

Nobility And Perseverance - A Tribute To Kanwal Muthu



(1942 - 2022)

Kanwal Muthu, whom we knew as Nanaji at home, was born as a pure soul, unruffled by the worldly concerns, unmindful of personal gain. As we were close in childhood, I saw to my amazement as well as to my concern, how he connected with people without fear and favor. At that time in his life I do not think he ever had a quarrel with anyone. I realize now that his fearlessness came from the purity of his soul, as reflected to him through his consciousness. See the picture above and look into his eyes, you will understand what I am talking about.

Lucky was Nanaji as he was born to special parents. His father, Dr. Dwarika Nath Muthu, was a noble man, who at times gave money to his patients to buy medicines and defray other expenditures, rather than take it from them as his rightful fees. For his compassion and generosity he was nicknamed Satyayogi Doctor. His mother, Roopawati, my father's sister, doted on her children the like

of which I have never seen. The parents treated the two children they had like God-given gifts, which they must raise with infinite care. Sometimes I thought they were going beyond the reality of life and raising them as softies.

Kanwal spent his pre-college life in small towns like Sopore, Anantnag, etc. He had a protected and privileged childhood in company with his highly dotting parents, a younger brother, who was very different than him, and the special treatment he got from the public surrounding him, being a town medical officer's son.

I spent a lot of time with the Muthu family, as I was a functional orphan, having been sent by my parents to Kashmir to pursue my studies, while they lived in New Delhi, on the basis that education in Kashmir was superior to the one dispensed in New Delhi. Although I was not convinced of that evaluation, I ended up spending six years of my boyhood with my uncle and other relatives. I spent time with Muthus in Srinagar, Sopore, and Pahalgam. During the F.Sc exam preparation, which would be about 12th grade in the modern school system, I ended up spending about a month and a half with Muthu family at their Ganpatyar, Srinagar residence. Muthus liked me very much and so the extent of the time I spent with them.

Kanwal while riding a bicycle would shout greetings to his friends and neighbors, without shyness and decorum considerations, which was not considered good taste. But he did not care as his heart had given him the green light. In the third year of college, which was the first year of B.A., he went for the enrollment very early in the morning, so that he would get the roll number one, so that people at the college would remember him easily. At this time in Kanwal's life he did not have much ambition in his education. He was not very fond of reading books, nor had any high interest in sports. His interest in girls was sharp and durable, which was augmented by their response to his overtures, propelled quite a bit by his Hollywood - looks. See the picture above to confirm this. He just wanted to have a good time in this period of his life.

Kanwal's seriousness about his life started when after his finishing B.A. in Kashmir he joined Victoria Jubilee Technical Institute in Bombay for the studies in engineering. Away from the love of his parents and comforts of his home, he faced life in its raw and challenging state. He was disappointed with some of his performance at the Institute but he did not allow it to make a mark on him. Proverbially he hit the sack but then got up quickly, steadied himself, and strode the path in front of him determinedly. This was the birth of new Kanwal, the personality that would guide him through the rest of his life. He became a serious man and ambitions took root in him. That is why I have called him a man of nobility and perseverance. Nobility he was born with but perseverance he cultivated. After VJTI he taught at Regional Engineering College in Srinagar for five years. Some of the people he taught and those who were his colleagues have told me that he was a very good teacher. They also told me that he was good also outside the classroom.

After the first tenure at Regional Engineering College, Kanwal decided to do M.Tech from IIT Delhi. He secured a first class in it, lashing at his VJTI performance. He re-joined Regional Engineering College for a couple of years. At this point he came to the realization that he was not an academician, as he confided to me a few years ago. So, henceforth he changed his tables and worked in manufacturing. He worked with several companies at high management levels. While doing that he maintained his interest in engineering societies, as he was fond of organizing events and meeting people. Ideally, he should have been in politics, but that would have been too risky an undertaking. After he stopped working for companies, he opened his own consulting company. So, Kanwal actually never retired. Below is a listing of his academic and professional careers.

But the glory of his life was to end, as it happens with most of the human lives. It was in early 2017 when Kanwal was attending the wedding of the daughter of his cousin in Delhi, he suffered a heart attack. Maybe, he could have come back fully after that, as he had lived a healthy life for the most part, but it was followed with two more heart attacks in the next year and a half. As if they were not enough

burden on his health, he incurred a fracture of the femur bone and suffered prostate cancer. The multiplicity of his ailments produced a serious setback to his recovery. Then after some five years after his first illness, he passed away on Oct. 24, 2022, on Diwali day.

We see in Kanwal's life there were two pivotal factors that gave it shape. One was his inborn nobility, the other his perseverance. Never did I see him harboring a grudge against someone who may have hurt him. He was naturally benign with people. Past did not weigh heavy in his life, present and future were his path. He was not an intellectual but a doer. That is why he was always doing something. In his mature years he had cut socializing, spending more time with his family. He loved his children very much, especially his daughter. He or his wife had given them cute nicknames: Minnah and Baya.

Like the string of lakes in my neighborhood which I frequently visit, Nanaji was a scintillating phenomenon of nature that I was connected with from childhood. Though he had become remote and uncommunicative with the passage of time, he was always there for me. But now he is in the company of stars: beyond reach but yet inspiring.

Academic and Professional Histories:

Full name: Kanwal Krishen Muthu

Actual date of birth: January 18, 1942

Official date of birth: January 20, 1942

Academic History:

I do not have information where Kanwal did his high schooling and F.Sc., but he

joined Amar Singh College, Srinagar, in 1958, for B.A. I guess he completed it in 1960.

He joined Victoria Jubilee Technical Institute, Bombay, in 1960, and graduated B.Tech, Mechanical Engineering, in 1964.

Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi, 1970-72. Graduated M. Tech., Industrial Engineering.

Professional History:

Regional Engineering College, Srinagar, Kashmir: 1965-70. Taught in Mechanical Engineering Dept.

Regional Engineering College, Srinagar, Kashmir: 1972-73. Taught in Mechanical Engineering Dept. again after M.Tech. from IIT Delhi.

Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi: 1973-75. Taught in Mechanical Engineering Dept.

Kelvinator Of India: Joined in 1975.

Weston Electronics: Joined in 1988.

Hero Honda Motors: Joined in 1991. He moved from the position of G.M.

Commercial to V.P. HR & TQM.

Lumax Industries: joined 1995 as VP.

Corporate Consultancy Services: Launched his own consulting firm in 1998. Provided management consulting services and conducted in-company training programs all over India.

Membership of Professional Organizations and Societies:

All India Management Association (AIMA)

Delhi Management Association (DMA). Served as president for one term.

Indian Institution of Industrial Engineering (IIIE)

Indian Society of Mechanical Engineers (ISME)

Operational Research Society of India (ORSI)

Picture of Kanwal taken in Pahalgam, Kashmir, May 1957:



Suffern, New York, Nov. 7, 2022; Rev. 5.14.24

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Daddy's Life - Excerpt From Inclinations And Reality

Following writing about my father is from my autobiography, *Inclinations and Reality*, published in 2010:

My father and uncle Papaji emerged as the towering personalities and gurus of our family after the untimely passing away of my grandfather. A pair of siblings could not have been more dissimilar. My father, called Babuji by family members younger than him, was a straight-from-the-gut person; he had little need for social hypocrisy, but at the same time he was warm, friendly, and gregarious. He was incorruptible but forgiving. He amassed a wide circle of friends as friendship was

his lifeblood. He was self-conscious, as almost all Kashmiri Pandits were those days, but had a wide empathy for people. He was serious and responsible but did not have any large-scale ambitions or goals in his life.

From his job with All India Radio, New Delhi, where he was a newscaster among other things, he moved to Information Services of India in New Delhi. On behalf of the organization, he went on diplomatic assignments to many countries of the world. This experience enriched his life, enlarging his perspective on world and life. He could work hard only to the limits of its need but did not like programmatic hard work. That is one of the reasons why he did not often top as a student though he did well in exams. He maintained very good relationships with people, especially with his friends and relatives. People adored him for his simplicity, his easy straightforwardness, his generous warmth, his ample generosity, and his spontaneous humor and wit. When with his friends, he would be at the peak of his jollity and agreeability; but when with his core-family he would generally be serious and silent.

Money did not inspire him, it was only a survival tool for him. He did not aspire for property or other material possessions. One way he looked at life was to treat it as a duty that one must strive to perform well. He was against over-intellectualization of human life. He thought its basic elements were quite apparent; all that was needed was to respond to them adequately. He generally lived in forward direction and on short-time basis. He conducted himself very well at his job. He was quick in his work and extremely good with his colleagues, especially his subordinates. He spent some of his spare time in reading books on history, literature, public life, and in other fields. He also wrote many articles on politics. He was well-versed in Urdu poetry. He was a colorful man, full of fun. He was a very good talker and the spark of his conversation stayed on people's mind for quite a while. His education prevented him to be religious, but he did not dismiss it as absurd, especially in his later years. He tried to live everyday as best as he could. He did not have metaphors for the marvel or mystery of life, neither did he condemn its painfulness and absurdity. Such detached and stoic approach to life, to some extent, could be traced to Hinduism, which surrounded him; though he did not practice it consciously. He could become nervous when

confronted with an important but a difficult situation or in an emergency or at the start of a long travel.

My father provided reliable and effective intellectual and emotional support to his relatives and friends, when he was asked to do so, or the situation warranted so. He was always willing to go to any length to help and comfort his family. He would not have liked to think that his life had a message, but if we were to look for it, it was to maintain the dignity of one's life at all the times, keep good relationships with people, follow the rules, and have fun. He passed away prematurely, at 65, on 16 August 1982, under unusual circumstances. That day in the morning he underwent a benign prostate surgery and passed away at midnight in the hospital. Circumstantial evidence strongly suggests he suffered pulmonary embolism, due to the mistakes in his surgery. His going away hurt his relatives and friends deeply, as they thought he was yet young and capable of a lot of goodness. No other person in our family, since and before his passing away, has equaled his perceived high human stature or his popularity, even though he had left Kashmir for good in 1948.

While bravely fighting his heartbreak over his younger son's accident, Daddy passed away on 16 August 1982, at an unripe age of 65, after a benign prostate surgery. I was traveling in Europe when the news of his passing away reached me. Hurriedly, I reached India the following day, only to be able to see his ashes. A man who liked to laugh and joke had now passed on to eternity. Below is the response I sent to people's condolence letters:

"It was quite some time ago that I received your letter about my father's passing away. The reverberations of that event in the last August are still strong and I have been unable to bring myself to replying you.

The invisible forces that tie us all seem very visible when calamities strike us. A man's life depends upon the sympathies and the smiles of other human beings.

Death is as final as anything can be. To understand and cope with it is challenging.

For your understanding and sympathy, I cannot find good enough thoughts to express my appreciation in. But this much I can say: by your letter you have reached out for the human heart and added to our bonds.”

My father, whose happiest moments were spent when he was in the company of people, would have been touched by such a moving response to his passing away, as has been generated by the people who knew him.”

His death seemed to mark the end of an era for me. He was like a big Chinar tree over me, whose presence sometimes I did not feel, but now by its absence, it has come to full life. All my life, during which Daddy was alive, he maintained, it appeared, a studied distance from me. Part of it was due to the cultural lag of Kashmiri fathers in relationship with their children and part of it was due to his innate shyness, well-hidden by his outwardly gregarious personality. But there were two more elements to it. My birth being the first in the family, when he was struggling to find a footing in the world, was reminiscent to him of his struggles. This experiential association, perhaps, made him cool toward me. Later, when I grew up, Daddy did not like my artistic disposition, as almost all his life he had wanted to be a practical man. Although he admired artists but living like one was too irresponsible and risky in his view. He wanted to take the world as it appears and man’s role in it to be like that of a captain in a ship. But I had forgiven his aloofness toward me a long time ago. I wrote a book about our relationship, *Life With Father*, whose introductory verse is:

He remained an aloof tower in my life,

When I was looking for a father.

But the flow of time has washed my wounds

And now I miss his unalloyed love, his fulsome compassion,

Sharpness of his wit, his unaffected manner.

His presence is imprinted in the recesses of my consciousness,

His incorruptible nobility a light forever shining in my firmament.

Suffern, N.Y., May 4, 2024

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Tribute To Dilip Kumar



Dilip Kumar Is No More: It is a deep personal loss to me that Dilip Saab, one of the heroes of my life, passed away a few hours ago. I discovered him in my mid-teens when I was living in Srinagar, Kashmir. During those years there was not much going on in a teenager's life except reading books, listening to music on Radio Kashmir, seeing movies, and imagining romances with pretty girls. The last item was more in the realm of

imagination than in reality, as the existing morality strongly looked down upon it . When I saw the first Dilip Kumar movie, I was hypnotized. His emoting, speaking, walking, and everything else was sharp, sensitive, coming deep from his heart. And the tragedy roles he played were in sync with my soul. After seeing a Dilip Kumar movie I used be so moved, that for several days I would be knocked out. It would take me effort to come back to real life. After seeing his many movies I came to think that he must be a special personalty in his real life. My thinking came to be true after I delved deeply in his real life. I found that he was an intelligent and a sensitive man, who had a strong character. Also, I came to know that that he was very selective in the roles he played, was very good to people, so much so you could not criticize any person in Bollywood and beyond in his presence. If you did, he would come out with many good qualities and deeds that the criticized person had to his credit. In the last few years I had a wish that he live up to 100, to add aura to his personality. His life, beyond the cinema, I studied keenly. I found that he knew how to live it, true to his personality. He maintained his artistic personality, knitting it with realism, and constrained to practical difficulties of life. The same qualities of sensitivity, intelligence, and character he used in his movie roles, he also applied to his life. He was selective in his roles, so that he ended up working in less than 60 films; while actors of his level of success would act in more than 100. This was a delineation of his character. He did not want to work in all kind of cheap movies, just to make money. Using Tagore's language, Dilip Kumar was greater than his deeds and truer than his surroundings. His name will not only live on in Bollywood, but in India, and beyond. He was the first hero of my life; subsequently, I added four other heroes, as I grew up. But none of them chipped away anything from the magic of Dilip Saab. Today my hero has left me, but his life will keep on inspiring me by its sensitivity, tenacity, talent, realism, and strong character. Maharaj Kaul

<https://www.facebook.com/profile/100009422537911/search?q=dilip%20kumar>

Reminiscences of Bhabi - Kamla Cherwoo



It seems some things in life are destined to fail, especially among those that you cherish the most. When I was a boy, I used to think I would marry a village belle. It was because I thought she would be pure of heart and simple in demeanor compared to a city slicker. Good luck opened up for me, I married one. Along with that came the relationship with a village family, which I was attracted to for the same reason as the belle.

It was in late February 1969 when I first met Bhabi, Kamala Cherwoo. The meeting was initiated by her, as she wanted to see me, the first time, and talk with me before I was married with her daughter, Mohini, which was scheduled about a week later, on March 2, 1969.

I did not have any inkling of what kind of a person and a personality she was, but I had never heard anything bad about the Cherwoo family, in the Kashmiri Pandit society in Kashmir those days. She had set the meeting in a restaurant in the main

bazaar of Jammu, escorted by her middle son.

Setting my eyes on her the first time, I found a very compassionate person, who held herself in good control, and was diligent in being respectful and charming to the person she was meeting. I was buoyed by her kindness, transparency, and generous respect she gave me. Years down the road this initial assessment of her has never wavered.

Bhabi was born in Srinagar, Kashmir, in a Kashmiri Pandit family. Her father Srikanth Mattoo was a medical doctor, specializing in pathology. She had a younger sister, who died young. Lack of a male offspring compelled her parents to adopt a son, Jawahar Lal, considerably younger than her.

At the age of fifteen or sixteen Bhabi was married in Cherwoo family, living in Anantnag, about thirty-five miles south of Srinagar. Her husband, Vish Nath, was the younger son of the family patriarch, Halder Joo Cherwoo. The family was engaged in the wholesale business in edibles, spices, and cloth. Their success in it had made them into a well to do family, concomitantly earning them social status. Cherwoos were a well-knit clan, spread over a few families, living at the same general place. The families were independent and yet had the thread of togetherness connecting them.

How a sixteen-year-old girl learned to live with them is the quintessence of Bhabi. By her culture and by her personality, Bhabi did not fit with Cherwoos, but yet she successfully lived with them virtually all her life; in fact, becoming one of their leaders. She molded herself to the new reality, using her salient qualities of tolerance, patience, inter-personal skills, and diplomacy, to be in control of the family; which her status as the family scion's wife demanded. She acquired the ability of deflating the family feuds and giving it the semblance of unity and congruity.

Even bigger challenge for Bhabi was to live with her husband, Babuji. He was of fragile tolerance, hyper sensitive about his self-image, dictatorial, and temperamental. Here was a colossal challenge for Bhabi. She had no special training to meet it, except to the extent what almost all Indian women of her generation had when they got married. Deep respect and tolerance for their in-laws and the husbands, a religious zeal to succeed in this endeavor, and, above all, not mind the hurt if bruised in interactions with them. It was a missionary work they had silently agreed to do. Over the years Bhabi managed to live with Babuji by sacrificing her right of equality, perseverance, and tactfulness. Over time their marriage became one of gratitude, tolerance, and love.

After my marriage in Cherwoo family, I visited them several times during my visits to India from U.S. Also, they reciprocated visiting me and my wife in U.S. several times. Because of these I came to know Bhabi more.

During her almost annual visits to U.S., after the demise of Babuji in 1995, at the age of seventy-three, up to early 2,000's, she stayed with us without fail, along with staying with her two sons. She was disciplined in daily activities: walking, eating, sleeping, and praying. She was always in control of her mind. But it is not difficult to imagine that at times she would have been travelling down her memory lane to the great times of Cherwoo's in Anantnag, her times with Babuji, and other relatives. The mega-family atmosphere has its own charms. Then, especially living in Kashmir, her birthplace, had its own gravitational pull of memories of childhood and youth, when her children were born and raised. It is a stroke of misfortune when a person is compelled to move from his place of birth, childhood, and youth to another country. Babuji's untimely demise, I am certain, has played a significant part in her subsequent emotional life. She would not engage me with her past, and, I guess, anyone else. That came from her inherent shyness and control over herself. For the same reasons she would not complain about anything to me.

I several times went to the airport to receive her when she was coming from India. During travelling she would put on an aggressive posture, just to feel

secure and be alert. After my retirement I would generally be the one attending to her lunch and dinner. I, also, made sure that we had honey in the house, which along with milk, she would take before going to bed. She would occasionally take walks outside the house. She had a long praying period in the morning. Whenever her middle son Balji would visit us she would be excited, as he was her favorite child. He had equally a weakness for her.

Overall, Babi's personality is unique. She is a long suffering and a controlled personality, who believes in the grace of God, and is at peace with the world. No wonder all this has contributed to her longevity.

We developed a special relationship, which continued on till 2013, after which due to my divorce with my wife, it abruptly ended. It was not her who ended it, but her children, who decided not to tell her about the divorce, on the assumption that doing so would jeopardize her health, as she was already in her 90's. Nothing could have been farther from the reality. Bhabi had seen many deaths among her close relatives in her lifetime, including that of her beloved Babuji; my and Mohini's divorce would not have been unbearable for her. This was a tragic situation for me, as I could not do anything to mitigate it.

I treasure her gentle touch, cool control, and sheer goodness. My memory flashes to trips we took to Pahalgam, Khirbhawani, and the times we spent in New York. She was a shaft of tranquility, forbearance, and silent fortitude; the kind of which I have only seen in my mother and a few others.

But memories of her will remain strong in my universe, as there was a relationship of love and respect between us. I have been told that old age has encumbered her heavily. I am certain that she will bear it gracefully, as she has borne other calamities in her life.

I am ending this tribute with the following words:

Upon the altar of life there are not enough sacrifices one can make, Bhabi burnt her ego and interests to irradiate her world with compassion and love.

Notes:

1. All pictures taken by me.
2. The frontispiece picture of Bhabi taken in Sept., 2007.
3. The pictures below are of Bhabi, Babuji, and Kakni (Bhabi's mother)





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Grace and Courage : Anupamaji is No More



When I met her first many years ago in India, I was stuck by her reticence. She sat with noble quietness. After a while I felt that it fit very well with the architecture of her rectitude. Great personalities, generally, are quieter than the common folk. I guess it is because they are more communicating with themselves, rather than with others.

I learned through a common friend that Anupamaji had been divorced many years ago, so she must have managed her life by herself. That is indicative of her courage and tenacity. Quiet people often have gumption.

Recently I met her while she was traveling outside India. Again, I was stuck by her gracefulness and quietness. Behind her sleek demeanor must have resided toughness and discipline.

The world is a poorer place without Anupamaji. Her family has lost a strong

anchor, her friends a shoulder to lean on. The richness of her personality cannot be easily described. I would attempt to describe her as a large, strong, perennial tree in a garden, which is always there to sooth you silently. But now with its absence one will be able to reliably measure its strength.

Anupamaji, you now belong to eternity, where angels dance and sing the glory of righteousness and redemption.

Suffern, New York, July 14, 2020

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Serendipity and Sorrow : A Tribute to Baijee

How can one sum up a long human life? Every human being during the course of his life wants to achieve several different things, be they his ambitions for himself, his family, his country, the humankind, or a particular intellectual arena. But ambitions themselves do not make them happen, as one's passage through the world is difficult. So, what is significant is what are the inclinations one has, so that if one fails in one arena one can succeed in another one.

Baijee was an idealist. He wanted things to be done in the world and in one's family according to established ethical principles. Having lived in Kashmir he had come to look down upon public morality. This mistrust grew up over time to

become cynicism. Everything the government did was suspect. But he was proud of Indian ethos. So, one thought that India, according to his vision, one day will find a way to cross its tremendous ethical gaps in public life.

But public life was not the only life Baijee lived. He was an intense family man. In fact, he was an epic clan man. He considered Kaul clan, or more precisely Malikyar Kaul clan, to be a great family. So, over decades he poured his care and work to keep it together. He arranged get-togethers among its members and worked on individual-relationship basis to keep the body a well healed emotional-machine. He definitely is the last great leader Kauls will have, as the younger generation is not beholden to the clan togetherness, neither practically nor conceptually.

On individual relationship basis also Baijee did good. He forged many an intense relationships. But he demanded 100% loyalty. He voluntarily undertook management of many wedding events among relatives. To take such a responsibility means that you will devote yourself completely to the task, which is not easy, as it involves many difficult types of work. Only a dedicated person can do such a job.

Baijee liked to laugh and joke around. At my wedding at Jammu, in 1969, he did a humorous dance, posing as a woman. He wore his heart on his sleeve. So, one had to be careful not to joke wrongly with him. He carried lifelong a deep hurt of the loss of his father when he was at the age of four. This inner tragedy he never was able to shake off. Although the loss did not prevent him to be educated, employed, or married, but he believed that his loss had permanently darkened his life.

But he serendipitously found peace of mind in his vision of India as a Hindu civilization, in his immediate family, and in the larger Malikyar Kaul clan. He loved his grandchildren Saumya, Tanvi, and Zitin. I and him spent six years together in the Kaul ancestral house at Malikyar, Srinagar. Baijee used to be a lot

of fun those days; also, straight as an arrow. He used to narrate things as he saw them, without embellishment. But while joking he would add some spice. We never had a fight.

Baijee's two heroes were his elder brothers, Babuji and Papaji. He was fonder of the former but admired the latter more for his intellect. In the later years he was critical of many of Papaji's views on people and life. He also thought I had earned a place to be in the circle of his brothers as an intellectual.

How can one sum up Baijee life? As I said at the outset of this eulogy it is not an easy thing to do. Because though the assessment is easy to make for those who have lived publicly, it is more difficult to make for those who lived their lives privately. Baijee had great ambitions for his country, for himself, and his family. He spent some three decades in intelligence work, perhaps two of them with Central Bureau of Intelligence. One should have seen his intensity at his work, he was a completely dedicated worker. India is on the road to doing well, his family has done very well, but Baijee himself did not directly succeed in making himself what he wanted to make. This failure is common among people of high ambition. But by making his family succeed Baijee has succeed. Also, by keeping Malikyar Kaul clan together Baijee succeed greatly.

Baijee has now reached his eternity. Our worldly measurements of him are silly. He was a loving and caring man, who wanted his country, community, clan, and family forever remain together and strive for betterment.

We will forever miss his human qualities.

A fulsome man with love and courage,

Spun with family values and dyed with mirth,

More original than the Zabarwan mountains,

A hero who was not fully challenged.

(MK)

Suffern, New York, Sept. 24, 2019

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The Journey of Piara Lal Qusba

On Tuesday, July10, in St. Vincent Funeral Home, in Canton, Ct. some fifty people sat listening to the religious incantations of a Hindu priest for the funeral of Piara Lal Qusba, who passed away on July7, at John Dempsey Hospital, in Farmington, Ct.

Relatives and friends were deeply saddened as Piara Lal was only 71. Before the funeral ceremonies started, his wife Asha, gave us an account of his last few

hours. When the attending doctor, sensing the nearness of his end, asked him what he wanted, Piara Lal asked to see his wife Asha, son Sandeep, and his two granddaughters Aryanna and Cereese. When a little later he was again asked what else he wanted he asked for morphine.

Sandeep, Piara Lal's only child, read a very eloquent and passionate tribute to his father. He called to attention his father's bright mind and his high passion. "He was the most passionate man I have ever met." He also mentioned his father's close ties with his family.

As the religious incantations filled the funeral hall, which most of the people present did not understand, their thoughts wafted over to Piara Lal's life that they knew. They remembered his coming to this country around late 60's. Then they remembered him managing KOA camps in mid-1990's. He was the one who discovered Moodus, Ct. campsite which became the most popular 4th Of July East Coast campsite. People also remembered Piara Lal's Sharda Foundation, set up to provide computer technology to refugee children in Jammu & Kashmir.

As the crescendo of the ceremonies climaxed, people went around the bier sprinkling flowers on his body, some touching his feet, Sandeep must have kissed his father a hundred times. The estimation of the intensity of his grief was excruciating. Asha stood close to the bier. Afterword, the bier was lifted by a dozen people and moved outside the funeral home, and after 300 yards of journey was brought to the basement level of the funeral home, where its crematory facilities are located. . All the people followed the bier. Emotions hit the peak for many people at this point. Sandeep looked very shaken and hurt. His wife Dawn tried to comfort him. Finally, Piara Lal's body joined the eternal body of the cosmos.

Piara Lal was born on April 26, 1941 in Kashmir, India, son of the late Amar Nath and Indirawati Qasba. He lived in Avon, Ct. prior to moving to Ellington 10 years

ago. Piara was a graduate of Clausthal University of Technology in Germany, graduating with a degree in Metallurgy in 1966. He also attended Columbia University where he received a Master's of Science in 1971. Piara was a Senior Metallurgical Engineer at United Technologies prior to his retirement in 2001.

Maharaj Kaul

July 11, 2012

Humility and Tenacity - A Tribute to Inder Krishen Bhat

Inder Krishen Bhat, a stellar personality, passed away on the morning of September 23, 2017, in

Falls Church, Virginia, at the age of 71.

The last time I met Inderji was at the KOA East Coast Camp in July, 2017. He was as usual low-key, self-effacing, and yet a determined KOA worker. Though we never became friends, due to distance between New York and Virginia, but that did not matter, as I always felt his shine.

I had met Inderji at several KOA camps. He consistently possessed all the

qualities indicated above. His strength came from a solid confidence in his values. He carried the same personality traits in his relationships with relatives and friends.

Inderji was born in Muran, a village in Kashmir, to Triloki Nath and Inderawati Bhat, in 1946. After his schooling in Jammu and Kashmir, he studied college in Agra. M.B.B.S he studied in Government Medical College, Srinagar, in 1968. .M.D. in Surgery in Maulana Azad Medical College, New Delhi.

In 1974 he arrived in U.S. He went through internship in St. Agnes Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1974-75. Residency in Surgery was done in Sinai Hospital, Baltimore, in 1975-1979 and residency in Colon and Rectal Surgery in Temple University Hospital, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1980. After the completion of his training he opened a private practice in 1981, in Virginia, where he had also been living.

He is survived by his spouse, Kamini, children: Vineet and Neeraj. The former is married to Misha and they have three children; the latter is married to Gretchen and they have two children.

Inderji was one of the bulwarks of KOA. Though officially he attained positions in its management only twice: once as a Newsletter Editor, and twice as a Secretary, but his influence in it was considerably greater. He was like the Socrates of the organization. Especially in Maryland and Virginia, where without his approval KOA Zone 4 significant activities virtually could not be done. On the 25th anniversary of KOA, he presented to it and the campers a CD carrying pictures from previous camps.

For many years a time slot at the Camps was reserved for Inderji: it was for his narration of light Urdu poetry. Often it was in humorous vein. He was sought in

the Camps for his advice and work assignments.

Besides interests in poetry, Inderji also took interest in U.S. politics. He helped some candidates in elections. He was also known for his humorous remarks and actions.

A noble and cherished Kashmiri Pandit has passed away. His family, relatives, friends, and KP community in U.S. are the poorer for that. The rub is that he left them at the young age of 71. But people like Inderji never die, their light continues to shine over the people who knew them.

Suffern, New York, October 5, 2017.

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Papaji : The Last Icon of Kaul Clan

1.Excerpt from my book, Inclinations and Reality (2010)

My uncle Papaji was just three years younger than my father. He was born shy, aloof, and brainy. He had few friends in his younger years. It was only in his later years that his efforts to come out of his cocoon paid off and he became more sociable and assertive. But sometimes in his overzealousness he would become an uninhibited and an opinionated talker, making extreme statements on people and things. He excelled as a student and used deft strategies to score high in exams. After completing his education in Kashmir, he went to Government College in

Lahore, which was considered the Oxford University of India at that time, to get a Master's degree in English. Given his emotional personality, it was strange that he chose to take up literature instead of physics, history, or political science. On returning to Kashmir he briefly taught English, but having qualified in Kashmir Civil Service he became a police officer. Again, a police officer's job was not in synch with his personality but he took it because it was monetarily a more rewarding job than other viable jobs, with potential for better growth than an English professor's job.

He married into a family not socially as prominent as Kauls were. He did so because he valued the education of the woman in question, who was called Pyari in our family after her marriage. There was another reason for marrying in that family; it allowed his and his wife's wedding gifts to be transferred to his younger sister, Gorajigri, when she would get married two months later. Pyari was a double college graduate, a regular graduate and a teaching graduate. She was also the first teaching graduate in the state. These qualifications gave her a special status in Kashmir those days. The irony is that her education brought a lot of problems in her married life, as she refused to move with Papaji from Srinagar many times whenever he was transferred to different districts of the state on the grounds of not willing to abandon her duties as the headmistress of a girl's school. Also, she did not share his intellectual tastes and found him cold and unromantic, describing his personality as lacking in passion.

For about the next three decades and a half in the police service, my uncle blazed a trail of devotion to duty, incorruptibility, and efficiency. He became one of the most iconic figures in the state. Being highly principled, stern, and unbending, he was feared at his work, both by his subordinates and his superiors. Together with his superior professional abilities, he became *bête noire* of the higher state management, as they did not know what to do with him. He was among a few non-bribe taking police officers in the state, which made his superiors uncomfortable; his intellectual stature and high-mindedness made them nervous. He could not be fired, so he was often transferred to different districts of the state. He became a shining symbol of honesty and "efficiency" (a word used for professional abilities in India, which seems to have come from the old British management mindset) in

an ocean of public corruption and stained morality. Add to this persona his six-foot height and reed-like leanness, he became a visible image of strength and sharpness.

After being treated as a pariah almost all his career, the crowning glory came almost at its end when he was promoted as the head of the police for the state (called IGP, Inspector General of Police, in those days). How did this happen? Customarily, Kashmir IGPs were recruited from outside the state. As the current IGP's tenure was coming to an end, Papaji went to the state chief minister, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, asking him if local police officers lacked the ability to become an IGP. Abdullah, known for his pride in Kashmiris, responded that that was not the case and that future IGPs could be sourced internally. Lo and behold, in the next recruitment process, Papaji was selected for the post. This big feather on his professional cap apparently mitigated the years of step-motherly treatment he went through in the police organization.

With all the successes in his career, family, and social life, he remained less than happy. In my 25 years of correspondence with him, he complained many times about his inability to see much value in life; turning him almost into a nihilist. He often saw life as a cruel joke played by gods on the innocent and helpless human beings. He would quote Shakespeare from King Lear, "*As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods: they kill us for their sport.*" He unconsciously believed that intelligence was an end by itself; nothing more was needed to live. That is, no faith in a system of thought was required to live, like in religion, art, science, etc. All that was needed was good brain power and the knowledge of the hard realities of life. The supreme irony of his life was that while he had evolved to achievements in character, intellect, and cerebral pyrotechnics, he had missed the spiritual dimension of human life. His perennial disenchantment with life provoked Babuji, his elder brother, to coin an epithet for him, "A Devdas without a Paro." (Devdas is the legendary hero of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's novel of the same name. Devdas leads a very sad life and hastens its end by alcoholism, because he is unable to marry his childhood sweetheart, Parvati)

During his police career and later when he retired, he took refuge in books. He read widely in English. He loved Urdu poetry and could quote many a verse fluently. He was also good in quoting from English literature. He questioned some of the basic ways in which our society lived, thinking they were hypocritical and therefore of not good value. The problem was that he was much less emotional than the common people, so unable to understand some of the popular social intercourse. He believed all the prophets of mankind had failed it. He thought Kashmiri Pandit refugees did not deserve much sympathy as they were doing all right. Our correspondence was impregnated with arguments and debates as we were emotionally and intellectually antipodeans and, therefore, our views on art, culture, civilization, etc., were on the opposite ends. With Pyari's untimely demise, and emigrating to New Delhi in 1990 due to the militancy in Kashmir, he struck the lonely phase of his life, which did not leave him till the end. Books did not provide permanent relief to him. He often asked me if book reading is all that life is about.

His influence on the family and the personalities of its members remains strong. Because of his high moral integrity, that too in a highly corrupt society, he has left a significant record of his services, a scintillating impression of his character. His life looks to be tragic to me because he had been born with the capabilities to do a lot more than he did—both in public and intellectual arenas. The following verse, written by me, may make my point clearer:

He came as a beacon penetrating the dark overcast skies,

To illuminate a patch below, to stir a cleansing

Of its stained fabric, to show us the new way to live.

But somewhere he lost interest in his work

And folded his supreme abilities and character,

To rue on unfairness of life, to lament on its immutable pain.

But I realize all of us are born one-piece. That is, our limitations are a part of our total personality. Papaji, on a larger canvas of his life, could not have been any different than he was. This is the uniqueness of every person, laced as it is with human dimension.

It is both ironic and unfortunate that most of the third-generation youngsters in our family did not know his achievements and his character, leaving them bereft of the inspiration he imbued in others. For me, during my exile years, he offered me his home to live in, and left me alone. Beyond that, he continued to remain a fatherly uncle to me through the vicissitudes of time.

He suddenly passed away on 16 March, 2008, after only a week's hospitalization for pneumonia and back problems. But these problems were swept over by septicemia, the powerful infection contracted in hospitals (which is found in India in high frequency), which rapidly gained control over his various organs and proved fatal. Some people believe that the fatal blow came from the festering tuberculosis that had invaded his lower vertebrae much earlier than his final hospital visit. For a man who had never spent a night in a hospital, and who possessed superior health genes and who maintained it with a tenacious and obsessive discipline, the manner of his demise was painfully surprising. People took cold comfort in the fact that it was the hospital infection, septicemia, that killed him and not his health.

With Papaji's departure, Kauls lost the last pillar of their clan. His iron strength of

character, his keenness of mind, his robust will to live, and his durable wisdom made him into an iconic figure. Kauls who knew him well will keep on thinking about this larger-than-life person till their end. If an epithetical pronouncement were made about his understanding of human life, it would be the following words from Shakespear's play Macbeth, which he cherished passionately:

"Out, out, brief candle! Life's is but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more: it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

2. The Spark and The Spine - Papa Ji's Eulogy

This is the eulogy I wrote immediately after Papaji's passing away.

Papaji - Dwarika Nath Kaul (1920-2008)

How shall one remember a father, an uncle, and a friend who was at once a man of high principles, intellectually sharp, very human, and simple? How had all these qualities coalesced in one man always mystified the people who knew him? His personality shined in every important phase of his life. His laughter was invigorating and infectious and he loved to be among his family and friends. He took the hard and rough of life with equanimity and discipline.

Papaji was born in a large family in Srinagar in 1920. His father, Pt. Sudharshan Kaul, became to be the senior most non-English police officer in Jammu And Kashmir state. Papaji was a shy and an introverted boy who minded his books diligently. In fact, he was found to be a very brainy child, who went on to do

brilliantly at his studies. After high achievements at State High School and Sri Partap College he went on to attend Government College, Lahore, which was considered to be the Oxford University of India those days. He graduated M.A. in English with distinction from it. Due to the untimely death of his father, at the age of fifty-four, he returned to Kashmir and plunged into taking care of his family. After a short stint as a lecturer in English in Sri Partap College, he qualified in the Kashmir Civil Service and joined the state police force. He steadily progressed through the ranks, ending his career as the Inspector General of Police of the state. He distinguished himself by his brilliance, discipline, and character. Being highly principled he was much feared at his work, both by his subordinates as well as by his superiors, though for different reasons. Being among the few non-bribe taking officers in the state made his superiors uncomfortable with him, and his intellectual stature and high-mindedness made them nervous. It took a lot of character and tenacity those days to maintain one's principles.

He called his job as a "thief catcher", which he said he did to make a living. For nurturing his soul he immersed himself in the world of literature and philosophy. He read widely and eclectically. He wrote many articles during and after his police career on important subjects, some of which were published in his book "Reflections on Police, Society, And Allied Subjects." He was an aficionado of both English and Urdu literatures. He could quote with equal fluency and panache a Shakespeare or a Ghalib. Sometimes one wondered whether his intellect was wasted in police, when he could have contributed at a higher level in an academic or a national level planning job. He would have made a fine ambassador for India to a foreign country or been utilized for other high intellectual type of positions. But our Central Government often does not know who its stars are. Alas, a high-level resource was left unused.

He lost his wife, Pyari, in 1976, when she was only fifty-two. This inflicted a deep wound in his life which he was never able to heal. But his perseverance and discipline prevailed and he spent the rest of his life absorbed in books and meeting his relatives and friends. He had wanted to continue living in Kashmir after his retirement in his house called "Simriti," named by him in memory of his earlier life, but the war in Kashmir forced him to move to New Delhi. This

adjustment was necessarily laced with trauma.

In the family life with him we enjoyed his sharp wit, humor, moral support, and practical advice. He was peripatetic, often walking many kilometers to see his relatives and friends, which also satisfied his life-long need for physical exercise. His tastes were fine and sparse. Overdoing was not his style. He endeavored to be a wholly independent man, which given the nature of life, was not easy. He many times let the ugly aspects of life get the better of him, turning him into a pessimist. But he was a staunch realist and believed in a pragmatic approach to solve life's problems.

Today we mourn him but tomorrow we will miss him. We will miss his strength of character, his trustworthiness, his wise counsel, and the sharpness of his mind. He was one of the beacons of light in our family and that light will endure for many years to come. The legacy he leaves behind is our treasure.

Maharaj Kaul
Suffern, New York
3.22.08

3. Life After Papaji

This is an essay written by me on Papaji in 2014.

He was an icon as well as an iconoclast, a traditionalist as well as a debunker of the traditions.

It has been six years since Papaji died but his persona as well his image has deeply descended in the Kaul clan mythology, despite his sharp and pungent treatment of some of its members and others at times. What has unconsciously and consciously impressed people has been his uncompromisable honesty and his unassailable character.

His absence from the clan is invisibly mourned. His intelligence, his sarcasm, his upbraiding of people, and his high-pitched voice are missed. He appeared to be the tower of strength.

He came from modest economic circumstances but by the dint of his intelligence and consistency he created a niche for himself in the society. He was an intellectual, but initiated more by intuition than by scholarship.

He took a police officer's job rather than an English professor's job because the former paid more and was more secure. Why he took a master's degree in English is puzzling because he was not an artistic person. He should have studied physics, economics, or political science instead. This is among the many contradictions in his life. Basically, he had no vision of his life: he went along whatever was the current social style.

Papaji did not have much fun in life because of his deep conservatism and parsimoniousness. On philosophical level he wondered whether joy was possible in human life. In the earlier period of his life he was often glum and sedate. He believed life was set up by gods to punish man for some unknown sins. But later with considerable effort he incorporated some modicum of joy in his life. His brother, Babuji, called him a Devdas but without a Paroo. His personality can be echoed by the following two stanzas from Shakespeare's plays King Lear and Macbeth:

“As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods,
They kill us for their sport.”

“Life’s is but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing.”

Papaji’s honesty in the public life was so strong that we can use the American president Harry Truman’s aphorism, “The buck stops here.” He had forbidden police officers subordinate to him to enter his home because they tended to please his home people by bringing in gifts like fruits, bread, and other things. He once told me that if his son was implicated in some wrong-doing he would not hesitate to punish him. Such high character was a rarity in the Kashmir of those times.

Life was unfair to him as he deserved a much higher level of job than the best he had, like an ambassador’s job. He deserved a wife who had more acumen of intellect than she had. He complained a lot about life, still he went on living.

Today we have no leader in the Kaul clan. It is among other things a loose spectrum of many young people who are unaware of Kaul clan’s glory days and grand personalities. Which portends a gradual dissolution of the clan as we knew it. But everything in life finally fades in the mists of time.

Life after Papaji in the clan has been a lukewarm experience, adrift in uncertainty, like a rehearsal of life, instead of the life itself.

With all his flaws Papaji was a bulwark of moral strength. He stood by his principles most of the time. But his tepid personality often muted the vibrant colors of relationships, celebrations, and the carefree moments of the enjoyment of life.

I had a special relationship with Papaji. I often differed with him on philosophical matters. We exchanged about a hundred letters. One day I wish to publish them as they are about serious philosophical subjects. Papaji's daughter Veena told me that after his death they found out that the only letters he had saved were those written by me.

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Information on pics:

1. Karan Singh giving an award to Papaji
2. Papaji
3. Papaji
4. Pyar & Papaji - pic taken by me in 1974 in Pahalgam
5. Babuji & Papaji
6. Papaji - pic taken by me in 1980's in Mandakani, New Delhi. Papaji liked it.

C.



Thinking of Babuji

He has been dead for thirty-five years but yet he is the most beloved of the Kauls. The foundation of this magic lay in his personality. He was intense, emotional, and intelligent. He captured people's hearts by his sympathy for them and his humility. Unlike his more famous brother, Papaji, he talked with people at their level. He was a people's person rather than an "I" person. He considered friends to be more important than his family. When he would be in low spirits, and therefore uncommunicative with his family members, the visit of a friend would rocket-fire his mood.

He was born on May 8, 1917, in a middle class family. His father was the highest level Kashmiri police officer in Kashmir Valley. The death of his mother when he was at a young age must have created subtle emotional deficiencies in him, at least during his childhood. He never talked about his parents, which is abnormal. How far did he look in his past is unknown. But I believe strongly that he did not look too deeply. This is because he wanted to be a practical man and not be burned by it. But those who live their lives solely on practical basis lose something of their soul.

Babuji planned to have a PhD in history but it did not come to that. He had done M.A. L.L.B. from Lucknow University and had registered for PhD. His subject was Kashmir under Moghuls. After starting his thesis in Srinagar at some point he had to go to Lucknow, perhaps to meet his adviser. On his way to Lucknow he stopped at Delhi. His friends there told him that the newly created Kashmiri section in All India Radio was looking for a newscaster in Kashmiri. He went for the interview and was selected for the job. The PhD fell by the wayside, as he thought the economic support of his family was more important at that time. He also thought

that Ph.D could be restarted later, which he never did.

During the early years in Delhi Babuji was disenchanted and disconnected with the immediate scene. He missed his life in Kashmir. It was a cruel stroke of destiny that he was catapulted in that situation. He would come home from work and sit on a chair immobilized and speechless, drifted deep in thought, perhaps hitting the shores of his distant past.

He was sanguine about and savvy with the world. He was an optimist but without an architecture of thought behind it. He did not have any goals in life, he just followed its flow. It was the same with his thinking: he followed an instinctive sense of things, there was not much intellectual architecture to it.

In his about thirteen years of Foreign Service employment I do not think he did any extraordinary work but to go along with the flow of what was being done in the department he was in. He lacked the gumption to trying new things and dreaming of things that were within his grasp of achievement.

In 1972 a calamitous event occurred which changed Babuji's life till the rest of his life. His favorite child, Babu, suffered an automobile accident so severe that he never worked and married. Babuji's misery was immense.

Babuji's image burns high in Kaul clan, even after thirty-five years of his death, because of his emotions for his family and friends. People remember his empathy for them. His more famous brother, Papaji, missed on that frontier and, therefore, is not a cult figure as Babuji is.

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