

Life With Father



Preface:

My father was inclined to be a peaceful man, inclined to be happy. Had it not been for some special experiences he had in life, he would have been almost a happy man. He did not think much of material possessions and worldly positions. He did not care for fame and popularity, recognition and legacy. He very much lived in the present. He did not carry any special burdens of the past or special projects for the future. He enjoyed friendships, caring for people, and truthfulness.

He had a good childhood, in spite of having lost his mother at a young age. He had good years in college up to the point when he lost his father at a young age of fifty-four. After that burdens of life started making impression on him. But he still essentially remained himself. It was only when he left Kashmir in 1948, with a plan to work toward Ph.D at Lucknow, which changed to his taking a job with All India Radio in New Delhi, did his life change significantly. It was a watershed event in his life. Cut off from his relatives and friends in Delhi, he started to change from his natural gregariousness to seriousness, from inclination to laugh to tendency to brood. For the rest of his life he tried subconsciously to revive his old self, but only with mixed results. For him his original social environment was the best.

Considering he did not have any specific ambitions or dreams, his achievements in life were good. What he was looking for in his life was happiness and in many patches of life he did get it, in others he was bordering at that, while in many

others he was badly away from it. He achieved a good level professional position. He was good at his work and very popular in his organizations. He met his family responsibilities very well and had achieved a reasonably secure material safety net.

He was intense but without goals. He thought the moment at hand was life and he tried to live it to his best ability. Luckily, not being introverted, confused, or depressive, he was never despondent. He knew a way will come out even in very complex and apparently difficult situations. He was hopeful without being overly optimistic, he was joyful without being too happy. His over deference to realism prevented him to let his imagination soar. He was neither poetic in his soul, though he enjoyed poetry, nor religious, though he did not outrightly reject it. He was a very intelligent, realistic, self-conscious, and a hopeful man. He believed that tomorrow will be better and he put in whatever effort he thought was necessary to make it so. He was not a searcher, like he was not searching to uncover the mystery of life or searching to find himself, or searching to find God. For him these were illusions.

His younger son Babu's accident in 1972 was a very serious blow to him; in a way a lethal blow, as he passed away within a few years after that, at only sixty-five. He never recovered from that trauma, much as he tried to free himself from its entrails. The timing of it in his life could not have been worse, as he was just close to a much awaited retirement. This was the tragic phase in his life when even his hopeful attitude sometimes deserted him. In the end he succumbed to resignation, depriving him of his happiness, which he so assiduously sought in his retirement.

The few pages written in the book are more to honor him than to write his biography. They were meant to portray my life with him for my own illumination and perhaps for the illumination of his grandchildren who never met him. By giving shape to my experiences with him in language, I am trying to understand him better, and celebrate our relationship. Every man comes wrapped in a mystery, as for his motivations, thoughts, and feelings, and if I have lifted the

corner of the veil of that mystery of my father even a little bit, I will have succeeded in my efforts.

What I miss most about him is his deep compassion, sharp laughter, his hopefulness, and his love for his friends.

Maharaj Kaul
Suffern, New York
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Note: All the verses are by the author.