

Mohammad Ali Qazi

Managing Director- KTN (Sindh);
world's first Sindhi Satellite Channel
and Editor of "Kawesh" (Sindhi Daily)



At the dawn of Independence the entire country heaved a sigh of relief. But for the Sindhis it brought in its wake only misfortune. On the basis of religion the community was split.

The Indian Sindhis struggled for their fundamental rights and the Sindhis in Sindh faced a continuous cultural onslaught.

Fortunately, the Sindhis in India, faced the challenge by working hard and attained a respectable status, while the Sindhis of Sindh reached new heights in the literal and cultural arena. About four years back, the world's first Sindhi satellite channel, KTN was launched in Sindh, amid apprehensions and fears. Its success story would be revealed at some other time, but for the present we have its Managing Director, Mr. Mohammad Ali Qazi, popularly known as Ali Qazi. He is also the editor of a daily Sindhi newspaper 'Kawish'.

Jawhrani: Qaziji, we welcome you. To begin with, can you tell us what made you think of establishing the daily Sindhi newspaper 'Kawish'?

Qazi: Sir, Journalism is our family profession. There were already many Sindhi newspapers in Sindh, but during 1989, I launched the first evening 'Sham'. Soon later, on 3rd August, 1990, I launched 'Kawish'. You may not be aware, but newsprint is very costly in Pakistan and I wanted to give an affordable newspaper to the masses of Sindh. A newspaper that is available to the common man and not only the elite class. To that extent, we ensured that even the content was of relevance and concerned the common man. By the grace of God, within three months of its launch, our paper 'Kawish' became the largest circulated daily of Pakistan.

Jawhrani: Did the launch of 'Kawish' bring about any change in the newspaper industry in general?

Qazi: Of course. Till then, not only Sindhi but even mainstream language newspapers were expensive in Pakistan. We established a new trend of a low priced, but standard newspaper. Another innovation from our side was colour printing on the front page of the newspaper. We were the first to introduce it throughout Pakistan. We also began a column carrying the people's viewpoint in our paper. We had the courage to touch even sensitive and controversial issues which no other paper did, even at the cost of displeasing the powers that be. Before the launch of our newspaper, the mofussil areas of Sindh were un-represented. Their problems were never highlighted by established newspapers, hence, we focused our attention on those underprivileged areas of Sindh. We reported issues of concern and wrote about them in our editorials. We always felt it was not necessary to focus only on those areas which led to maximum sales.

Jawhrani: How did you graduate from the print to the electronic media and how was 'KTN' launched?

Qazi: Electronic media cuts across the literary barrier and it had always been my dream to reach out to the maximum number of people. Actually, before the actual launch of KTN, it seemed a dream, but somehow, we began, inspite of a small market with limited viewership.

Jawhrani: I think it has been three and half years since then. To what extent have you succeeded?

Qazi: In the beginning, we offered four hour programmes a day, from 6.00 p.m. to 10.00 p.m. We were extremely short of software at that time. We had very few writers, directors, singers and editors etc. And to run a channel we needed huge manpower. Words can't adequately describe the response the channel received from the public. People sat glued to their T.V. sets for all the four hours as they didn't want to miss even a single moment. Surprising, as people have different tastes, but KTN became a singular issue in Sindh, which everyone supported. They wanted to make it a huge success. The four hour programme was extended to six hours, then eight, twelve and ultimately a year after the launch of KTN, i.e. on October 1, 2003, our channel began telecasting twenty four hours a day.

Jawhrani: Is it a purely a 'Sindhi' channel?

Qazi: KTN is an infotainment channel, that includes news, drama, music, talkshows etc. We perceive it to be a Sindhi channel, but if at times, on our chat shows someone speaks in non-Sindhi we do not place any restrictions. But, basically this is a Sindhi channel, for the progress of Sindhi language.

Jawhrani: Have you ever conducted a survey to find out the percentage of youth and elderly viewership?

Qazi: The older generation definitely constitutes a dedicated viewership, but the youth is also catching up. Nowadays, Sindhi songs from KTN channel are played during marriages and other festive occasions, whereas about three years back one heard only Hindi songs. Responding to the people's huge appetite for Sindhi music, we have launched another Sindhi channel 'Kashish', completely devoted to Sindhi music.

Jawhrani: Isn't there a danger of Kashish cannibalizing on KTN, and the youth only watching Kashish and not the cultural programmes telecast on KTN?

Qazi: We cannot dictate to our viewers and today we wish to provide all options. Even presently, according to TRP ratings KTN is numero uno in Sindh, while the second is a distant second. Surveys also indicate viewer age groups and KTN continues to maintain interest of the younger generation with its mix of news, drama and music.

Jawhrani: Do the Sindhi songs on KTN reflect the Sindhi culture and tradition?

Qazi: It is fifty-fifty, we not only show traditional songs, but a judicious mix of contemporary songs. The youth like pop and so we added Sindhi pop. Why should they only listen to Urdu or English pop? Our drama category also reflects various shades of our life. Some dramas are rural based and others depict urban life. After all, Sindh has also progressed and is not what it was fifty years back. Earlier, people used bullock carts but today you see them in Pajeros. We cannot hold Sindh, suspended in a time frame, and must recognize and accept change.

Jawhrani: Coming out of studios, what was your motive for conducting live cultural shows in various parts of Sindh?

Qazi: We wanted to create events, where people could celebrate a musical evening with their family. If you see CD's of our programmes, you would be led to presume that it is a political rally and not a cultural show. That was the massive response to these shows.

Jawhrani: What has been the opinion about the continuous message telecast by KTN for improving relation between Hindu and Muslim Sindhis?

Qazi: It is highly appreciated - a Sindhi is a Sindhi whatever his religion or dialect. Lifestyles may be different. A Sindhi living in America may have an American lifestyle but yet we identify him as a Sindhi, not American Sindhi; even though he may not wear an 'Ajrak' or Sindhi topi. Sufism, prevalent in Sindh through centuries has never put emphasis on religion. Our programmes are testimony to our policies. You must see a tele film 'Kanwar Bhagat', which was based on the life and works of the legendary saint, Bhagat Kanwar Ram. One thing must be kept in mind, that we are doing no favours. I don't even know about the religion of our staff members. For me, they are just Sindhis and their talent is more important than their faith.

Jawhrani: You have unlimited resources at your hand. Have you ever thought of bringing Indian and Pakistani Sindhi artists on a common platform?

Qazi: I am already seized of the matter. I know Ghanshyam Vaswani, who is a talented artist. We got a CD of his songs from Dubai and included two songs in our programmes. Especially after coming here, I think, we should present our artists on a neutral platform, whereby the populace from both sides of the border could derive pleasure .

Jawhrani: Do you think the governments of both countries will assist in this initiative?

Qazi: Yes, but we will have to work hard for this.

Jawhrani: What is the present status of a Sindhi writer in Sindh?

Qazi: Every civilized society respects its litterateurs and artists. Likewise, we too pay utmost respect and acknowledge their contribution heartily. The writers live on a higher mental plane and they even think differently. We do have a fair share of poets and writers in Sindh. But, I do not want to get into a discussion about the quality of their writing.

Jawhrani: Have you ever felt that gradually, the values of our tradition and culture are weakening?

Qazi: We can't blame anybody for this but if we have to fix any responsibility it is 'times'! We cannot preserve our old values, as archives. Today's generation wears jeans. Can we force them to revert to salwar-kameez? They study in English medium schools. Why don't we admit them to Sindhi medium schools?

Look around the world at the developed nations. Are they the same as they were some hundred years back? Take the English language for instance. Does it resemble Shakesperian English? Who would be able to write in that language and who would understand it? Everything changes with time. We must only ensure that change should be for the better and it should not deteriorate our basic structure. Change is a continuous phenomenon. Sometime back, if a young girl was married off to an old person, it was accepted, being a decision taken by the elders. While now if a girl protests against this malpractice, should we feel sorry that our age-old values have been trampled? We should not disrespect our elders, but at the same time speaking up for what is right should not be considered as rebellion.

Jawhrani: What is the status of women in Sindh?

Qazi: You would agree with me that a woman is traumatized not just only in Sindh or Pakistan, but it is a widespread phenomenon. This is also prevalent in Bangladesh, India, Burma and Africa etc., just because she is considered the weaker sex. Sindh has progressed and it is not the same as it used to be some 30-40 years back. Presently, if any injustice is done to a woman in Sindh, by anybody, he is pulled up by the society and law. But yes, I admit that there is lot more to be done in this respect. We cannot say that a woman in

Sindh gets hundred percent justice. I read yesterday, that eve teasing is prevalent even in Mumbai. Look at some positive points of our Sindhi society. Here, we respect a daughter more than the holy book of Quran. If a daughter is taken along for rapprochement after even 10 murders, pardon would be granted. But yes, still a lot is to be done and we are working in this direction.

Jawhrani: What is the level of awareness in Sindh?

Qazi: There are four main languages in Pakistan; Sindhi, Punjabi, Balochi and Pushto along with the national language Urdu. We do have some other regional languages, like Siraiki and Hindki too. But, Sindhi was the first to have a satellite channel, exclusively devoted to a regional language. Others followed later on. The Sindhi people's response to KTN, is ample proof of their awareness and it is on the rise. Media is a great help, because we highlight various issues, whether national or international through our print as well as electronic media. All this goes towards creating considerable awareness in an average Sindhi.

Jawhrani: What is the main occupation of Sindhis there?

Qazi: They are in every field. Be it industry, trade, agriculture, media or education.

Jawhrani: How much do people value education in Sindh?

Qazi: Everywhere it is on the rise, just as I read here in India that a school was established on a boat. Likewise in Sindh too, we value education very much. Our greater emphasis is on the education of women and our government doles out various incentives to the family of the girl-child.

Jawhrani: Every generation passes on its own culture and traditions to the new generation. What can this generation pass on to our future generations? What do we have to pass on?

Qazi: An urge and determination to grow and 'never say die' attitude even in the severest of conditions, has been our forte and we must pass this message onwards, to enable our future generations to face all challenges bravely in times to come.

Jawhrani: I offer my gratitude for the time spared sharing your views.

Qazi: Thank you.