

Interviewee: Sultana Ahmed

Female, Age: 43

Birthplace: Karachi, Pakistan

Occupation: Engineer

1. What do you feel are important things U.S. students should know about Pakistan?

S.A.: One of the most important things about Pakistan is that it is a very nice tourist place and there are really beautiful places in the northern area and also very historical places in Harappa and Mohenjo Daro. There are many places to go and look around in Pakistan. Also, the Pakistani people are very friendly people. They really welcome any foreign people and make you feel very good in their company.

2. Do you feel that there are any misconceptions or misunderstandings about Pakistan in the U.S.? If so, what are they?

S.A.: I feel that there are many negative portrayals of Pakistan in the media. I have spent my whole life in Pakistan and I feel that is not at all how Pakistan is shown here in the U.S. If something happens in one small corner of Pakistan maybe because of one group of people, it doesn't mean that all of Pakistan is like that. Also, the issue of suicide, like suicide bombers, in Islam is "haram" or unlawful and forbidden. It's not allowed and it's totally wrong. I don't know how to tell this to everybody!

3. How do you feel that education in Pakistan is similar to and/or different from education in the U.S.?

S.A.: In Pakistan access to education is a government concern. There is a lack of funds to provide full schooling. The main thing is that most of the Pakistanis are farmers and such, so the government is trying to spread education and promote it. Our family tries to donate money for this. In Pakistan we also have Madrassah schools. These are Islamic study schools, but there are some misconceptions about Madrassahs. The Madrassah is where the kids learn to read and memorize the Koran/Qu'ran, the sacred book of Islam. It's a place for kids to learn verses, but it's kind of strict because they may have to learn a lot of verses per day. The kids there are very good kids and very hard working. In some areas there is no other type of education, only the madrassah, but the government is trying to add other things in the madrassah, like math, science, and social studies. The government wants to add these things to make up for any deficiencies. This is very hard work, but little by little it's getting better. I really admire the kids at madrassah because they are very respectful. Respect is a very big issue in Pakistan. When the teacher arrives the kids stand up and when the

teacher talks to them, kids will look down out of respect, and the kids there are not arrogant at all. I really like those kids!

4. How is daily life in Pakistan similar to and/or different from daily life in the U.S.?

S.A.: Socially there are differences. For example, the teens in Pakistan do not date. That is just not what we do. In Pakistan the family structure is the key to social life. In the U.S. everything seems more focused on friend relationships, not family. It is customary for kids to live with their parents until marriage. Upon marriage women will move into the husband's family's house. The social network is based on the extended family. When I was growing up in Pakistan as a girl I spent all of my time with cousins and siblings, so they were my network of friends.

5. What are some expectations for men and/or women in Pakistan? What are the standard gender roles or norms?

S.A.: I feel that for women, in Pakistan, they get so much respect. Women there are precious, like pearls or diamonds. In Pakistan the religion demands that women be modest, which is why many women wear the veil. I have heard that there are some rural areas where the women and men are uneducated and there the women are not treated right. In marriage the men have the higher rank, but that is all. That doesn't mean that the women do not get respect. Even the inheritance system has requirements for women.

6. Some Americans say that typical or "classic" American elements are apple pie, automobiles, and baseball. Do you feel that there are similar elements that typify Pakistan?

S.A.: Yes, cricket. The Pakistani team is very good and so is the Indian team, so when these two play it's very competitive. It's like a season finale. Plus this event brings people together. When India and Pakistan play it shows how the countries can be together and this is important because we share so much. I also think the clothing of the Shalwar Qamiz is a symbol too, because it is like Pakistani identity. If you see it, you think about Pakistan.

7. Is there anything else you would like to share about Pakistan?

S.A.: I have a serious thing to say about terrorism. Pakistan is eager to eliminate all terrorists and we want them out of our country. They have damaged our country's name by hiding there and they are abusing innocent people. Pakistan is doing everything possible to get those terrorists out.