Mumbai attacks case. The 26/11 terrorists had brought bags of dried fruit to feed themselves during the siege.

**Ateeq's case**  
This is not the first case of a truant Pakistani schoolboy being caught in India. The day after Nauman was arrested, 12-year-old Ateeq was caught illegally crossing into India on the Samjhauta Express.

After *The Hindu* wrote about his case, Ateeq is now safely back home in Lahore, giving Nauman some hope that his case will also be settled similarly. He said an emissary of the Pakistan High Commission in India recently visited him and assured speedy procedures for his release.

Nauman pleaded with the court to be allowed to call up his family. His request was rejected on the grounds that no such provisions are available.

"I just want to communicate with my mother and elder brother. Why cannot I be allowed?" he said.

Nauman's father Ramzan Arshad died nearly six years ago, according to documents that his advocate V.P.S. Bhatia, a member of the Lawyers for Human Rights International, submitted to the court to establish his juvenile status and place of residence. The certificate issued by the school indicates that Nauman last attended classes on January 11.

The youngest of three siblings, Nauman shares his interest in the computer and internet and how much he misses chatting with his friends and sharing "interesting websites."

Despite persistent family pressure to study biology and become a doctor, he is more interested in a career in computer technology.

Nauman said he saw India as a fascinating "land of opportunities," and his stint in an Indian jail does not seem to have deterred that interest.

"I would return to see it after I grow up and get proper travel documents," he asserted.

— *The Hindu*, front page

other than a school chemistry textbook and Rs 10 in Indian currency, BSF officials claimed he was a highly-motivated suicide bomber and had "confessed" to having received training at a pro-Taliban madrasa in Pakistan's Punjab province.

Officials claimed Arshad was trained at terror camps at Peshawar and Okhara, the very place where the lone surviving Mumbai terror strike perpetrator Ajmal Kasab comes from.

But LHRI's lawyers, who are now in regular telephonic contact with Arshad's mother Tahira Anwar and maternal uncle Asif (his father Mohammed Ramzan died some years ago), have put together a completely different version of the "facts."

"I cannot tell you how my son landed up in India. We haven't seen him since he left for school on January 11," the anxious mother told LRI's general secretary, Navkiran Singh.

She discovered the boy was missing when he failed to return home and inquiries revealed he had never made it to school that morning. Later the family learnt of his boy's arrest and incarceration in India from a news story in an Urdu daily published from Lahore.

According to her, Arshad is a Class 9 student at the Government Boys' Comprehensive Higher Secondary School, Ghorey Shah Road, Lahore, where he has had a fairly consistent academic record. He scored straight A's in mathematics and Arabic in his last school board exams. LHRI representatives are now in possession of documents proving Arshad is a minor.

— *The Asian Age*

# Trip down memory lane

A retired Railways officer sends an email to Aman ki Asha with a copy to family members...

From: Iqbal Samad <iqbal.samad@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, March 12, 2010 2:42 AM

To: amankiasha@janggroup.com.pk

Cc: Asif Khan; Saima Salman; Saira Iqbal; Cyma; Anwar Samad; Iftikhar Khan

Subject: Trip down memory lane

I was four years old when I came to Pakistan in September 1947 with my father Abdul Samad Khan. My father came from a place called Abu Road at the base of Mount Abu, a famous Hill Resort in Rajputana. He was a schoolteacher there.

We came and settled in Sukkur where my father picked up his old profession — teaching. My father went to Agra's famous St. John's College where he stayed at the Bishop French and Halibury House hostels during 1937 to 1939. That is how he married my mother from Agra. He always looked nostalgically at the college magazines of his time which were very dear to him. He always talked fondly of his teachers specially Rev. Sully, Doctor Mahajan and Doctor Pandia.

Some of his class mates and contemporaries from St. John's who came over to Pakistan, that he talked about often, included Masroor Hassan Khan, Ahmed Saeed Khan, Muhammad Yousef Khan, Ghulam Mohiyuddin Khan and Raza Haider. Maybe, some day in the future (if I last that long!) I'll visit this famous institution to return these three magazines and visit these two hostels that he used to talk about so often. After the year 2000 he lost his memory to Alzheimer's. However, he remembered vividly everything about Abu Road and Agra. He would often stray out of home and stop a passing taxi or rickshaw and ask the driver to take him to either Agra or Abu Road.

He wished and prayed that he may visit Abu Road and Agra before he died. His wish remained unfulfilled and he passed away on September 4th 2004.

I'm now over 66 yet I have clear memories about Taj Gunj in Agra and Abu Road. I remember visiting the Taj Mahal and the Dilwara Temple at Mount Abu. At Mount Abu my father showed me some of the 40 Rajwaras (summer resorts of the Rajas and Nawabs) as also the British Resident's official residence.

Maybe some day I'll take a trip down memory lane to these places and fulfill my father's unrealized dream. I am confident in my heart of hearts that I'll run into someone who knew my father or mother.

Tomorrow, the day after, a year from now, when? Maybe some day, before I die, like my father and mother.

Iqbal Samad Khan  
Retd. G.M & CEO Pakistan Railways.

**Reply to all from his daughter:**  
What a wonderfully beautiful note!!! I'm going to print it and get it framed!!!! You can go whenever you want.... All you need is a passport and attach this letter with the visa application! :) life's too short whether you're 30 or 60! What's important is to get out and do whatever we are capable of doing at a particular stage of life - if we don't then it's a huge loss!

You had so many opportunities in the past to go to India and visit all these places... You still have the opportunity so pls don't be lazy about it! Just GO! I'm trying to figure out a way to get an Indian visa... Maybe the two of us should go together and visit all these places! I'll be your official photographer!

Thank you SO SOOOOOO much for sharing this letter with all of us!!! You're such a great writer... Maybe I got this talent (aside from other 50,000 talents) from you... Hehe!

Love you and Ammi very much!  
Cyma

**And from his son:**  
As always, nicely written abba!

I think you should continue this on into a complete biography - I know I would love to read it. You have such awesome experiences and lessons you learned throughout, that a lot of people can definitely benefit from it.

Let's plan to go visit Agra end of this year. I have heard that if you know someone who can write an invitation letter, it definitely helps. I actually know quite a lot of people there so will start working on the invitation letters.

Talk to you soon.  
love  
Asif

**Reply from the writer to Aman ki Asha ...when asked if we could publish this correspondence:**  
Please do!! Please do!!

That was basically the purpose - to let others like me come out with their yearnings of old. Hopefully, if this is published in the *Times of India* too, maybe someone from across the Great Divide will drop me a line on my e.mail.

Regards & God Bless  
Iqbal Samad Khan

## 'Appeal in HC for Pak boy's release'

Friday, April 2, 2010

By Vikas Kahol in Chandigarh

The lawyers and human rights activists fighting for the release of Nauman Arshad, a Pakistani teenager who had strayed into India, will file a petition in the Punjab and Haryana High Court for the withdrawal of the cases against him.

The Lawyers for Human Rights International (LFHRI) said the boy was innocent and that the police could not substantiate their claim that he was an ISI agent.

Navkiran Singh, the general secretary of LFHRI, said Arshad was in school uniform at the time of his arrest. He was wearing a wrist watch and carrying a Rs 10-Pakistani currency note and 150 gm almonds in his pocket.

"We will move the court seeking directions to the government for the withdrawal of the case against the boy. He was booked for violating the Indian Passports Act and the Foreigners' Act," Singh said.

"His case will come up for hearing on April 9. His mother has sent me the evidence that he is a juvenile. We will produce these documents in the court for shifting his case to the Juvenile Justice Board," Singh said. Arshad is currently in judicial custody.

—Mail Today

## 'Indian lawyers campaign for Pak boy release'

Sunday, 28 March 2010

By Asif Jolly

CHANDIGARH, March 28: Protesting the "innocence" of a 16-year-old Pakistani boy who was labelled a fideayan boy and jailed in Amritsar in January, a Chandigarh-based lawyers' collective has initiated a campaign to liberate the young prisoner and facilitate his repatriation.

The Lawyers for Human Rights International, which has represented dozens of people "incorrectly" branded as terrorists in past years, will arrange free legal aid to Mohammed Noman Arshad to help establish his true age, nationality and other antecedents. The group, which is already in touch with the boy's family in Lahore, hopes to submit requisite documentation when Arshad is produced before Amritsar's chief judicial magistrate on Tuesday.

A Border Security Force patrol intercepted the teenager loitering close to the electrified security fence.

Even though he possessed nothing

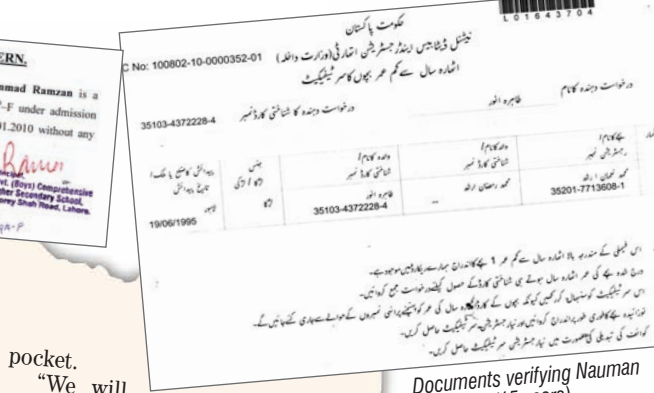
other than a school chemistry textbook and Rs 10 in Indian currency, BSF officials claimed he was a highly-motivated suicide bomber and had "confessed" to having received training at a pro-Taliban madrasa in Pakistan's Punjab province.

Officials claimed Arshad was trained at terror camps at Peshawar and Okhara, the very place where the lone surviving Mumbai terror strike perpetrator Ajmal Kasab comes from.

But LHRI's lawyers, who are now in regular telephonic contact with Arshad's mother Tahira Anwar and maternal uncle Asif (his father Mohammed Ramzan died some years ago), have put together a completely different version of the "facts."

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She discovered the boy was missing



Documents verifying Nauman Arshad's (15 years)

Subject	Time Marks	Marks Obtained	Adjusted Score	Grade
Urdu	100	65	71	B
Mathematics	100	66	67	C
General Science	100	69	91	B
Social Studies	100	37	39	A
Arabic	100	56	50	C
Elective	100	78	91	A
Total	600	381	381	D

Result Card  
Grade VIII Examination 2009

# Luna's call travels across boundaries for Mehdi Hassan

A Jaipur-based writer visits ghazal king Mehdi Hasan's native village, Luna, in Rajasthan



By Ish Madhu Talwar

Music knows no boundaries, especially when it comes to Mehdi Hassan, the king of ghazal, popularly known as Khan Saheb in Pakistan. The call of Luna village in Rajasthan's Jhunjhnu district silently travels through the desert sand dunes to Khan Saheb in Pakistan. He reciprocates, as reported by some Pakistani dailies, expressing his desire to visit Luna despite his poor health.

Mehdi Hasan was born in Luna in 1927. He left at age 20 after the partition of the country in 1947 and settled in Pakistan, but decades after his departure his presence lingers there. And the memory of his village still haunts him. His childhood friends have passed on but the trees, wells and fields of the village remain, mute witness to the golden time he spent here.

How intensely one can love the land of one's birth is borne out by an incident in 1977, when Mehdi Hasan visited Luna for the first time after partition. He had come to Jaipur for a ghazal programme. The Rajasthan government honoured him with the status of a state guest and took him to Luna at his request. On the way he suddenly asked the driver to stop the car. Everybody travelling with him was surprised be-

yond belief as he got down and went towards a temple built on a small roadside mound, then flung himself, weeping, on the ground, rolling in the sand. It was like child weeping in the lap of his mother after a long separation.

Poet Krishna Kalpit who witnessed this scene remembers how it "moved and mesmerised everybody. Mehdi Hasan's son, then a small boy who was also there, asked us what had happened to his father. We consoled him and told him not to worry. On regaining his composure Mehdi Hasan told us that he used to sing bhajans in the temple. He also told us that his family still talks to each other in Shekhawati back in Pakistan and how drawn he is to the land of Shekhawati."

His son Asif Mehdi is now also a ghazal singer. His album with his father, 'Dil Jo Rota Hai' (The Heart That Weeps) has already hit the stands.

When Mehdi Hasan visited Luna in 1977 the whole village echoed with "Mehendyo ayo hai, Mehndyo ayo hai" (Mehndi has come, Mehdi has come). Everywhere he went, people welcomed him with milk and curd or 'Chhaachh Rabri', a dish made of buttermilk and porridge. The Collector (District Magistrate) of Jhunjhnu gave a dinner in his honour but Mehdi Hasan slipped away to his sister with a distant relation in Jhunjhnu and ate the famous Rajasthanian garlic chutney and millet bread in her house.

Mehdi Hasan has been to Luna twice, as a state guest. A new generation has grown up there since. If he ever visits Luna



again, there will be nobody there to say "Mehendyo ayo hai, Mehendyo ayo hai" although they know about him and they love and honour him. Mehdi Hasan sang a ghazal perhaps for this very situation: "Mohabbat karne wale kam na honge/ Teri mehfil mei leikin hum na honge."

When the people living in the cluster of 250 houses that form Luna village saw our car approach they guessed that somebody had come to inquire about Mehdi Hasan. It is because of Mehdi Hasan that the government gifted Luna this road, leading straight to the village from the state highway.

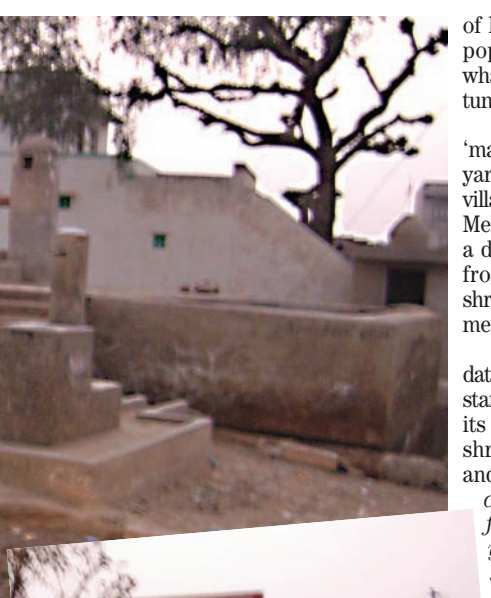
As we entered the village, a man we met there, Sanwara, asked us to go and see Narayan Singh, Mehdi Hasan's childhood friend and the only person alive in Luna who knew him (the only other person, Arjun Singh, is now senile). Mehdi Hasan meets Narayan Singh whenever he comes to Luna.



Above left: Narayan Singh, Mehdi Hasan's childhood friend; above: ancient well at Luna; right: roadside board announcing Luna — Photos by Ish Madhu Talwar and Prenchand Gandhi

Narayan Singh lives in a room surrounded by many houses with his sons and grandsons. On his wife's death a decade ago he took sanyasa and wears saffron robes. He claims to be 90 years old but does not look it. He passes his time binding and stitching his old books. He informed us that he was well versed in the Quran. He showed us a rare copy of the Ramcharit Manas translated into Urdu.

Mehdi Hasan comes from a family of traditional musicians. He claims to be the 16th generation of musicians hailing from the Kalawant clan. Mehdi Hasan ob-



Above left: Narayan Singh, Mehdi Hasan's childhood friend; above: ancient well at Luna; right: roadside board announcing Luna — Photos by Ish Madhu Talwar and Prenchand Gandhi

tained his early musical training from his father Ustad Khayal and Dadra at the age of eight. Narayan Singh says he learnt music from Mehdi Hasan's grandfather Imam Khan, a well-known classical singer with whom the Mehdi Hasan also studied music. He told us that he was interested in spiritual music,

not in ghazals. He does not remember any ghazal sung by Mehdi Hasan. "Mehdi Hasan's style of ghazal singing incorporates the subtle elements of both Dhrupad and Khayal," said Narayan Singh. "He enriched his ghazals by using the various techniques of classical music and above all a touch

lift water in a 'charas' (large leather bucket).

The people are tight-lipped about Mehdi Hasan's old house which, as Rameshwar, in a restrained voice, told us, "was built with mud. Now Bhagirath Meena, an administrative officer, has built a palatial house there. He lives in some city".

One feels Mehdi Hasan's presence in the village but it is difficult to gather more facts about his childhood. Narayan Singh is unable to "summon up remembrance of things past". All that he recalls is that Mehdi Hasan's father Azeem Khan was a singer in Mandawa Thakur's court and the Thakur used to grant lands to him in lieu of his services. His uncle Ismail Khan was a wrestler. Mehdi, with his brother Kadir and Narayan Singh used to go for wrestling. Rehmi and Bhuri were his two sisters.

Luna is still there for Mehdi Hasan, and Mehdi Hasan's passion for Luna has not waned with the passage of time. It is said about the legendary singer Tansen that those who go to his shrine are all ears — who knows when the Ustad will start singing? No wonder Luna still anxiously awaits Mehdi Hasan's footsteps. And maybe this time when Mehdi Hasan returns after visiting Luna, he will murmur in his heart: "Ab ke hum bichde to kabhi khwabon me milein/ Jaise sukhe hue phool kitabon me milein."

The writer is a prominent journalist. He has visited Pakistan with a delegation of writers. Email: ishmadhu14@gmail.com

As we passed through the village lanes at dusk, the smoke rising from the hamlets and the trees swaying in the breeze gave us the feel of a ghazal sung by Mehdi Hasan: "Dekh tu dil ki jaan se uhta hai/ Ye dhuwan sa kahan se uhta hai".

The peripheries of the wells are ancient. In the old days people used big wooden pulleys to

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## DESTINATION PEACE

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

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