



Khalid Sherdil

21 April 1970 – 22 May 2020

**Founding Member, The Shahid Javed Burki Institute of Public Policy
at NetSol**

A Tribute to Khalid Sherdil



Mr. Shahid Javed Burki (Chairman, BIPP)



I write this with a heavy heart: a day after the funeral and burial of Khalid Sherdil, my relative, friend and a great supporter of the Burki Institute. This remarkable individual as Khalid Sherdil as many have already said in their rich tributes to him, occupied a space on this earth which is hard to fill. Everything he did, he did well; every relationship he had he cultivated with care and affection; he served the Pakistani state in many capacities with honesty, dignity, and total commitment. Shahid Najam and I are contemplating to found a chair at our institute to honor his memory. The chair would be devoted to advancing our understanding of the process of urbanization and how it can be steered to help those who live in Punjab province's many urban areas. That was the last job he had while he was still alive. We will also have the Sherdil Chair develop a teaching program on urban development, using the enormously rich data and information his Urban Unit had collected. The "Unit" is a great example of how the state can be used to develop societies and provide care to the citizenry. As it happens, I happened to be reading Zachary Carter's monumental biography of John Maynard Keynes when the news of Khalid's passing reached me. The book, "The Price of Peace: Money, Democracy, and the Life of John Maynard Keynes", is a good way to understand and appreciate a career such as Sherdil's. When governments lavishly borrow and spend to prop up an economy in the midst of a pandemic as Pakistan and several other countries are doing at this time, they are following the playbook of John Maynard Keynes, writes Carter. In my many discussions with the late Sherdil we talked about the role the state can play to advance societies and provide care for those who needed it. We were being Keynesians.

Mr. Shahid Najam (Vice-Chairman, BIPP)



Tears welled up and trickled down many eyes when we heard the tragic news of untimely demise of Khalid Sherdil in the plane crash on 22 May 2020. It was indeed demolishing and devastating- especially for someone like me who has known the Sherdil family for more than almost 35 years, right from the days when Khalid was in his early teens through to my interaction with him just two days before his farewell to the world. The intense feelings of loss and bereavement cannot be conveyed through symbols of words; the meanings can only be articulated and fathomed through the unspoken language and inaudible beats of heart. Men of talent are scarce and rare, we Pakistanis are unlucky, that they are callously consumed never to return to us again.

While death is a bitter and inescapable reality, a sudden and untimely exit to the eternity of those whom we love and adore always create profoundly shocking ripples in our lives; these ripples continue to assiduously stir a sense of deep grief, suffering and sorrow in our souls despite our faith and religious conviction that departure from the world leads to an eternal life - of serenity, purity, innocence, and loftier significance.

Those who have the privilege of interacting with Sherdil family, sincerely recognize and concede that Sherdils are like a fountain of love who attract the people irresistibly to partake the joy and generosity which flows out of them to enrich the hearts and souls. Khalid fully lived up to this spirit and tradition of love and affection: his friends, peers, superiors and subordinates will vouch for his caliber and prominence without reservation or hesitation.

Khalid entered the mortal stage of the world in 1970 but during his brief stay, with youthful exuberance, dynamic creativity and passionate commitment, he lived the fullness of life in its entirety inspired by faith, hope and idealism. He manifestly demonstrated that it is not the duration nor longevity rather the troika of three dimensions of life which define and determine the meaning and purpose of life. It has an intense internal dimension in pursuit of personal ambition and objectives to stride forward to be able to expand frontiers of excellence and achievements and actualize the full potential. It has horizontal stream with dedicated discipline to be of service to others, the wider society and the global humanity; and a vertical link to commune and connect with the Creator. Khalid lived his life in fullness and richness with outstanding accomplishments and achievement to his credit.

While Khalid's expedition sadly came to an early end, the legacies of his hard work, going beyond the call of duty, caliber, gentle and giving nature; his real and genuine intellectual and emotional commitment completely devoid of adornment and additives in producing the desired results; his insatiable passion and yearning for Pakistan to reform and excel, are going to ricochet forever in our memories and hearts.

Khalid you will always be remembered as a colleague for your core values of integrity and commitment, energy and motivation, equity and fairness, learning and development; for your leadership qualities, strategic perspective, institution building, visioning and inspiring actions; and above as a person full of benevolence, compassion, magnanimity, grace and kindness.

May God Almighty (SWT) grant Khalid the highest ranks in Jannah. Our deepest condolences to his bereaved family. May He enable them to bear this irreparable loss and deal with the clouds of sorrow, agony and affliction with courage, patience, fortitude and perseverance.

Ambassador Shamshad Ahmad (Former Foreign Secretary & Chairman, Lahore Center for Peace Research)



We are remembering a very special person. Khalid Sherdil; brother to Mujahid, son to his beloved mother, and indeed, friend and colleague to thousands of others in Pakistan and elsewhere.

Khalid was special to me, personally as well as professionally. Personally, he was the son of a very dear friend and colleague of mine, late Sherdil. I have known this family since the 1960s when Sherdil and I were

together at the Civil Services Academy.

Until few years ago, Khalid's association with me was only of personal nature, being the son of a very dear friend of mine. But it was at one of the BIPP's Conferences in Lahore three years ago that I discovered Khalid's extra-bureaucratic talents. He was no ordinary bureaucrat. He then came to my house and asked

me if I could help him in launching Lahore Center for Peace Research (LCPR). I could not say no to Sherdil's son. He was like my own son.

In the last two and half years, I saw Khalid at LCPR playing a phenomenal role in generating a positive and high value work on issues relevant to peace and security, economic development, foreign policy and security matters through policy dialogue in the form of roundtable discussions and conferences. He made LCPR a well-known entity in the family of similar organizations in the country.

With his well-rounded experience and personality as well as his inter-personal communication skills, combined with his sense of commitment and dedication, Khalid was instrumental in establishing LCPR's cooperative relations with several foreign and domestic entities.

He organised several major events inside as well as outside the country which included a large Roundtable with the Chinese Ambassador in Lahore in 2018, three International Conferences in Turkey and then initiating with me what we call the Lahore Process on Afghan Peace beginning with the Bhurban Event last year. He was at the same time, acquitting himself in his governmental responsibilities with distinction and confidence. Urban Unit was one of them.

Khalid leaves a void that can never be filled. Remembering him personally, one sees him in many images. A very profound person, a patriotic Pakistani, a sincere friend, an amiable colleague and a civil servant of unmatched qualities, class and caliber. There are in fact very few left who have his grace, dignity, knowledge, competence, and self-effacing character.

I always found him warm, polite, gracious, ready to help, always keen to learn and explore, the soul of any venture he undertook, the life of any company he was part of, and above all so human and so passionately committed to his country. Khalid never sought to acquire fame or glory, but success came to him open and unencumbered. He leaves his family and friends desolate and empty except for all the beautiful memories that will abide.

Our deepest condolences to the bereaved family, and prayers for the eternal rest and reward for the departed soul.

Dr. Iftexhar Ahmed Chowdary (Former Foreign Minister, Bangladesh)



I have no words to express the pain I felt at Khalid's tragic demise. I fervently pray for the eternal peace of his departed soul. I had come to learn of the tragedy from friends in Pakistan soon after the accident.

I have very warm memories of my interactions with Khalid, in Lahore as also in Singapore. He was a person of prodigious intellect and unswerving commitment to his responsibilities. To all who knew him,

or came by him, Khalid's passing would be deeply mourned. The Chairman of Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) Ambassador Gopinath Pillai has requested me to convey the deep condolences of all at the Institute to Khalid's family.

Tariq Hussain (Member Board of Directors, BIPP)



Khalid Sherdil was a dynamic and talented leader. I had the opportunity to meet him a few times in BIPP meetings. Each time I observed some new dimension of his personality. His leadership in the Punjab province in defining and articulating the role of cities and urbanization was exceptional. He was recognized as a highly promising young civil servant of Pakistan. His departure at this young age is a loss for Pakistan and especially the civil service. May his soul rest in peace.

Najeeb Ghauri (Founder, NetSol Technologies, Inc)



I wanted to offer our condolences for now late Khalid Sherdil that came as a total shock along with the loss of other 96 passengers. May they all rest in eternal Peace and their families be healed, which will take a long time.

As much we got to know Khalid in every meetings we had at NetSol in last few years, he always came out as a smart and hardworking professional, a bureaucrat with high integrity and passionate about Pakistan. He definitely stood out in the total fabric of politicians and bureaucrats as a positive force. he had such an amazing future and promises for Punjab as well at the Federal level.

I offer for his family to hold strong and courageous as his fate was written this way, sadly. Only one comfort we all feel as Muslims that all these 97 victims of PIA crash will have special place in heaven having departed during the last most powerful nights of Ramadan.

Mr. Ayoub Ghauri (Member Board of Directors, BIPP)



The first time i met Khalid Sherdil was at a BIPP meeting i was asked to attend on behalf of Netsol Technologies back in 2015-2016. I saw this very well dressed and well groomed, handsome youngish man quietly listening to the proceedings. And when his turn to present came he unleashed his brilliance in speaking eloquently, well supported by statistics, and also with relevant comparisons. I knew i was meeting someone outstanding. He never tried to overshadow any conversation, he didn't have to. Very humbly he would present his perspective in a soft yet firm tone. The content he spoke about kept him in a league of his own.

I was pleasantly surprised to see him among audience twice when i was presenting outside BIPP. He would always be gracious in his compliments and appreciation.

I will always remember our trip together as a team of four we took to visit University of Missouri, St Louis in fall 2016. He discovered great wit, sense of humour and playful side of his personality.

A man of many facets we met on some cultural events as well. I fondly remember our call last year where he sought recommendations for recruitment for Data Sciences. Within my notes i see his name for people to call on 11th May 2020 as i just wanted to keep up with how things were at his end. Unfortunately that never happened as i got busy and couldn't make that call. And within days such precious life was taken away from us in favour of eternal abode in the heavens. Farewell dear friend, you shall be remembered at every important junctures in our lives.

Ms. Nasreen Kasuri (Member Board of Directors, BIPP)



My association with Khalid Sherdil was very short as I met him briefly at one of our BIPP meetings.

He came across as a serious minded and intelligent person. His colleagues speak very highly of him. He was known to be a competent and hardworking bureaucrat with great integrity and an outstanding reputation. His dedication to civil society can be seen in his research publications.

His untimely and unfortunate death in the air crash of 22nd May, 2020, came as a shock to everyone.

He will be remembered fondly by all those who were associated with him.

Dr. Daud Ahmed (Member Board of Directors, BIPP)



My association with dear Khalid Sherdil was short, but memorable. I first met him about three years ago when we collaborated on preparation of the 2017 BIPP Annual Report on review and analysis of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He was the contributor on regional linkages of CPEC. Khalid provided us with a chapter that was quite extensive and original; showcasing his impressive broad knowledge of the existing and potential regional trade agreements.

We worked together on the 2018 report in similar manner. I fond Khalid to be a strong professional and a very humble person. I always thought that he is an unusual asset to Pakistan's civil service. His untimely demise is a national loss. May Allah bless his soul and grant patience to his family members and friends to bear this loss.

Dr. Mehmood Ahmed (Advisory Council Member, BIPP)



Mr. Khalid Sherdil was truly a gentleman and a professional. He would always go out of way to help people from all classes and would try his best to address their genuine problems. I also enjoyed social and cultural aspects of his life, as during last Faiz Festival at Alhamra, spent enjoyable moments, seeing a very different side of him. I always benefited from his vast knowledge on issues related to disaster

management, water, agriculture and great deal on China Pakistan Economic Corridor. On a personal note, three years ago, being Secretary of Industry he had the vision to study the sugarcane issues in the country, a story well documented in my recent article on sugarcane industry published in the Business Recorder, what I wrote very much speaks his ideas and attribute and the positive feed backs received from him. I was also actively working with him on number of credible policy studies as follow up to Punjab Spatial Strategy. I will simply miss him, as he perfectly understood me to get most out me. I offer heartiest condolences to his family for his irreparable loss. God bless his soul with peace.

Asad Ejaz Butt (Former Director, BIPP)



Khalid Sherdil (KS) was the shining star of the dull, dreary bureaucracy of Pakistan. Whenever I learnt of an injustice meted out to someone at the hands of the bureaucracy, I found solace by reminding myself of KS, the silver lining in an otherwise unjust and ineffective system. As soon as you imagined KS, the vibrant, dynamic and passionate servant of the people, hope and belief ran down your spine. He was different surely, but never a misfit. Extremely adaptive, KS could adjust to several situations and do

many things at a time, without failing at any.

I vividly remember my first interaction with him. He drove me to Sheikhpura where we implemented Teemardar - a health inventory management project funded by DFID. KS drove his white SUV while I sat ensconced in the back-left corner listening quite keenly to the stories he exclaimed to his friend sitting by him in the front passenger seat. He was recollecting his time at school in the US from where he began to discuss the feasibility of setting up an energy power plant. I remember carrying Noam Chomsky's latest at the time, "Anarchy", which I had planned to read along the way.

Mr. Shahid Najam had introduced me to him a week or so earlier. He probably wanted to examine my skills and see if the decision to hire me was in the interest of BIPP, an institute he loved dearly and worked for with an unmatched zeal and passion. As we gathered around the round table for the meeting at the DC's office in SKP, KS noticed the Chomsky book. Asked me if I was reading it. I replied "just started today". He asked me "do you know what Chomsky's area of research is - he writes quite prodigiously about politics and international relations but his area of research is not politics. Not many know about that side of Chomsky". He looked on curiously after asking the question as if he was going to discover something about me that my hirers do not know. That maybe I carry books for the show as many of the Pakistani youth, distanced from books, do to make an early impression. I replied hesitantly "Generative Grammar?" Immediately afterwards, a wry grin appeared on his face which soon turned into a nod of approval. It was my sixth week at BIPP and I knew I had earned the unrelenting support of this man at least. It happened exactly like that until late 2018 when I left the institute to join the government.

He was extremely pleased about my decision to join the government. At the launch of BIPP's 2018 report in Islamabad, he introduced me to a number of people saying he was with us at BIPP, he is now joined the government and become "one of us". During the same event, he connected with a friend of mine over a

neck tie which he had unfortunately lost. His love for clothing was just another side of his diverse and multi-faceted personality.

My last conversation with him was around 2 weeks before his untimely death. I had approached him to consider a budding magazine for marketing of Urban Unit's activities. KS had envisioned the idea of using a widely circulated magazine to publicise the events and activities of Urban Unit.

He was a doer - of rabid proportions. Driven by action, unlike most of us in the development sector who can only imagine, plan and procrastinate, Khalid Sherdil had the competence and moral courage to give practical expression to even the most unworkable of ideas. He was magical.

RIP Khalid Sherdil Sahib.

Khurram Zafar (Former Director, LUMS)



We spent two years - two of the best of my life at least - together as roommates at McGill. Khalid was pursuing his gazillionth Masters degree and Akbar, our other room-mate, and I were reluctant undergraduates who thought of College as torturous drudgery and kept questioning his motives for continuing to study despite already having a Masters degree. I wanted to graduate, get out of college, and start earning; while Khalid wanted to steadily but passionately chase a higher academic calling. That's what made him happy. So much that he opted for a double major, which to me, at the

time, was like asking for a cup of harrowing labor with an extra shot of agonizing servitude. We all thought he was crazy, but we didn't know any better than.

He loved college and the hustle and bustle of campus life. He relished Montreal summers and was among the rare souls who never complained about the spit freezing, bone chilling winters of the country. Khalid absolutely cherished the company of his countless friends at McGill. Friends, who were more like fans, which he acquired while trying to help students in all types of pickled situations, or while orchestrating politics of Pakistan Students Association, or because of his love for entertaining them (which for most broke students meant free food) at our shared apartment. He was a kind, giving and generous soul who was sincere in his friendships and thrived on everyone's "Thank you so much Khalid".

Khalid was smart and a very quick study. He was my go-to guy whenever I couldn't figure something out with tough assignments. He'd pick up the book, skim through pages, and very quickly drop an insight that'd solve the puzzle.

He had a serial entrepreneur's instincts and leanings. Khalid was always coming up with business ideas for friends to pursue. As a civil servant, he considered himself a torch bearer of his amazing father's legacy and the Sherdil brand. Anyone who has spent time with him would know how much he revered his family in general, and his father, an exalted civil servant, in particular, and how proud he was of his father's

legacy in service and the family name he inherited. He worked hard and smart, and left a mark of the Sherdil brand wherever he was tasked to serve by the government.

But, unfortunately, Khalid is no more! His generous heart has stopped beating. The eyes that always carried a twinkle underscoring the prospects of his next big idea are shut forever. His stiff arms won't stretch open for another loving embrace. As heartbreaking as that is, such is life- ephemeral, unpredictable, and often, seemingly punishing, as it throws an unexpected curve ball our way.

For family, friends and everyone who knew him intimately, Khalid's passing is an unfathomable loss that will leave a huge void in their lives. A void that will never, ever, be filled. We will all have to learn to live with something lacking in our lives. For the country, it's a big loss as well. Pakistan, today, is left bereft of a fine, diligent, sincere, honest and committed civil servant. The country has one less Sherdil serving it.

For me, it's a tragic loss of a dear friend, a compassionate mentor and an inspiring role model of an empathetic human being who taught me how to be a good friend. I mourn his colossal loss, not with tears in my eyes, but with a smile on my face that I know Khalid would be carrying if he was sitting across from me brainstorming another venture idea. I know that's what he would want from all of us who are mourning him.

Khalid, may Allah grant you maghfirat, make your final journey easy and bless you with jannat. And may Allah give strength and sabr to all the loved ones who mourn your loss, especially your mother. Keep smiling and say hello to uncle for us.

Fi Amaan Allah!