

Lord, Your Morning Is Beautiful

A Look At Aruna Karihaloo Kaul's Life

Who Died On April 25, 2008

She was an epitome of grace and civility, of goodness and discipline. When she laughed worlds seemed to melt, when she cried universe seemed to disintegrate.

She was born Aruna Karihaloo, daughter of a well-to-do man, in Fateh Kadal, Srinagar, in 1921. She was one of the six children in her family. She lived among the six families of the six brothers, where an attendance was taken in the evenings to make sure that no child was missing after the hectic plays of the afternoon. She was the favorite of her father, Dama Kaul Karihaloo.

Aruna lived a fairy tale life in the beginning: she was hailed as a noble and a beautiful person, religious and an icon. Her physical and mental beauties captured a flock of admirers and followers, a trend that would continue all her life.

From a beautiful and tender life she catapulted into marriage in 1935. Her husband was a scion of Kaul dynasty. Educated, smart, but not worldly-wise, who would squander his comfort and money for principles. He was a man without any style but was an ardent friend. For him friends were more important than his family. He was intelligent but not an intellectual. He did well in school and college but was not a topper there.

Aruna's wedding was a star-studded event. From her house in Fateh Kadal cars of the baratis lined up to her would be husband's house in Malikyar. It was a social event of the year perhaps. Aruna joined a family very different than hers. Kauls were egoistical, brainy, cold, complex, and unpractical as against Karihaloo's who were warm, practical, and plain minded. Aruna found living with Kauls painful. She went through a rough time. I imagine she must have cried many times. Her

husband would not have helped her. Not because he did not care but because his sense of grace and fairness did not allow him to abandon his immediate relatives against his wife. Like Jahangiri Tarazoo he did not want his poise to be deflected. Even in Kaul mega-family Aruna gathered admirers. But in situations of confrontations with some senior relatives she waived. She was not a fighter but only a flower.

In 1948 she joined her husband in Delhi, who accidentally took a job there, while he was on his way to Lucknow to complete his Ph.D. in history. This was to open doors to a new life, both painful and joyous. But the painfulness was the first phase of her life. Living in Delhi was an arduous task as a new life had to be setup. Income that her husband brought home was meager. Two new children were born. It was a life of intense struggle. Emotional comfort in the form of close relatives was missing. Aruna must have been thinking how her destiny had exploded. But she had a spine of steel: she persevered where sharks would drown.

When Aruna's husband found a job with Information Services Of India mega doors opened in her life. Not only did her husband earn a lot more money than before but also she lived in several foreign countries, and in style. Delhi's bleak life melted in front of the sophisticated life she now lived. Once again she gathered new set of admirers. Her religious fervor continued.

She was physically built well. She would not get sick much. Only much later in life she contracted arthritis and certain type of heart problem. She could absorb a lot of work, from early morning till late evening.

While the foreign phase in her life was very good but the insanity of life bought her misery. Her son Babu was smashed in an auto accident, destroying his life.

Impressed by her shining spirit many people sought her guidance. Her Delhi apartment was visited often by seekers of her guidance. She was not only a guide

but also a friend.

Aruna never questioned destiny but she was ever hopeful that her life and her family's life would go on. Her life was a compound of faith and courage. Hemingway said courage is grace under pressure. Aruna continuously in her life put her grace under pressure. She stood where pygmies would fall down, she fought where timid would disintegrate. Not only did she have courage but she also had a sunny disposition. Every day was a new day for her, an opportunity to respond to His beckoning. Her life was like an exquisite morning, which inspires us with great power. Day after day for eighty seven years she kept her candle burning.

Today in appreciation of Aruna's spirit and nobility I (her son) am writing the following verse:

She came like a beacon
To illuminate the ground below our feet,
She had the courage to meet the dark and the ugly of life,
She met her challenges with grace and dignity,
She smiled where others would succumb,
She was an angel who just briefly visited earth.

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