

Interview with Maryam Mohiuddin Ahmed

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Interviewer: Carla Hills

Recorder: Linda Chapel Jackson

Interviewer: Tell us a little bit about yourself, including your background that led to where you are today.

Ahmed: I was born and raised in Karachi. Karachi is this big beautiful city by the sea in Pakistan. It's also a very diverse city. It's the largest city. It's also the corporate hub and the trade hub because it's a port city. And so I grew up in a very diverse, very fast city, very fast space really. And someone recently asked me, "Hey, where did you spend your childhood?" And I was like, "Oh, Karachi." And they were like, "Ah, now we get it. That's where you get your speed from." And I said, "Well, yeah, maybe, I guess." And they were like, "Well, that's also where you get your innovativeness from," because a city like that, it demands you to keep pushing and to keep struggling and to keep changing and to develop rapidly.

Interviewer: What led you to come to the United States and go to school?

Ahmed: As much as I loved Karachi, I wanted to see what else I could do in life, and also part of living in Karachi meant seeing a lot of injustices around me because in a big enough city, you're able to see a lot of the problems that you would otherwise just read about in the news or see on TV. And so I confronted a bunch of them when I was younger, face to face. At high school, I thought, "Well, what are the different ways in which we can make Pakistan globally competitive?"—so competition. And I thought, "Hey, we're very technologically behind. Maybe we should be thinking about the different ways that other nations have gone ahead of us." And the closest example I could think of was NASA in the U.S.

At high school, I actually wanted to study astrophysics, and I took subjects that would eventually lead to astrophysics, but when it came to going to college, it turned out astrophysics isn't something that was very specialized or even taught at any big universities in Pakistan, that the places that it was taught at were so far flung, there were hardly any female students pursuing it. And the one place that did teach it, they had just started. They had just been a year in and my folks were like, "Well, this doesn't seem really credible. Are you sure you want to do this?" And then, as time went on, something else that I'd heard growing up because I'd been into debating at school, was, "Hey, you should go study law because you're just awesome at arguing." I was like, "Wow. That doesn't sound very nice." And they were like, "Well, maybe we're not being very nice."

As a debater at school, something that came very naturally was making a case for things, arguing, competing over ideas and then having logical debates. And so this eventually led me to think, "Hey, maybe it's not astrophysics, maybe law." And then, once again, I looked up all the law schools in the country and I found a good one in Lahore. And it was nice also because it meant getting some space and getting the opportunity to discover myself in a different environment. And that's what led me to the Lahore University of

Management Sciences. Now once I was there and I was in my first year, I was taking a lot of arts and humanities classes because that's part of it. You have to do your bachelor in arts before you do your LLB, which is like your JD here.

And so before law school, I had to go to humanities school. And doing that just completely blew me away because I was studying philosophy and anthropology and sociology and literature and economics and everything under the sun. One of my courses, it was on witchcraft and magic and religion and how these three intersect and how they then ... science and how science in the modern framework and postmodern framework then clash with these ideals and then where's the world and aren't we all just looking at the same thing from different lenses and using different words to describe the same event or the same occurrence around us. And so things that really opened up my mind. Things that really made me already very critical of what I was about to jump into, which was law school.

I went to law school, and I realized that, wow, we are very colonized still. The legacy of the British hasn't really gone away and, unfortunately, we haven't been able to disentangle our colonial past with politics. And then we've further managed to, over time, mix it up with things like faith and culture and tribe, but mix it up in all the wrong ways because we've now imposed an external alien entity onto something that was very natural and community-based. Suddenly, we've tried to codify tribal customs and cultures. We've tried to codify how faith-based systems of community justice used to work in Pakistan.

And in this codification process, we've left the people and their practices behind, and we've colonized these sectors, these segments, these practices once again. We've done to our own selves what the British did to us before, which was just horrific. It was so sad. And it made me very passionate about decolonizing the law and about human rights, particularly, because I saw that a lot of this had actually led to very negative consequences on the lives of the poor and the underserved.

And so once I was almost through with law school, I started looking at different programs around the world. And, interestingly, I wasn't looking at Berkeley. That was one of my professors saying, "Hey, why don't you apply to Berkeley?" And I was like, "Well, I don't know. Should I?" And so kids in Pakistan, unfortunately, we don't realize these things about ourselves, so even when we're trying to decolonize, we are still working in a colonial framework, so I was still thinking, "Huh, maybe I should apply to Yale and Harvard." Because, for me, sitting back home in Pakistan, people around me that I see, those are the big brand names that people want to associate with.

Recorder: But Berkeley's the big center of social change.

Ahmed: That's right, right? I think I was, what, in my first year of law school and that's when I was challenged about my assumptions like big brand names and why do I want to go to Harvard and what's there. And then I started looking at programs and I realized, wow, I was wrong actually. The program there is not offering enough of what I'm looking for, and that's when I ran into programs at Berkeley and, in fact, also at Ann Arbor, at Michigan U. And then I was like, "Oh, hold on a second. These are very different from

what I'm seeing at some of these bigger brand names. And, in fact, these seem to be more in line with what I want."

And that's how I ended up going to Berkeley because it just gave me the ... and also the beauty of LL.M. program there, it gave me the opportunity to not only just focus on research and write a thesis, but also, at the same time, specialize in something. And so I got my specialization in international law and, within that, I was focusing on humanitarian law and human rights. It is a bigger advantage for me to spend my time and resources there, as opposed to go to a school where it's very differently structured and I can't experiment and I can't pick and choose the things I want the way I can at a place like Berkeley. And that's what led me to the U.S., essentially. Berkeley is how I came to the U.S. the first the time.

Interviewer: How do you put a foot in each community or each culturally relevant framework? Because what you find in the U.S. is very different from what you find in Pakistan, I would think. And how do you resolve the thinking? Do you apply what you've learned in the U.S. to what you want Pakistan to be now or ...

Ahmed: Here's where there's a difference. We assume that things are very different and they're not. The kind of inequality and injustice that you see in Pakistan, you also see in the U.S. all the time and sometimes even more than in Pakistan, which was shocking for me because we'd always been taught, hey, that's the dream. Because we grew up on Hollywood, by the way, sitting in Pakistan, we grew up on Hollywood. We grew up on Netflix. Everything you see on Netflix now, before, that used to be on cable TV, so we grew up on American TV and American movies, so we had a very romanticized version of what America looks like. And, in some ways we'd, I think, also internalized the American dream, so to speak.

And so when I came here, and in a place like Berkeley, I saw homelessness, I was shocked. I can't tell you how riveted I was because it was just so ... it was in your face completely. I was like, "Hey, hold on. How is this different from where I'm coming from?" At least there, even the homeless have slums that they go back and sleep in. I'm seeing people here sleep on roads. What is going on here? And then, of course, I also saw, which is something also very, very stark contrast, is the mental health issues. And that's where you think about, oh, and not only that piece where you said, "Do I want to apply what I learn back home and make it more like the U.S.?" Actually, no, I don't in so many ways because I don't want to see this isolation and loneliness that we see here in the U.S. also start applying in Pakistan.

And we are seeing those trends now because the more and more people become glued to technology, their iPhones, their computers, their iPads, they become distanced from people around them and that sense of community, that sense of family, is being lost. And that's what I saw, such an extreme version, when I visited California, that mental health is a huge problem and it's not given the attention it should be. And we're seeing more and more of it erupt in instances like [inaudible 00:11:26] just now. And how are we ignoring it? And then I thought, "Well, hold on a second," because I've also studied psychology before law school. And I said, "Well, hold on a second. No, we've also seen mental health issues in Pakistan, but what's different?"

And what's different is the coping mechanism. And the coping mechanism that exists in Pakistan is because you're never left alone. Even when you know you're behaving outrageously or you have what a lot of people would call PTSD or you have dissociative disorder, families are going to do everything they can to support that person, support that child, sometimes even go consult practitioners like witch doctors. The only closest comparison is like a witch doctor or a shaman or a religious or a spiritual leader. And they go like, "Hey, can you please do something about this child and blah blah blah." And what you realize, if you read enough psychology, realize these are great ways to, in fact, cope with dissociative disorder and with PTSD and with this ... that if you give them emotional support and if you give them a community of people who they feel are paying attention to them, a lot of these manifestations dissipate over time.

Interviewer: Or they're minimized.

Ahmed: They're minimized. They're handled. They're dealt with.

Interviewer: And they're nurtured in a more loving environment that can sort of contribute to them feeling secure enough that they don't have extreme types of behavior.

Ahmed: That's right. Another thing that I saw, which was really nice on the one hand and then the more I read and the more I thought, was also very questionable on the other hand, so we were thinking about, well, in the U.S., the system of law and order is amazing. That was my vision of it initially. And I said, "Look. Everything is in a system and everybody has social security and people's biometrics are up and everybody can ... There's a brilliant record and this is great and why don't we have swift enough systems like this and maybe this is something." And then the more I thought about it, the more I read about it, the more I realized, "Oh, wow. This is more like a police state. And what about people's privacy? And what about all the times in which the federal government here has used national security has a way to seep into people's private lives?" And then I've seen consequences of it.

When I went back to Pakistan, the first consequence I saw was people being illegally detained and illegally rendered because there was a price tag on ... there was a prize money for anyone who could give a suspect who could potentially be involved in terrorism. And we saw people giving completely innocent people, who are illiterate, so they didn't even know how to read or write and they couldn't even argue their own cases, and these guys are being given into these prisons that were secret prisons, where these guys were going to be tortured and held for over decades. And so what's the point of a justice system, which leads to such unjust consequences?

Interviewer: What about, from your talk on ... Well, let's go back. What led to you establishing the ... is it SIL? Is that what you call it? What brought you to the impacts that you want to create with SIL? How do you establish the impacts through social innovation?

Ahmed: SIL has its predecessor Literati Pakistan, which was a student movement we started while I was at LUMS and then while I was at Berkeley. And the whole aim of this was to be questioning everything around us and being super critical. And then, in the process of

questioning, also thinking about being constructive. Sure, there are problems, but are there solutions out there? Have we seen other peoples face the same problems? Can we learn from them and apply some of those solutions here? And what is the role of young people in doing that work? Because we'd seen around us, our politicians were not going to do it. They were quite corrupt and they had completely different priorities, and they still do. A lot of them still do. We couldn't expect them to make that change.

And then we saw our parents and their generation and we said, hey, these guys are super busy. They've worked really hard to survive and they've worked really hard to put us through good schools and they worked really hard to bring us where we are in life. And they're tired and we can't expect them to do this. And the generation before them, well, not at all. We can't expect them at all to do this. And so who's left? And that's us. That's young people. What can we do, today, to make the world better tomorrow?

That's what led us to, well, setting up the SIL. In 2012, we wrote and published the first ever handbook on social entrepreneurship in Pakistan. And this handbook had five case studies off social enterprises that had been working in the country for almost a decade now, to introduce to people that this is also a career option. And even though we're not told about this, this is something we can very easily do. We don't have to completely live our lives as poor and frugal people in some not-for-profit.

Because that's the mindset people had, that if you want to do good work, it's going to be charity and, if you work in a charity, it's not going to pay you too much. Forget about luxury and forget about this and forget about that. And it was definitely not a career option for men because it was expected that men eventually have to have enough money to support their families and that women aren't required to work, even though, more and more, with the kind of lifestyles that we're living, they are expected to work. But the traditional mindset was that it's not the responsibility of the woman to put bread on the table. It's the man's job. And if a woman wants to work, sure, she can, but that's her earning. The man has no right over it.

Interviewer: Really?

Ahmed: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. We've seen. We've actually learned and studied about this and Islamic principles on earning and work and this and that. And it's very clear in the literature, and also in the culture and tradition, that what a woman earns is hers and what a woman brings in dowry is also hers. Men have no right over it.

Interviewer: I didn't know that.

Ahmed: And so it manifests differently. It's interesting to see that you have households where the husbands are not working and the women are working and they're the breadwinners. And you see that too in Pakistan.

Interviewer: Well, I want to come back to that, but one of the questions here is how can universities support academic and scientific dignity in countries that are culturally diverse? But, I don't know, is it ... that is the proper framing of the question for what we're talking

about because are you ... I need to twist this around and say are universities in Pakistan supporting the work of the SIL?

Ahmed: Not all of them. Some of them are. The ones that are have been very supportive. LUMS, for instance, for the four years that we were associated with them, was very supportive. They did what they could. But, over time, we also realized that maybe being within one environment, and especially if it's got its way of being, which is sometimes bureaucratic by its very nature, it might impede the work or it might stand in its way. And so we decided, you know what, we can partner with a lot of universities, but we may not necessarily want to be based at one. Or we may have satellites at a number of universities or franchises, if you may, but, once again, to be headquartered in a place where there is a certain way of doing things that is slow moving ... It may not even be bureaucracy, it's just that the system moves slowly because there are a number of steps.

Interviewer: You want your independence?

Ahmed: It's important to have that is what I'm saying, is what I've learned. It's important to have that because this work is very fluid, like I said on Wednesday. It just keeps evolving. And in a slow moving system, that evolution is resisted a lot because the system just got too used to you being a certain way and now you're telling it, "No, I'm not going to do that." And the system's like, "Dude, stop annoying me. What are you doing? I don't get you," because they're moving at very different paces.

And so a university is excellent. It's a very safe environment, by the way, to do this experimentation, which is why I'm saying it's a great idea to have a higher ed partner because they are the kind of spaces that allow for this kind of flourishing of ideas, exchange of ideas, and we found that at LUMS. Honestly, we had so many amazing people that were able to come and contribute to the work in so many different ways. And it was a safe enough space in that sense where ideas could be discussed without thinking twice.

Interviewer: At University Outreach and Engagement at MSU, we talk about reciprocity. You learn from them, they learn from you and it's one of these. What are you finding are the most surprising things that you're learning from social innovation and the people that you see coming in? You're training on the one hand, but you're also learning from them on the other hand, right?

Ahmed: Big time.

Interviewer: Yeah. And what types of things are you seeing? Are you seeing patterns? Are you seeing surprising sorts of things emerge? Are you learning how to reframe what you know? Yes to everything?

Ahmed: Yes. All of it, yes. Every cycle, and then not just every cycle, every training that we run has a feedback forum, so we're constantly learning how these guys are interacting with this material and with the mentors and with the kind of content that we're providing,

and we're constantly trying to improve that. All that is based on feedback and learning from the participant, from the entrepreneurs. Beyond that, like I said, at the presentation also peer learning has turned out to be a very, very interesting way of doing this, of getting this word out, of getting this content out.

That initially we were going after really superstar mentors, and that's the expectation, that incubators need to have big names attached to them and that's how they're going to be successful. And then we realized that, no, that's not it. Big names are great motivational speakers and that's it. That's all they are. These kids can't relate to them. These kids think they're so big they will never be them. And they need to see people that they feel, "Oh, my God. Hey, this guy is just like me, or was just like me two years ago or five years ago or six years ago. And that's something I can relate to because he's very freshly seeing where I am at, and so he can tell me much better than that guy who's 30 years older than I am or 40 years older than I am and who's made it really big and who made it really big in a time that was very different from my time."

A lot of these entrepreneurs, for instance, sitting in Silicon Valley, they will tell me, they're like, "Ha-ha, you guys, we had it easy. We took on the dot com boom and we rode it. And with you, it's going to be more difficult." They tell me this, that, "You know what? Good luck to you because we had it easy." And that's something we don't see everyone have, that kind of insight, that kind of self-reflexivity. And then we needed to ... Somewhere in the middle, we had to start doing that for ourselves and that's when we brought in the peer learning approach.

We started calling our alumni. We started calling other people that we knew in the ecosystem who are younger entrepreneurs and we said, "Look, you guys, they're going to hear you better, so just come over." And the feedback was phenomenal. Like I said, each session, we get the feedback, and we were able to compare and contrast that, "Oh, my God, look. These guys are totally relating to this guy better than that professor who studied at Stanford and done three startups now. But these guys can't relate to him, but they can to this guy."

And then something very recently that I think I learned from one of our startups. Risk, the food waste management company that I spoke about, I was sitting with them, I think, about two months ago or so, and we were in this small office and we were talking about life and we were talking about the larger, sort of metaphysical war that is going on in the world, where it's almost like the clash of ideologies to some extent, but, actually, not really. It's just politics that's trying to make it seem like that. And what is our role as young people, as moral leaders, as moral imaginers, to do something about it? And I realized that two and a half years later, we were having the conversation that I wanted to have two and a half years ago. We were instilling these concepts in them then, and they were confused and ...

Interviewer: Trying to sort it out?

Ahmed: Yeah, and they were just ... They didn't understand how moral imagination had anything to do with entrepreneurship, and now they are speaking the language of it. And, in fact, they were giving me readings to do on my own, and it was amazing having them give me

content that they've come across in that two and a half year journey, which started with that first lecture that I feel that we had and where I was really hoping against hope that this stuff that we're doing really has an impact. And then seeing it, not only have an impact, but actually repeat itself so much that these guys were now at a place where they could recommend me things to read and things to think about when it comes to moral imagination and to realizing they know it's full circle and, when I say peer learning, it's not just the entrepreneurs learning from each other, it's us also learning from our entrepreneurs.

Interviewer: This may be ... I'm not sure how long the answer would be to this question, but what institutions have been most resistant to what you're doing?

Ahmed: I don't think it's been institutions per se. It's been a certain category of people within institutions. And what you realize is that, unfortunately, the way we've made hierarchies and the way we've designed institutions, we've left a whole sort of layer of people in the middle who we've disenfranchised, as Max Weber would call it, that we've separated their work from their spirit or their intellect or whatever you may call it, that inner calling, that these people, they come in, day in and day out. They punch a card or whatever else. They have certain administrative functions and that's it. We're talking about everybody getting meaning from their work, and yet here is an entire class of people at all kinds ... You'll see that across every institution.

Interviewer: Yes, you do. Yes.

Ahmed: Every institution, and sometimes it's called the staff. Sometime it's called the administrative block. Sometime it's called something else. Sometime it's the guys in the account department. You see that particular layer of people who have been moved from the idea that there's something very human about you, there's something very human about this work, there's something very ... And what you realize is, it's only when we've gone and built relationships with those people, have we been able to tackle that resistance. And because people have taken them so for granted, they're considered a machinery, which means you just give them what you want and you walk out. You don't say hi. You don't talk much. You don't care.

Interviewer: Right, and then you can leave.

Ahmed: Yeah. And what I've seen, what has worked really, when we saw this resistance was, actually making friends out of those people and making allies out of those people, trying to engage them, asking them for ideas, making them feel respected.

Interviewer: And part of the process.

Ahmed: Absolutely, part of the process. And that if you're signing me a travel form, you're not just the guy signing a travel form, you're someone that I'm really grateful for and, "Thank you for making this easy for me. Tell me, where else can we go and what else should we be thinking and this is what we're up to." And just sitting down and having ... My team would just be surprised because I'd go hang out at one of these offices and I'd



just sit for an hour and a half and they'd be like, "What are you doing?" I'm like, "Just wait and watch." I'd take a form with me that I know I have to sign, but I know it's not going to happen before an hour and a half. Because I know that if I'm in and out, that form is going to lie on that table for a week. But if I just spend this hour and a half right now, that form's going to be signed today.

And that's what I mean, that as institutions, we have alienated our own people and that's horrific. That's horrific, especially within a higher education institution that is supposed to be the exact opposite. Because you will see that in the corporate, but with an HEI, come on. What vision are we working with? How are we so duplicitous that we are teaching our kids something else and living something completely different?

Interviewer: That is so true. What is your advice for an institution like Michigan State University to better prepare and equip their faculty to encourage social innovation? It's question number 12, where we say ... We can meld it with question number 11, but what is your advice for faculty? And I think you just touched on that, throughout the whole discussion about how you treat people and how you listen and how you learn from the feedback and things like that. But how can MSU better prepare and equip their faculty to work with these global communities and social innovation and the things that are happening in this world? One of the things that we talk about all the time is co-creation, reciprocity, and looking at a problem from a solution-based approach, where we work together. We learn together. Is that happening that you can see? I'm not explaining this very clearly.

Ahmed: No, you are, and, in my mind, I'm questioning the question right now, because I'm wondering why is it just faculty. Why isn't the question what is your advice for the MSU community and how can MSU better equip their community to work with global communities?

Interviewer: That's actually a very nice twist to the question, yes.

Ahmed: Because, once again ... And this feeds, this flows from the conversation we were having right now around why faculty? Interestingly, another group of people who have resisted work like this is sometimes people in faculty. Because they have felt like, "Who are these young people and why are they doing what they're doing and why is there no check and balance on them and why do they get paid this or why do they ..." We've actually seen, "Why do they have this particular office? Why are they making noise in the office?" Well, this work is noisy. Get used to it. "No, we're going to keep our doors open, but you've still got to control your noise." No, you shut your door if you have a problem with noise, but no.

Faculty, unfortunately, we've privileged faculty in institutions of higher education. I'm not saying that they shouldn't be privileged. Of course, they should be privileged. They're amazing. They're the people who teach us what they teach us, but so should everyone else. I'm sorry. Why are we creating a white man inside an institution of higher education? Why are we in this paradigm where the teacher stands in the middle and everybody else sits around the teacher? Have we not ... I'm serious. Have we not

created that same dialectic of the white man and the slave and the colonized? Where we've given one person or one entity or one group of people that ...

Interviewer: Power?

Ahmed: Not power, I'm saying pedestal. It's not even power. They've not asked for it, poor guys, so to blame them because they didn't ask for it. The system has put them in a place where they're now expected to live in it. It's a pedestal. Here's the tragedy. These people don't even ... they're not born like this. They don't want to be some guy standing in a center pretending to be the beacon of knowledge for everyone. They're also very confused. If a faculty member admits ... I don't know about MSU, but I've seen places where admitting that I don't know something and I'm a professor, is considered a big problematic thing. It's considered, "Oh, my God. How does this guy not know? How can he admit that he doesn't know?" or "How can she say that she hasn't thought about it or read about it?" That's actually something that makes people cringe and go like, "Uh, what kind of professor is that?" And that's such an unfair ... That's so unfair for people in the faculty.

And here's another unfair thing, that, oh, my God, you always have to be chasing tenure. Oh, my God, write six papers in a year. Go to XYZ conferences. Get these many citations and get this done and, unless you do this, no, we're not going to give you tenure.

Interviewer: Well, that impedes your ability to sit and talk to somebody for an hour and a half and get a paper signed, right?

Ahmed: Exactly. And so the problem is, it's not even that it's one particular party's fault that they resist, like I said. It's that the system pushes them into these roles that they have to live up to, that they have to grow into. And once they've grown into that, it's very difficult for them to envision anything outside of it. And that's why I'm saying, sometimes they would assume that everybody ought to not make noise and that's just ... how is that a question? How is that a thing? How is that something we can't compromise on? That you could shut your door. I could ask my kids to calm down a bit, and maybe we could still make some noise and you could still have your door shut and we could still all coexist. And yet, the poor guy, he's been conditioned into this pedestal, into this power dynamic, where he's told, "Hey, if you're not strict and stern and imposing rules, then you're not a good faculty member."

What is my advice for faculty? No, I don't have advice for faculty. I have advice for the higher education institution that, hey, you really ought to be thinking about your structure and where, within that structure, is the faculty and what do you expect from the faculty and what are you conditioning the faculty into?

Interviewer: It leads me to a question that isn't on here, and that is yesterday ... We have a monthly meeting at MSU with communications people like me. And the presentation that they had was on creativity. And we talk about how toddlers have the ability to be so creative, but you take the years through, and you go to high school, and the creativity has been

judged right out of people. Some of this reminds me that the work that you do requires people to be creative and think outside of the boundaries that are placed on them as they age, which is why young people always seem to have such enthusiasm and creative ideas. How do you nurture, though, the creativity when there is the structure? Is it through the dialogue that you provide? Is it through the encouragement you provide? How do you take these creative ideas that young, enthusiastic people have, or not even young, enthusiastic people, but anybody who's enthusiastic about their idea, but it's been judged poorly by other people? How do you expand on that?

Ahmed: The idea is that you start small and you show proof, and that's the only way you can really get people to stop bugging you, frankly. That's what we've seen. When we've seen, working within different structures, slow moving, fast moving, medium paced, whatever, and we've seen that we've faced resistance, we've said, "Okay. No worries." And we've become quiet, so we've decided not to make a big hoopla, and just put our heads down and do the work and then show the results. And there is nothing as effective as that.

Interviewer: This is so true, yes.

Ahmed: Countering criticism, you say, "Well, look. Here's what I have and here's the numbers because you guys all love numbers."

Interviewer: And that's where some of the science comes in then, some of the academic work because the proof is in the impact. We're almost done. Here's the fun part. Is there something you want to accomplish that you haven't started yet because of current commitments? Take me into the future for you and tell me, if the SIL is humming along nicely and you're looking for a new challenge, where do you take yourself on the horizon?

Ahmed: I've thought about this a lot. I'm sure there's a lot of work stuff that can happen and so the work stuff would look like, well, working with the government and seeing a lot of this work find good partners, good supporters, get sustained, maybe even some of it can be scaled up or replicated in other parts of the country, maybe even the world. I'd really like to see more people look at all the beautiful things that are going on back home and get that message out and also get more support in to the country and, particularly, to the social entrepreneurs that we've seen.

But I also feel like a part of me just wants to paint. At some points during the work, I've just felt like I just want to step back and paint or I just want to step back and write. And so I've been putting off a PhD for the longest time because I just say, "You know what? No, I don't have the time and I don't have the mental space and these things are more urgent than that." But maybe, if things were ... and if some of this government sector or, again, some of this international work, if it gets done along the way, then I might be looking at stepping back and reflecting and reflecting by thinking, painting, writing, and studying again. That could be one way of looking at it.