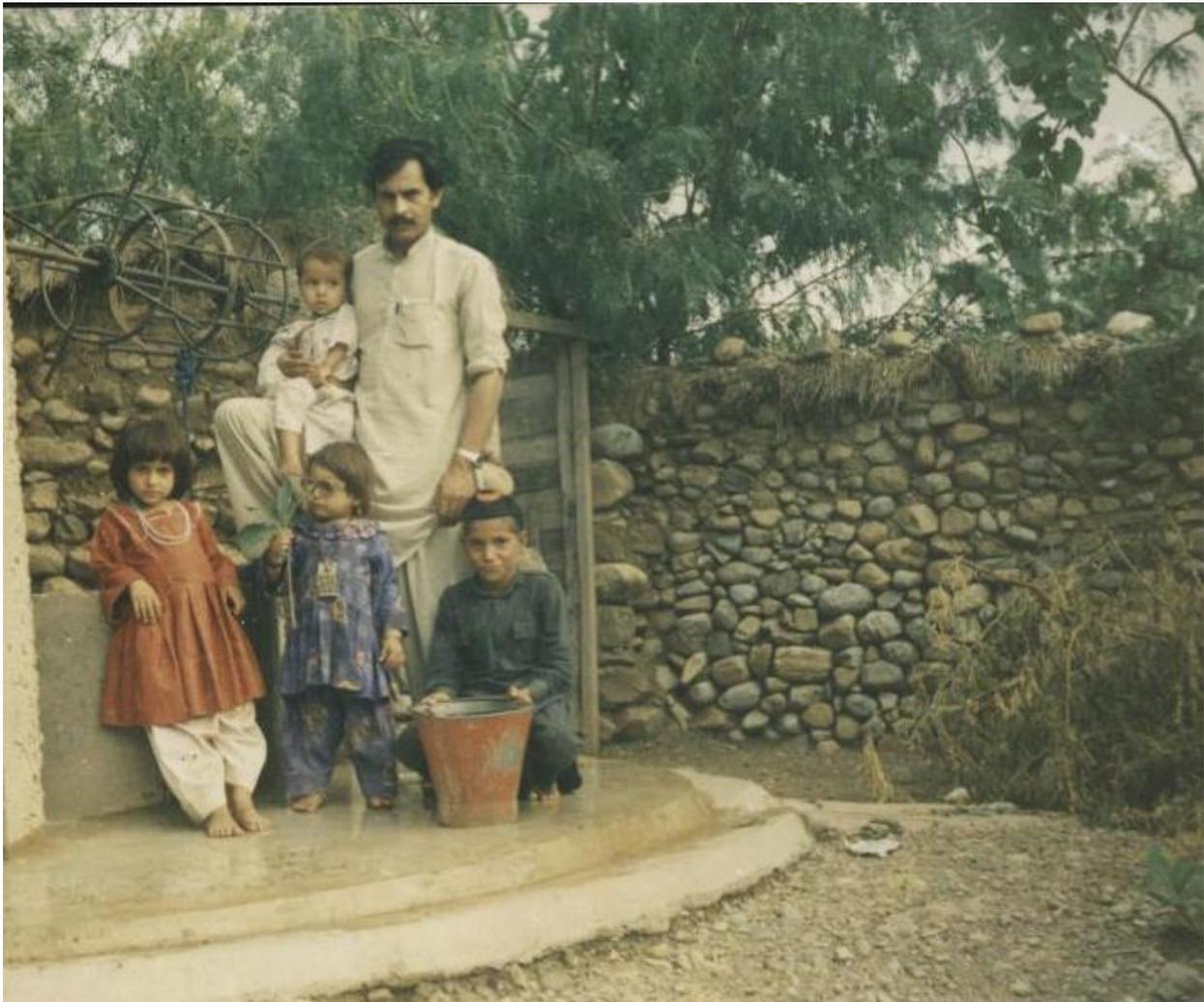


It was winter 1988 when an afghan refugee lady gave birth to Bahauddin Baha in a mud house in Peshawar. She had already lost an elder child to complications when her husband was out supporting the family and there wasn't any one who cared enough to take her to hospital. It would have been much easier for Bahauddin to support his family if his eldest brother had made it to this world.



Bahauddin in his father's lap outside their mud home with his two older sisters and neighbor.

Bahauddin is the eldest son in a family of 7 sisters and 2 brothers, 5 of whom are half blind. Growing up in a family with disabilities, he helped the sick from a very young age. They would come from Afghanistan seeking medical care and stay with his family in Peshwar, Pakistan. Through his interactions, Bahauddin developed a great compassion and desire to help others in need. At a young age he realized that through becoming a medical doctor he could fulfill his desire to heal.

Because of the war and the poverty his family faced, Bahauddin has lived in 11 different locations in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. After the defeat of the Russian-backed government his family returned to their native village of Mazina in the Rodat district. This was where he formally began school. After 2 years in school, civil war emerged and forced his family to leave Afghanistan once more just before the rise of the Taliban in 1997.

Bahauddin and his family left Afghanistan again for Pakistan with a handful of housewares and a cow. He still remembers the ride on famous Khyber pass from the Torkham border towards the neighboring city of Peshawar. The weather was freezing and it was raining on the open truck with a cow standing in it. He and his siblings huddled together to keep warm in the cold weather.

For a year or so Bahauddin could not go to school because his father couldn't obtain work. His family would sell cow's milk and lived hand to mouth. Bahauddin would take his family's cow to graze in the mornings while other children of his age were going to school. It was a very painful time for him because he too wanted craved education.

Finally his father was able to open a medical laboratory and Bahauddin was able to go back to school. For Bahauddin, it is recalled as golden days in his life. Even though the school was in a different country and classes were in a different national language, he liked to be challenged. He found that he could excel at school and started to rise to first position in his classes from elementary through high school.

Bahauddin was very inquisitive in terms of education and his great desire to learn only grew with each passing year. He found many learning centers in Peshawar that even the native citizens of the city didn't know about. He developed an interest in becoming a member of Peshawar's Library, but he was not allowed because of his nationality and refugee status in Pakistan. He asked to borrow his Pakistani friend's library card, and used the card to borrow books and spend time at the library. It enabled him to read many books on education, psychology, behavioral science, culture, religion and language science.



Bahauddin in the Peshawar Library compound with borrowed books in his hand.

One day his English teacher in 10th grade spoke of an English Language Center where native English teachers taught, IELI (International English Language Institute). He searched for the address of the institute for many days, finally finding its location. Passing a very challenging interview, Bahauddin was the youngest student in his classes among professionals and earned first position in 3 semesters.

Being in IELI wasn't just a chance to learn English; but it was an opportunity to begin a journey into becoming a citizen of the world. Bahauddin started to think beyond his tribe, culture, and language and developed a respect and tolerance for difference cultures and religions. Education built a love and respect for Bahauddin's fellow human beings.

It is often said that history repeats itself, and so it did in Bahauddin's life. He spent the last days of high school in the same school where he had begun his education 12 years earlier. Realizing that there were no opportunities for higher education in Pakistan, his family had returned to Afghanistan. That was where, in 2007, Bahauddin graduated from high school and started to take coaching classes for the national university enrollment test. He would wake up at 3am and take the first local bus to the center of Peshawar City, where he studied for the entry test with an Afghan professor. The test would allow him to become a student at a medical university. Each day for two years he traveled for two hours to classes, but he discovered that despite all his efforts he could not get accepted to medical school because of rampant corruption in higher education at the time.

This was evidenced when the entry test was unexpectedly returned with a denial of acceptance in spite of many hours of study and preparation. Bahauddin and his mother shed painful tears, but vowed to challenge the results. When Bahauddin and his father sought an explanation from the Ministry of Higher Education, they were told that Bahauddin could only be admitted to medical school if a bribe was paid.

Bahauddin's father turned to him and said: "I don't want to plant a tree and steal water from someone else, because the fruit will not be legitimate. If you become a doctor based on a bribe, you will be of no help to the sick." The only other option available for Bahauddin was to go to a private university, which he knew he and his family could not truly afford. He still recalls when his father managed to give him the fee for the first semester with a trembling hand.

Soon after he was accepted to the university, Bahauddin began to look for part time jobs. To finance his education, he has worked with many international non-governmental organizations. He discovered that this work was not only an opportunity to arrange his fees, but also an opportunity to serve others. He found joy through working with humanitarian organizations and helping many around him.

Bahauddin worked with [OP Mercy](#), a Swedish NGO as a book promoter in Nangrahar to introduce a culture of reading and critical thinking among Afghan youth. He was also a language and cultural advisor to the expatriate staff of [Asian Rural Life Development Organization](#) Afghanistan, and has translated unpublished poetry for the Nangrahar Poetry Project through [SIL International](#) to give a voice to the marginalized communities on a national and international level.

Currently, Bahauddin is coordinating and translating teleconferences between [Teamcare USA](#) and Nangrahar Public Health Hospital to assist in the education of Afghan doctors, and he has assisted in emergency preparedness workshops for [Alliance Solution Group Inc.](#)

Bahauddin will soon publish a book that he co- translated with another friend for [Interlitfoundation](#), and he has been a research representative for King's college London. Part of his research is published in a book titled [Age of Empires](#) by Dr. Christian Tripodi.

He has recently managed a project for [Moni International Consulting](#) , coordinating a program and presenting lectures on civic responsibilities and leadership development for 1469 of the youth of Jalalabad city. Additionally, he has written a paper on street kids in Jalalabad together with other youth from Egypt and the United States as part of his project work for WISE. His insight on education in Afghanistan has been published in famous Italian newspaper *CORRIERE DELLA SERA* [click the link to read the article in Italian](#).

In November 2012, he was selected to be among 30 learners from all around the world to have his voice heard at the World Innovation Summit for Education. Participating in this international conference and seeing leaders such as the Amir of Qatar and former Prime Minister of the U. K., Mr. Gordon Brown face to face was a big achievement for a person who was born in a refugee camp.

Finally, in 2013 Bahauddin became a member of United Services Rotary, an online Rotary group comprised of 26 young professionals that lives the motto of 'Service Above Self'.



Bahauddin with his expatriate friend at Kabul International airport, flying for the first time to take part in WISE. His friend was very kind to teach him about how to get boarding pass, get luggage and find his connecting flight. He also lent him clothing that was needed for formal meetings.

Despite the large personal safety concerns in Afghanistan, economical problems, workload, and family issues, Bahauddin is now almost finished with his medical degree. The institute he is studying at will give him credentials, but he still needs practical application skills to become a good doctor. Unfortunately, many of these skills are not currently part of the curriculum at his university. It is because of this that Bahauddin earnestly hopes to secure a place working in a reputable hospital. Through continued education and developing additional expertise, Bahauddin hopes to become an excellent doctor and fulfill his dream of healing and serving his fellow human beings.

The screenshot shows the homepage of RET (Protecting Through Education). The browser address bar displays 'theret.org/en/home'. The website features a blue header with navigation links: ABOUT US, OUR PRIORITIES, WHERE WE WORK, DONORS AND AFFILIATIONS, NEWS, EN FR ES. Below the header, the main content area includes a search bar, a 'Photo of the Month' section, a 'DONATE NOW!' button, and a 'View Map' section. A large photo shows four men standing together, with a quote from Sadako Ogata: "Post-primary education should be a promise, not a dream..." Below the photo, there are sections for 'ABOUT RET' (focusing on providing post-primary education), 'OUR PARTNERS' (listing UNICEF, IABC, and UNHCR), and 'RET's Memberships' (stating commitment to assisting communities to meet educational needs).

Bahauddin featured on RET an international organization that works with refugees in different countries. It was a coincidence that RET found one of their refugees beneficiary has made it to the World Innovation Summit for Education. Left to right Bahauddin, Chairman of WISE Abdullah Althani, Barbara Hendricks Opera singer and UNHCR goodwill ambassador, Mr Moqim RET Afghanistan director.

Please also read what his friends and supervisors have to say about Bahauddin.