

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 Bajjee has succeed. Also, by keeping Malikyar Kaul clan together Baiee succeed greatly.

Bajjee 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)

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www.kaulscorner.com

mharaj.kaul@yahoo.com

