

EXPERIENCING AFGHAN HOSPITALITY

By Rohan Khattar Singh and Harshit Pai, MA.DLB 2018, Jindal School of International Affairs

Although Indian airlines have stopped providing meals in their flights, the Afghan Airlines called *Kamair* surprised us with their hospitality in the air. They provided us with some amazing Mughlai dishes as well as the famous Afghan green tea. This marked the beginning of our experience with Afghan hospitality.



Painting on the streets of Kabul

Landing on a cold evening in Kabul, we were taken to our guesthouse. We didn't expect to be served with meals for the entire month that we were staying there, and in our heads, we had been planning how to manage our meals. But after another course of green tea, we witnessed Afghan hospitality yet again. **We were told that we didn't have to worry about food as they would provide us with meals three times a day. When we offered money to chip in for the groceries, they said, "Don't worry, you are in Afghanistan, not America".**



View of Snow laden streets and buildings of Kabul in the winter month of December

Charcha

After another round of green tea and the famous Ukrainian *Kovrika* chocolates, we were shown our cozy room which was in the basement of the guesthouse. As the room was cold and they didn't have extra heaters, one of the helpers of the guesthouse sacrificed his heater for our comfort. This act was considered very normal in Afghanistan, even when it was -5 degree Celsius at the time.



*Left: Naan with Rice, Ghosht-E-Murgh, Sabzee (Spinach)
Right: Naan with Kabuli Pulaw, Chaka, Ghosht and salad.*

Over the course of the month, we were fed meals of such large portions that it could feed four people, but had to be consumed by the two of us Indians with small appetites. While we struggled to finish the food, our hosts would come and ask if we wanted more thinking that we didn't have enough on our plates. More so, they would take the blame on themselves, saying that they lacked in their hospitality because of which we were eating so less, which was certainly not the case.

“We were fed dishes like Tokham (Afghan Omelette), Shorba (Afghan soup), Lubia (Afghan Rajma), Chaka (Afghan yoghurt), Ghosht-E-Murgh (Afghan Chicken curry), Chopan Kebab (A famous Kebab of Afghanistan), the famous Kabuli Pulaw and Naans. All this was always accompanied by Afghan green tea and Afghan “Alokozay” cola.”

Apart from serving us with food, they also came and talked to us regularly making sure that we didn't feel bored, but we were too excited to be bored. When the temperatures dipped below -15 degree Celsius, they gave the both of us two quilts (Razai). **Everyone who met us after they got to know that we were Indians, offered to take us roaming around in Kabul.**



Left: Harshit Pai with Hajji Basheer and Sayyad Mohammad.

Right: Rohan Khattar Singh with Sayyad Mohammad.

We were again reminded of the hospitality on the last day when we were taken to Kabul's famous *Sufi Restaurant*. Our hosts apologized to us for not showing enough hospitality, when in reality they were extremely warm and welcoming towards us.

Although we are back to India now, we still feel like we are in Afghanistan. This is how deep the connection was with the friendly Afghans we met. If you are on the JGU campus and want to know more about our experience in Afghanistan over a cup of green tea, definitely reach out to us!

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