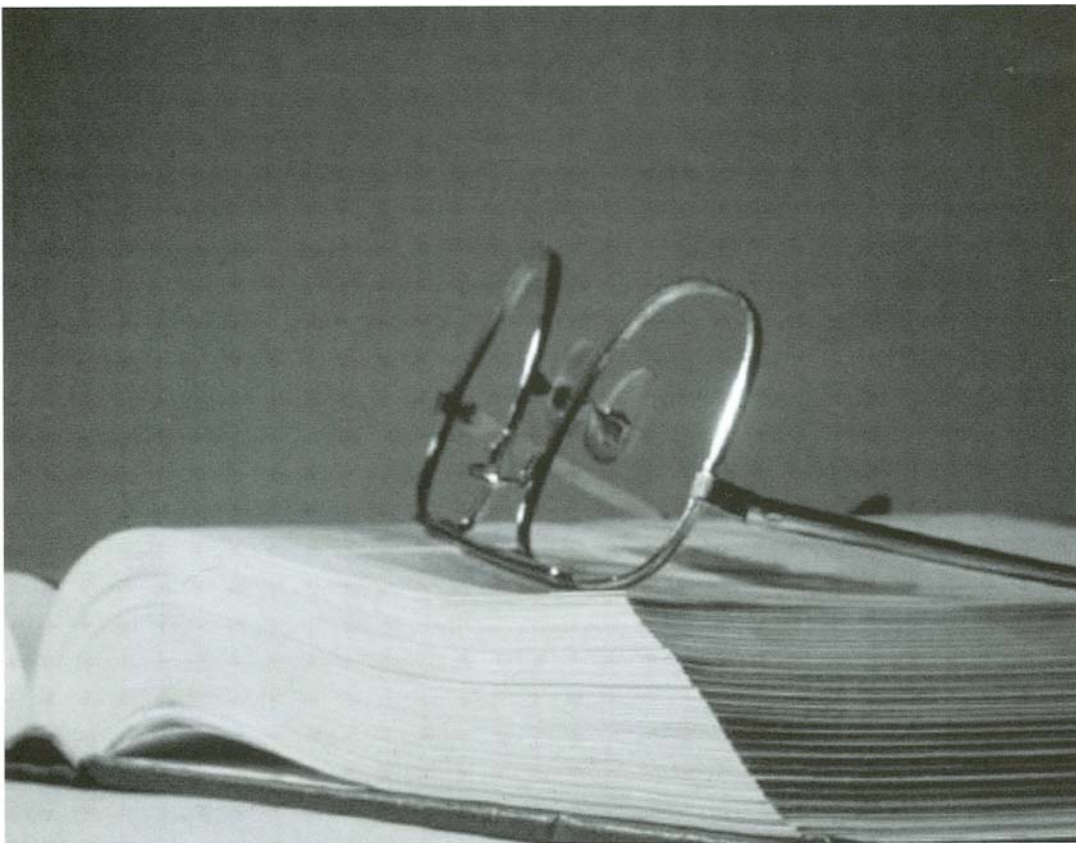


Time went back about four decades. The mind's eyes were looking at a 14 year old boy, who in 1941 went to Bhagalpur [Bihar, India] to spend his summer vacation with his maternal grandfather, a reputed physician. The two large almirahs crammed with Arabic, Persian, and Urdu books were a God-sent boon for the boy whose only hobby was reading. The books on medicine were too dry, and were left undisturbed; but those on *munazirah* [comparative religions], history, hadith and theology proved a good companion to while away the sweltering days of north-Indian June.

The most interesting were the periodicals like *Islah*, *al-Hafiz*, *al-Wa'ez* and *Suhail-e Yaman*. It seemed that the grandfather had been a regular subscriber of all those magazines since their inception, because their complete sets were there, all bound and carefully preserved.

The old volumes of the *al-Wa'ez* proved especially interesting. The Madrasatul Wa'ezeen (The School of Preachers), Lucknow, used to send its preachers not only to various provinces in the then un-divided India, but also to such far-away places as Hong Kong, Singapore, Burma, Tibet, Zanzibar, Madagascar etc. The reports sent by the preachers like Syed Liqa 'Ali Haideri, Syed Masrur Hussain,



Syed 'Ali Wa'ez, Syed 'Adil Akhtar and Hafiz Kifayat Hussain were really inspiring. Their letters created in the young mind vivid pictures of those exotic places; and he, in his imagination, followed those stalwarts into those countries where lions and elephants roamed at will and where people had strange-sounding names. He felt an irresistible urge to go out like them to preach true Islam where it was not yet properly known.

Last year, my friend, Rev. Professor N.Q. King, asked me how the idea of engaging in missionary work came into my mind. I sat visualizing the picture of that summer vacation, and I knew the answer...because, as you might have guessed, I was that boy.

It shows how a small seed might grow and grow until it became a large tree. By the way, it also shows why it is necessary to keep only good books within the reach of young children. Young minds are easily influenced, and wrong type of books may put them on a wrong track. Health magazines that the bottles of medicines should be kept out of reach of the children; should not the same care be exercised about the books of wrong type?...