

**T**alk about modesty. Direct and to the point, Khadija Mahbub-ul-Haq spent the sum total of one minute telling me her personal and concise biographical history. She was keen to stress that her work, both past and present, was more interesting and relevant. So, with the sweep of her jewelled hand I learnt that she was born in Dhaka, and like many other Pakistanis, relates to the melting pot of the sub-continent in its entirety.

Hers was a family of educators, her father being first and foremost a teacher, who set up a girls school and college, as well as being a "committed social worker". After studying economics at Manchester University (where she obtained her B.A. Honours and a Masters Degree) she began working at the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics and shortly thereafter met and married fellow economist, Mahbub-ul-Haq, with whom she worked. Together they have two children.

"I have always believed in the search for social justice. My husband joined me in my mission much later". Having returned to Pakistan just three months ago, Khadija Haq is responsible for setting up a vital new NGO called the Human Development Centre and holds the position of executive Vice-President. "I have always had a job and a cause. Now I feel I have a cause and a cause. One of the major reasons for poverty in the SAARC region is inadequate human development". Their work involves concentrating on and highlighting issues such as education, health, nutrition, clean water, family planning, the right to employment, and other fundamental political, social and economic rights for the individual.

Driven by a purpose, Mrs Haq wants to see action and implementation at ground level. "Our feudalistic and tribalistic structure has never allowed our masses to have access to education or a better life. The human development centre employs some of the country's best brains to reflect on key issues, learn from the experience of other developing countries and provide a methodical direction and approach to tackling problems."

Keenly motivated by the topic of women's status, Khadija Haq is clear about her objectives: Equal rights to property and employment. "Women make a vital contribution to the economy, but less than a third of a woman's work is recognised or paid for. We deserve equal rights."

In her early years at P.I.D.E. she unleashed quite a storm. Her first paper was about deficit financing in Pakistan, to which she added the comment that if the money is being used as an investment to increase wealth, it is beneficial, but if money is being borrowed merely for consumption, it can have disastrous consequences. Her second paper was a professional measurement of the inequality of income. This led to her third and most controversial paper: "The concentration of income and wealth in Pakistan: A twenty family study", (later amended to twenty two families). It took two years of investigative work, sifting through classified data in archives to write this "time bomb" which exposed the fact that 1% of the population had control of over 80% of the nation's wealth. With the term "twenty two families" Khadija Haq coined a phrase in our terminology, though very few people know that a bright young woman, freshly returned from University and in her twenties was responsible for it.

Keen to distance herself from the political misuse of her paper, Khadija Haq vehemently states, "my purpose was that economic growth and social justice must be linked. My conclusions of imple-

By  
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Khadija Mahbub-ul-haq

## A citizen of the world



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menting social safety nets, donated by these very industrialists, in the fields of education, health centres, and compensation to workers (as exists in developed countries), was totally ignored". By involving rich industrialists in mandatory schemes for the national good, instead of attacking them, Pakistan may have been made of a more durable economic model than it is today. Instead the powers that were used it as an excuse to nationalise everything and hence Pakistan's economy "slid backwards". Coupled with years of political upheaval there has been a "terrible regression". Mrs Haq is quick to add that the majority of policy makers often disregard the

valued conclusions reached by professionals and intellectuals, and instead base their decisions on mass appeal, votes and the rhetoric that supports them.

After this stint at P.I.D.E., and having married, the couple went to Harvard where Mahbub-ul-Haq taught and researched his first book, "strategies of economic planning". They returned to Pakistan briefly only to return to the States and then were based in Washington. "I have always worked in research institutions, (the Brookings Institution and the Overseas Development Council) and have maintained a position in a policy think tank group, called the

North-South Roundtable, which deals with socio-economic issues of developing countries". Mrs Haq is the current chairman of this global policy research and dialogue forum of thinkers and policy makers from all over the world. For the last seven years, Khadija Haq held the position of senior advisor on education to UNICEF, at their headquarters in New York. She has been responsible for designing policies and strategies for basic education in developing countries with a particular focus on the education of girls. Mrs Haq belongs to many professional groups including the earth council institute advisory board, governing council of the Society for International Development, the Third World Forum Federation of University women, UNDP's eminent group of advisors on human development. Khadija Haq has written extensively and her better known publications include: dialogue for a new order (1980), adjustment with growth (1984), development for people (1989).

For many years, under the umbrella of the North-South Roundtable, Mrs Haq lobbied actively for a worldwide annual development report, through which global consciousness could be raised. The challenge now lies in the implementation of advice at a national, local level. Another cause which has not yet been realised, is the need for a separate U.N. agency for the advancement of women (UNAAW). "So far whatever we have is fragmented. There is no single overseeing body. No agency has the power or political backing to ensure implementation of measures."

During the 80s, her husband Mahbub-ul-Haq worked with General Zia. Mrs Haq also lived in Pakistan between 1984 and 1988. "I always travelled back and forth so much that I never really felt that I'd left". Her home was maintained throughout her absences. However she thinks of herself as an international citizen. "this is the hope for the next century. Nationalism breeds prejudice and is not a healthy way forward."

Asked why she gave up such an important job in New York, Khadija Haq candidly explains that she views life in four stages: Firstly, the learning stage; secondly, career/children; thirdly, social service; and fourthly a spiritual quest. "Just by belonging to a country we have so much security. Ask the Bosnians or the Palestinians of their suffering. Each one of us owes it to our country to do some sort of worthwhile service. Whether we succeed or not becomes irrelevant, but our intentions have to be right."

"I don't know how I manage time. I suppose I prioritise and draw up lists for everything. I'm lucky because I'm part of a husband-wife team. We share the same causes, we're on the same wavelength, and we're working towards the same goal. I've had to sacrifice much of my personal life and I have very little time for friends. When my children were born I sacrificed my profession for child rearing. I handled it, and I know I did it well. Women have tremendous energy and potential. What we often lack is self esteem and courage. But faced with a challenge, and if you remove the dependency syndrome, women blossom."

Khadija Haq was due to set off the day after we met for a six week trip around the world. Her diary was tightly packed with dates and venues for various conferences and seminars along her route, all connected to her primary focus, human development, women's advancement and issues of global concern. She hopes to return to Pakistan fuelled with fresh ideas for her brainchild, the human development centre. ■