Sayyed Muhammad Abbas Shah—3rd in CSS-2012

Q: Kindly tell us about your educational background and achievements in detail?

Sayyed Muhammad Abbas Shah: By the grace of Almighty, I have a bright and proud educational career at my credit. I have been a topper throughout my academic career. I secured 3rd position in BISE Faisalabad in pre-engineering group. Afterwards, I earned a degree in Textile Engineering from National Textile University, Faisalabad with distinction. In fact, I was the silver medallist. After this, I started to prepare for competitive exam and stood 3rd in CE-2012.

Q: What is so special in PAS and how these are better than the other groups?

SMAS: No doubt, every cadre of Civil Service of Pakistan is special. Every group has something which is unrivalled in the whole service. But I feel there is something more special about PAS. It has a plethora of advantages ranging from personal grooming to the best career prospects. To me, the most appealing features of PAS are the level of impact you can have on society and your contribution to the governance and policy-making.

Q: Have you prepared from any academy or prepare on your own?

SMAS: In fact, I have never been to any academy and prepared completely on my own. I am neither in favour of nor against the academies. However, I have serious reservations about the level of preparation of the academy students especially keeping in view the ever-changing paper patterns, extermination of rote questions and the way CSS is getting tougher with every passing year.

Q: What strategy one should adopt to make a difference?

SMAS: I don't think that one can make difference only by studying difficult or different books. More or less, all the candidates consult same books. I think the real difference lies in the way you actually present your thoughts. Presentation of material needs a lot of acumen coupled with abilities to discourse. Make your paper more and more attractive with flowcharts, graphs, relevant diagrams, tables, headings, etc.

Q: As you know, most candidates fail English Essay and English Composition papers. What strategy would you suggest for these two crucial papers?

SMAS: To me the only key to success in these two papers is "write, write and write". But, of course, do get your work checked by some good teacher. Once your teacher okays your material, you may keep on practicing the same on your own. Gone are the days when writing 6 or 7 essays in December was sufficient. Nowadays, if you want to be on the safe side start writing under someone's supervision right now and keep it on till the actual papers.

Q: In your view, what sort of guidance should the fresh aspirants seek and how do you see Jahangir's World Times (JWT) as far as guidance on CSS is concerned?

SMAS: Of course, guidance is indispensable for better preparation otherwise you will feel lost in the sea of CSS. One must seek guidance from some experienced teacher or a CSP officer. But, one thing which I particularly noticed is that candidates somehow manage to get enough guidance but they remain unable to make its meaningful use. Always keep the axiom "too many cooks spoil the broth" in mind and collect tips but use them pragmatically as well. JWT is a great source of guidance for aspirants.

Q: What role does the luck play in CSS? It is commonly observed that many students of average intelligence are allocated while a number of talented and scholarly students just couldn't make it?

SMAS: Definitely, I do believe that luck factor has a role to play and on a positive note, I think luck is nothing but the blessings of Almighty Allah. Besides luck, other factors including but not limited to hard work, calibre, aptitude, educational background, level of motivation, dedication, also play the key role. As you mentioned the dilemma of talented individuals, I feel that CSS, apart from luck, does require a lot of other things which I have mentioned earlier.

Q: Would you like to give any message to future aspirants?

SMAS: To all the prospective aspirants, I would say that each of you can be successful as everyone is equally gifted. So, be confident and go with an undeterred resolve that you can and you have to top in first attempt. Numerous examples are there in this regard even I did it in my very first attempt. So never lose heart, work hard, set your study goals and achieve them.

Q: What are your views on the recently-introduced Screening Test?

SMAS: I can understand that many a candidate of CSS is having sleepless nights over screening test. But let me say that if one is serious to achieve one's goal, it should be of no concern. Consider it a blessing in disguise for you as it will have a number of advantages e.g. throwing out non-serious candidates, expediting the process, etc. Believe me, this test will also help you better prepare for your compulsory subjects.