

Letter of destiny



Mumbai

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Arabian
Sea



A true story

as told to GenBonds

Letter of Destiny

Thirty-something Tasadduq had a lot on his mind that November day. Not only was he missing his wife Sharifa, who was still living with his family in Ahmedabad, he had just been told by his boss that soon he would need to relocate to Karachi, Pakistan. This was due to the ensuing Partition that was now enveloping India.

Tasadduq had been married for just three months when his job at the Habib Bank branch in Mumbai had forced him away from Sharifa. It was 1947, and the ominous wave of partition was sweeping through both countries, affecting millions of lives and livelihoods.



Another busy session was in progress on Mohammed Ali Road, leading to Bhendi Bazaar in the bustling district of Mumbai (then known as Bombay). Tasadduq was on a goodwill errand to deliver a letter to Mr. Kokawalla. The letter was from his parents.

Tasadduq had recently returned from visiting his own home in Ahmedabad, and while he was there, the gentleman's parents had given him a letter for their son, who worked at the Kachins company in Mumbai. Apparently, the son was leaving soon to take up a new post in Aden, in South Yemen.



When Tasadduq finally arrived at the Kachins' business premises and asked for Mr Kokawalla,

whose letter he was bearing, he was told that he had already left for Pakistan, as there had been a change of plan.

With his errand unaccomplished, Tasadduq was about to leave the Kachins' premises when one of the owner managers of the company quizzed him about his own line of work. Tasadduq told him about his employment at the Habib Bank. And added that he was also likely to end up moving to Pakistan, or perhaps even lose his job. Upon hearing this, the Manager made Tasadduq an impromptu offer. Would he be interested in taking up the post in Aden – the one that was originally intended for the Kokawalla's son? They already had a spare visa and the necessary work permits!

Tasadduq was taken by utter surprise. At that moment he could not decide between Karachi or Aden. He was in a very tight spot. So, he asked if he could think the matter over and let the Manager know the next day. He was told that he could, but he better act quickly, as he would need to board the ship in a week's time!



Tasadduq thought really hard. He was an intelligent man with good boarding-school education. He was ambitious and hard-working too. Overnight, he concluded that the promise of Aden and the unknown would most likely be a better option for him than the uncertainty of a tumultuous partition-ridden Karachi. He boarded the ship for Aden the following week. This journey would prove a turning point for him, his family, and his future generations.

After a few days journey and enduring several bouts of sea sickness in the Arabian Sea, Tasadduq arrived in Aden, which was a British Overseas Colony at the time. It enjoyed the status of a free port and its trading potential was booming.

Tasadduq worked industriously for the next four years. He quickly became a very popular and well-liked member of the expat community in Aden. His strong English language skills were volunteered to assist and help people with a host of administrative, legal and financial matters and chores. He was also a popular member of the board of governors of a local school. However, his personal and marital life suffered tremendously, and so did his health.

During this period Sharifa only saw him on his brief and occasional visits back to Ahmedabad. Her husband-less home life coupled with her demanding in-laws was becoming onerous and lonely, leaving her feeling miserable and sad.

Tasadduq's employment as an import-export agent earned him a monthly wage of 250 shillings. However, he only kept about 25 shillings for himself and sent the rest of the money back to Ahmedabad to his family. Most of this money was spent on his younger brother's study of Law. Why? Because Tasadduq had made a selfless-promise to himself to help his younger brother build his future. Thus, even his wife Sharifa felt overlooked during that time.

After four years, once his brother had successfully completed his law studies, Tasadduq arranged for him to travel to Aden. In preparation, Tasadduq also borrowed money to purchase a small apartment on Jafran Road, part of which was used by his brother as home-office for his fledgling law practice.

It wasn't until 1954 that Sharifa was finally able to travel to Aden to join Tasadduq, after seven difficult years of longing and only very brief sporadic get-togethers with her husband, when he was able to visit her in India. However, there were to be yet more hardships for Sharifa on her home front.

Once again, through clever manoeuvring and unbeknown to Tasadduq, his brother quietly arranged for their mother and sister to arrive in Aden, before Sharifa could! He also upset Tasadduq by saying that now there was not enough room in the apartment for Sharifa to be able to live with them! (Later, after about a month of Sharifa's arrival in Aden, the brother got married and moved his wife into the apartment.)

Tasadduq was incredulous at his brother's attitude, and decided to move out (of his own apartment).

On the same day, his boss sensed his low spirits and, upon enquiry, learnt about the dilemma that was now facing Tasadduq. At once, the boss assured Tasadduq that he will make sure that a new apartment in the boss' own building complex, which was currently under construction but nearing completion, would be reserved for Tasadduq to rent. This uplifted Tasadduq's spirits tremendously and paved the way for Tasadduq and Sharifa to finally commence a normal and happy married life. Though, undoubtedly, they would still encounter further more challenges.



Several months later, Tasadduq started his own import-export agency, which he called *Globe Trading Agencies*. He and Sharifa were also able to get a loan to buy an apartment of their own and a car – a green Volkswagon Beetle!

In March 1961, they were finally blessed with the first of their three daughters and a son. They called her Niloofer (meaning a flower)!



Thus, one could say that a goodwill stroll to hand-deliver a letter to a stranger mapped the course of Tasadduq's and his family's lives – and may be even all of their destinies!

Many years later, Tasadduq, Sharifa and his children emigrated to live in England.



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