

paying bribes? You are not running brothels; you are educating children! Government officials are not your bosses,' he reminded them; 'they are your servants. They are taking salaries and have to serve you. You are the ones educating *their* children.'

He soon became president of the organisation and expanded it until it included 400 principals. Suddenly the school owners were in a position of power. But my father has always been a romantic rather than a businessman and in the meantime he and Hidayatullah were in such desperate straits that they ran out of credit with the local shopkeeper and could not even buy tea or sugar. To try and boost their income they ran a tuck shop at school, going off in the mornings and buying snacks to sell to the children. My father would buy maize and stay up late at night making and bagging popcorn.

'I would get very depressed and sometimes collapse seeing the problems all around us,' said Hidayatullah, 'but when Ziauddin is in a crisis he becomes strong and his spirits high.'

My father insisted that they needed to think big. One day Hidayatullah came back from trying to enrol pupils to find my father sitting in the office talking about advertising with the local head of Pakistan TV. As soon as the man had gone, Hidayatullah burst into laughter. 'Ziauddin, we don't even have a TV,' he pointed out. 'If we advertise we won't be able to watch it.' But my father is an optimistic man and never deterred by practicalities.

One day my father told Hidayatullah he was going back to his village for a few days. He was actually getting married, but he didn't tell any of his friends in Mingora as he could not afford to entertain them. Our weddings go on for several days of feasting. In fact, as my mother often reminds my father, he was not present for the actual ceremony. He was only there for the last day, when family members held a Quran and a shawl over their heads and held a mirror for them to look into. For many couples in arranged marriages this is the first time they see each other's faces. A small boy was brought to sit on their laps to encourage the birth of a son.

It is our tradition for the bride to receive furniture or perhaps a fridge from her family and some gold from the groom's family. My grandfather would not buy enough gold so my father had to borrow more money to buy bangles. After the wedding my mother moved in with my grandfather and my uncle. My father returned to the village every two or three weeks to see her. The plan was to get his school going then, once it was successful, send for his wife. But *Baba* kept complaining about the drain on his income and made my mother's life miserable. She had a little money of her own so they used it to hire a van and she moved to Mingora. They had no idea how they would manage. 'We just knew my father didn't want us there,' said my father. 'At that time I was unhappy with my family, but later I was grateful as it made me more independent.'

He had however neglected to tell his partner. Hidayatullah was horrified when my father returned to Mingora with a wife. 'We're not in a position to support a family,' he told my father. 'Where will she live?'

'It's OK,' replied my father. 'She will cook and wash for us.'

My mother was excited to be in Mingora. To her it was a modern town. When she and her friends had discussed their dreams as young girls by the river, most had just said they wanted to marry and have children and cook for their husbands. When it was my mother's turn she said, 'I want to live in the city and be able to send out for kebabs and naan instead of cooking it myself.' However, life wasn't quite what she expected. The shack had just two rooms, one where Hidayatullah and my father slept and one which was a small office. There was no kitchen, no plumbing. When my mother arrived, Hidayatullah had to move into the office and sleep on a hard wooden chair.