

# TITU KI KITAAB

*“A Daughter's Tribute to a Life Well Lived”*

~ SUMEENA SAWHNEY



BlueRose ONE .com  
S t o r i e s   M a t t e r

New Delhi • London

## BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS

India | U.K.

Copyright © Sumeena Sawhney 2026

All rights reserved by author. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the author. Although every precaution has been taken to verify the accuracy of the information contained herein, the publisher assumes no responsibility for any errors or omissions. No liability is assumed for damages that may result from the use of information contained within.

BlueRose Publishers takes no responsibility for any damages, losses, or liabilities that may arise from the use or misuse of the information, products, or services provided in this publication.



BlueRoseONE  
S t o r i e s   M a t t e r  
New Delhi • London

For permissions requests or inquiries regarding this publication,  
please contact:

BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS

[www.BlueRoseONE.com](http://www.BlueRoseONE.com)

[info@bluerosepublishers.com](mailto:info@bluerosepublishers.com)

+91 8882 898 898

+4407342408967

ISBN: 978-81-6744-079-2

Cover design: Aafiya Saifi

Typesetting: Namrata Saini

First Edition: August 2026

# Dedication

A book or numerous stories or anecdotes - whatever they may be, they will never do optimum justice to the legacy papa left behind - the legacy of goodness, kindness, warmth, love, care and what not.

Papa truly led us by example. He lived a life that was full of joy and had enormous space for one and all. During his last walk in and around the society we live, papa made sure to serve cold water to the security guards, telling his chemist friend that he would get him petty coins for change and just exchanging the ear to ear smile to everyone he crossed that day.

I may have missed so many of the stories here that I might be narrating to my friends and colleagues but everything stays in my heart and I am sure, in my family's heart too. All those who have known papa, have rarely missed a chance of appreciating him - be his friends, colleagues, acquaintances, our school friends and the list can go on.

I keep revisiting these memories and wonder if I could be like him - I am still not there and not sure if I can ever be but I try.

I am sure he sees me from somewhere in the universe and knows that I am doing alright, I am keeping up with all that he left me with - the goodness of heart, a will to never stop loving and caring, a dream to be accomplished and lots of *chatpati* stories to remember him by.

I hope I make him feel proud, some day, not sure how but I will do it.



# Acknowledgement

Could this be possible, at all, had I not received support and faith in me, from my mother and siblings, especially. In the majority of the incidents you will read, I have referred to myself, my siblings and mumma as we, collectively.

Meenakshi Sawhney - My dearest mother, who stood throughout like a pillar, has been my biggest supporter in writing this book. Since the day I mentioned this book, she trusted me and supported my journey of the last ten years. How wonderfully she has taken care of the three of us, single handedly after papa's demise, is truly commendable.

Thank you, mumma!

This book is about papa but please know that he could do so much of all that because he had a partner like you in his life.

Saurabh Sawhney - My younger brother, older of the twins - thank you too, for showing faith in me and for proof reading this book for me. You have held so much in your heart since papa left us and did your best to hold us all together, truly like the man of the house. We see your struggles.

Thank you, Sobu!

Papa would be proud to see you do well in life and I, too, am proud of you.

Surabhi Sawhney - My dearest sister or my eternal buddy - thank you for always telling me that you are looking forward to reading the book. This truly led me to keep going and finally publish it. You have been papa's favourite, Subu and my favourite too, honestly.

Thank you for everything!

Ajish IR - I would like to thank him, specifically, for coming up with this beautiful name for my book. He tried his best to motivate me for a long time to pen this all down. I am sure you too are waiting to read this, like many of us.

Thank you for the support and motivation.

I would also like to thank papa's dearest friends, our neighbors, one special bhaiya, relatives and anyone and everyone who knew him, who would randomly share his *kisse* and *kahaniyan* with us, that really helped in shaping this all down.

Thank you, all of you! I am indebted for all you cherish about my papa and for sharing it with us.

Special Mention - I would sincerely like to thank this person for helping me write down this book. They never asked me to write but their presence brought out the deepest emotions in my life, which was exactly the impetus needed for jotting it all down. You may not have known my papa but you touched certain cords that led to the completion of this book.

Thank you!

## Note from the Author

Can I be grateful enough to him for having brought us up with utmost love and care that we have grown into individuals who know nothing better than spreading the same love. And not to forget, my mother has an equally outstanding role in this journey, be it bringing us up or managing us and everything else post papa's demise.

We and everyone who knew papa, knew that he was a jolly, kind and warm person. He would be friends with anyone and everyone, no biases at all. His smile, his aura, would lit up the room he was in. He was one fine man.

And when he passed away, the huge amount of people gathering to pay their tributes to him, on his *chautha*, and the kind of sharing that was done on that day, stood out so deeply for me, that I decided, there and then, that all this has to be captured. I have to write about his journey, his story, his persona. It will certainly enrich so many people's lives, the way it enriched my life.

And here I am today, finally living that dream of the last ten years – narrating stories from his journey that may guide each one of us reading, to lead our lives on the same lines.

When I initially sat to write one incident then another then another but nothing concrete for good five to six years then, I would wonder if I would ever be able to do this. And like I mentioned in the acknowledgement

section, this book needed a lot of emotional impetus and when I had it, I penned it all down, not everything but significantly a lot, for the readers to learn from and cherish a life like my papa.



# Contents

|                                                               |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction .....                                            | 1  |
| The Hidden Diaries .....                                      | 3  |
| Papa as an Individual - Witty, Intelligent, Caring, Silly! .. | 6  |
| Papa as a Son .....                                           | 12 |
| Papa as a Husband .....                                       | 16 |
| Papa as a Banker .....                                        | 19 |
| Papa as a True Guardian, A Protector .....                    | 25 |
| Papa as a Movie Person .....                                  | 29 |
| When He Left Us All .....                                     | 32 |
| Sumi's First Love.....                                        | 36 |



# Introduction

Today is 28.10.2024

I had determined, on the fourth day after my papa's death, that I would, one day, write a book on him – stories from his lifetime.

At that moment, I did not know how I would write it, when I would write it, or whether I had the strength to do so. I only knew one thing that I wanted the world to know the kind of human being he was - A man full of kindness, compassion, intelligence, humour, warmth and an endless capacity to love.

More than eight years have passed since then. In all these years, I have spoken to countless people about him. I have repeated the same stories many times and discovered new ones in between. Sometimes I laughed while remembering him; sometimes I completely broke down.

Had someone simply recorded all those conversations, this book would probably have already existed.

But as they say, "It is better late than never."

And so, here I am, finally gathering enough courage to do what my heart had decided years ago.

This is not merely a book about my father.

This is a book about goodness.

About emotional intelligence.

About humility.

About kindness that asks for nothing in return.

About a man who appeared ordinary to the world, but was deeply extraordinary to everyone who truly knew him.

Sushil Kant Sawhney.

Our beloved Titu.

And hence the name - *Titu ki Kitaab*.

# The Hidden Diaries

I have always had a desire to document everything, be it the names of the episodes of my favorite TV show; or the account of expenses I made on a particular trip or a day; or some important quotes from 'The Speaking Tree'; or whatever that could be categorically documented. However, I couldn't keep up with it, with growing years.

But this wasn't something I learnt from the environment, it was purely genetic.

After papa's passing, I made a surprising discovery that he had maintained a daily diary since ages. We were all looking for some documents to fulfil some formalities and we discovered one diary first and later, the entire series. We were both shocked and amazed that he had kept this secret from us all. My curiosity led me to search for his diaries and I eagerly looked for the one he might have used when I was born in 1990.

My heart was looking for that one date's entry and was so keen to just open it and read it right away. And, finally when I found that diary and turned to the entry dated 26.11.1990, I kept reading through the pages, my heart warming up with each of his words. He had mentioned how my mother started getting contractions and was taken to the nursing home near our house, on his motorcycle. He also wrote about kissing her forehead just before starting for the nursing home.

And then comes the most precious date, most precious lines where he expressed his happiness at having a daughter, Sumeena, and not a son, whom they would have named Sumeen. He was happy to hold Sumeena in his hands. He had beautifully described holding me in his arms, noting that my nose resembled his own. He also expressed his desire to nurture the joy of having a daughter throughout his life, just as he cherished that special day. I had always known this but his diary entries made so many things just clearer that our value system is such because of their beautiful thought process, great set of values and wonderful upbringing.

I may sleep in the room or in the same room. with Jeeva, his  
 time was over. (More interesting than) 5.5.1. 26.11.90  
 27. My very important day. 27.11.1990. Yesterday 27.11. we were  
 very busy when she invited me to and today again it was very important.  
 Someone Mr. Suman got I don't mind I have no desire to do it. Someone  
 a girl - Lakshmi, and I wish we continue to work together. At 11.00 early morning  
 never dreamed me as I was in other room with Pooja. I had to go to his  
 room as means was in continuous labor pain. At 2.00 PM I had to go to his  
 room as means was in continuous labor pain. At 2.00 PM I had to go to his

1990  
 27  
 SATURDAY  
 OCTOBER  
 दंत मंजन  
 लोग युक्त  
 My very important day. 27.11.1990. Yesterday 27.11. we were  
 very busy when she invited me to and today again it was very important.  
 Someone Mr. Suman got I don't mind I have no desire to do it. Someone  
 a girl - Lakshmi, and I wish we continue to work together. At 11.00 early morning  
 never dreamed me as I was in other room with Pooja. I had to go to his  
 room as means was in continuous labor pain. At 2.00 PM I had to go to his

### Diary entries from 26.11.90 and 27.11.90

These words made me admire him even more. He raised us with fairness and love, without any discrimination. His love for his children knew no bounds.

My take away - It wasn't just these hidden diaries but his personality as a human being, a man who cherished everything and who wrote his heart out so beautifully - is something that will stay with me.

## **Papa as an Individual**

### **Witty, Intelligent, Caring, Silly!**

In a Punjabi household, it was a rarity to find someone pursuing a career in detective work, but my father was an exception. He chose a path that led him to become a detective, and his first assignment took him to the captivating landscapes near Nepal. From the very beginning, he was captivated by the thrill of his job.

He had aspirations beyond the ordinary. He dreamt of joining RAW, India's prestigious foreign intelligence agency. He even contemplated taking the entrance exam to pursue this dream. However, due to family pressures and responsibilities, he chose a career in the detective field as his first job. His initial assignment near Nepal was a chapter in his life that he treasured. However, he did not continue there owing to his parents' ask.

He held an unconventional desire - to extend a hand of partnership to someone who was differently-abled, envisioning a lifetime of companionship shared with them. Regrettably, family obligations prevented him from realizing this aspiration, too, in his own life. Nevertheless, he instilled in his children the value of embracing diverse cultures and traditions by encouraging us to have partners from various backgrounds. My father was a man of extraordinary intelligence with a heart of pure gold, radiating love towards everyone fortunate enough to know him. Even



as he rose to the prominent position of Chief Manager at Punjab National Bank, he remained humble and down-to-earth, a testament to the humility of a Punjabi business family.

He was one person everyone would love. Every time he would step out of the house, he would meet and greet all the security guards, vegetable and fruit vendors. He would check with people he met in local temples on a regular basis about their and their family's well-being. No wonder, that's why he had a jam packed hall when he passed away, both the floors of the venue were tightly packed, as everyone was shocked at his sudden demise, and moreover, he was a man of worth.

This brings me to talk about this one dear bhaiya. This bhaiya would come to a hanuman temple outside of our society, every Tuesday and would clean the temple and pray. Papa would notice it every week and one fine Tuesday, he reached out to him and had a word. And this one conversation led to another and very soon, bhaiya became part of our family. Papa, being a responsible banker and a human, would also check with everyone for their insurances. He helped bhaiya get his and his family's insurance done and would guide him in completing the due process of paying the premium. Whoever reached out to him for whatever work, papa would leave aside his work in hand and help them accomplish their things first. Oh, I wish to become at least half as compassionate as him. Papa formed a very deep bond with bhaiya so much so that till this date, if we need some support or they need some support, both families

are readily available. This was the power of heart to heart connection papa would forge with everyone.

He would wake up in the morning and go for a walk. Since the time he got to know about his diabetes, there was no place in the vicinity of our society, he had not counted the steps to. He was super calculative, in the sense that he had calculated how many steps it would take him to cover from one society to another or how many inside our society or how many if he would walk inside the park. He loved doing things with such precision all the time. For our school projects also, he would calculate how many inches should be kept for this, how many for border, how many for one picture and so on, in the sense, he would help us to geometrically create all our projects for summer holidays - the scale, the precision, the measurements, the love for technically making it correct and clearly, this trait is deeply seated inside us. We also love organizing things in a geometrical manner. Indeed, he was so sharp other than being so learned.

Every time we would watch some sport, he would tell us the technical part of the game and the scoring patterns. He loved numbers and I guess that's where my love for numbers came from. He wasn't a sports person but loved watching each and every sport. He would calculate in advance what will happen if one side scores this or one player does this. He loved talking in numbers.

This brings me to his love with investment. Investing in the stock market and regularly checking the prices and calculating the net profit/loss, was almost a routine for him - which he clearly inherited from our grandfather.

We have grown up witnessing the smallest of these things because he was fully transparent. He would share all that he would do and this helped us gain a lot of insight into so many fields.

He was also my personal 'google'. Whatever I didn't know, he was my go to person. I would call him from anywhere and everywhere to ask the smallest of the things; to clear some doubt. He was always a support, no matter what my question was. A lot of his knowledge base came from reading books, reading newspapers. We used to take the HT, The ET, TOI. He would read all three of them, cover to cover, every day, besides reviewing the Hindi paper as well. No wonder, he had no dearth of words. I wish I read as much as he used to read. While eating, while watching television, newspapers would always be handy. He would carry it wherever he would go so that if he could spare a moment or two, he would utilize it for reading. Clearly, this bothered everyone around a lot but papa being himself, couldn't help but read more and more. He had his own collection of books, a lot of them in Hindi. He would keep sharing his favorite quotes, his favorite take away from all those reads, very often. And a lot of them have stayed in my heart since I heard them. He only introduced me to the Das Capital, to communism, to Marxism, to Dale Carnegie.

Also, how can I miss his sense of humor, his witty comments!! Uff, he was one intelligent and sharp guy who loved finding silly things in serious situations. I can absolutely recall this one moment when he threw a huge satire on me and I couldn't understand how to react. I was in my first year of graduation, B.Sc (hons.) in

Mathematics and I had hardly studied or attended college (Miranda House, DU). My annual examination result had come and I was not aware of it yet so hadn't checked it either. Moreover, I had not done anything concrete in my examination. So, papa called and informed me that the result was out and I could check for myself. He had already checked it and so I asked him to tell me how and what it was. Instead of directly sharing my marks, he said, whatever you secured in the 12<sup>th</sup>, just divide that by 2 as you are a mathematics student so you could easily do it. I had secured 84% in 12<sup>th</sup> and so my first year's numbers were 42% only. I was embarrassed and amused both, at the same time.

One more such incident comes to my mind when I recall his humor and care for us. He was an absolute cutie that post his retirement, the little time that he spent at home before he passed away, he would ensure serving breakfast to us before we left for work. He would make a tiny prick in the *tadka chhachh* packet (buttermilk) and pour it ensuring that the foam is formed on the top of the glass and would then come and very proudly tell us that see, the entire essence of the *chhachh* is retained, only because he made a very small prick for us.

To add to his funny and silly bucket of stories, I remember when he would get late for the bank in the morning and did not intend to bother mumma when a button or two were broken from his shirt, he would quickly call us over and get that part stapled - hilarious and cute he was!

He formed personal heart to heart connections with every life he encountered. For instance, he would tease

one of my cousins with her favourite tumbler. He would always say that the tumbler belonged to him and that he would take it back with him, which would worry this little girl if it would really happen. To quote one more such incident, he knew that one of my cousins loved *besan ke laddoo*. So, every Tuesday/Saturday, he knew she would come and meet us so papa would make sure to offer the same *laddoos* in *prasad* so that she also gets to eat some. He took care of or noticed the smallest of the things he could, for everyone.

He was so full of life. There are so many anecdotes, so many incidents, a lifetime actually, when and where we witnessed his charm.

My take away - One can be funny, smart, warm and loving at the same moment. One can really live this one and only life with all these emotions, without begrudging or making it super tense or stressed.

## **Papa as a Son**

Oh, where to begin!! This could have been better or for that matter, best explained by my grandparents only but I would be sharing how I saw him as a son. What a blessing he was, to both of them.

He was an extremely liberal and progressive headed person. He wanted to do so many things that a lot of us might not even think of but he created a beautiful balance between everything and everyone. He kept up with all that my grandparents asked him of.

He was fully determined to look after our grandfather post his retirement. He would often mention how he is going to do everything. Unfortunately, fate had other things planned for both of them. I remember him calling me from the hospital when my grandfather passed away. He called and told me that it was all gone, he couldn't do anything about it.

I also vividly remember the day when my grandmother passed away in 2005. I was the first one of the three of us siblings to come home from school. Papa was informing someone about the demise of my grandmother. Immediately after he kept the phone, he hugged me and cried. He cried like a child and I couldn't for once believe that he was so broken. To him, both the parents were absolutely sacred.

He called them *chayji* and *pitayi* - *punjabi* terms for mother and father. But how I heard these two terms from him was - full of love, respect. The infinite regard he had for the two of them, definitely trickled down in the three of us too, for our parents.

On days, when there was any disagreement or argument between them and our mumma or us kids, I saw papa strike the perfect balance, bringing harmony. He wanted to do as much as he could, for them. I remember going to Andaman for the first time in 2004 with our grandparents. It was their first flight and papa made sure they got their own room, every privilege they could. The peace he had in his heart seeing them two relax near the beach was evident on his face throughout.



*Chayji-Pitayi in Andaman -10.2024*

In the summer of 2005, my grandmother had asked my father to take her to meet her older daughter, our *bua*, in Ghaziabad. Papa was unable to take leave or take out some time but would sit with her every Sunday to reassure her that this would happen soon and one day,

my grandmother fell ill and was hospitalized and then, she could not make it. Papa carried this guilt or burden in his heart for sometime and would tell me sometimes, that he should not have postponed it.

Like shared above, papa and my grandfather were absolutely invested in the stock market since I can recall. And back then, markets and stocks would come in the daily news bulletin, on the bottom of the screen. So, when my grandfather grew fairly old and his eyesight got very poor, wherein, he could not properly see the stock price on TV screen, papa bought a new 42 in TV for his father to enjoy taking notes of the stocks, day in, day out.

My take away - All I wish for myself and my siblings is to be as committed and sincere to our mother as was papa to his parents or at least be half the person as he was. It is because of his sincerity towards his parents that I could never leave Delhi as I wanted to be around my parents, always, whether or not they need me.



*Chayji-Papa in Andaman - 10.2004*





*Pitayi-Papa on Raksha Bandhan - 2012*

## Papa as a Husband

Well well well! This is something that we saw and then, later I read in his diary and letters as well and a few things from my mumma's collection of memories - what a lover and partner he was. He was posted out of Delhi for a good number of years, traveling back in local trains, late at nights or traveling over weekend or after a gap of two or three days, was his usual. We were small and little did we understand that staying apart was not cool, especially when you have kids. Our grandparents were there but a partner is a partner. And look at my mumma now, she is still living without him, still holding up so much, when she is pissed with all three of us. No matter what the three of us say, mumma lost the most with papa's passing away.

But the time they have spent is something she keeps revisiting like their bike rides in the old delhi area, how he would pick and drop her from and to work. She would revisit the memory lane, many times and share about their times together at connaught place, especially the Madras hotel and Coffee Home - which later turned into my go to places as well.

Because I am sharing about his partnership, how can I miss a very significant part of this bond? While going through papa's diaries, I discovered a letter he had written to mumma, one of many. He had quoted a beautiful song in that letter - '*ye mera prem patra padhkar ki tum naraaz mat hona*'. He shared about his routine and



I remember, very amusingly, the times when he would take us to the balcony, post his retirement, when mumma would head out for work and point out at mumma and sing the song - '*wo ja rahi hai meri heroine, hero ka dil leke*' and if mumma would be upset with him, he would sing another song - '*kya kisi ne meri jaan ko jaate huye dekha hai*'. I used to be both amused and amazed by how much heart he had - absolutely full of love, nothing else.

He had immense respect for mumma as an individual, as a banker, as a mother and especially as a partner. If she would get angry, he would, sometimes, ask us to pacify things with her and he would mostly be the first one to break the ice and make peace and harmony.

My take away - I really look forward to loving someone like this, where there is love, respect, understanding and a shared commitment of growing into better individuals.



**Mumma-Papa in Jodhpur - 10.2015**

## **Papa as a Banker**

Having studied economics as an under grad student, banking was still not a field of his liking. Literature, philosophy and similar things would interest him more. He did master's in philosophy following his area of interest and also opted for a career in detective agency as mentioned earlier. But fate had other things written for him. In search of a regular job that would ensure him staying closer to his family and earn a stable income, he got into a bank job. He worked for more than three decades at Punjab National Bank. Initial years were not very easy going. He was posted from one place to another, like Jhansi, Bulandshahar, Khurja, Agra. For better upbringing of his children, he would take up promotions which would take him to a place further from home. He would travel weekly or twice in a week or sometimes daily from Khurja and Bulandshahar. We would wait for him, till late night and next morning he would leave in the early hours. He worked diligently and compassionately. He would be that one good banker to each and every customer, that would brighten up the day with a smile. Oh yes, his smile was truly an asset.

In the toughest of situations, even when he did not want a transfer, he would just smile. It never reflected on us that he was exhausted. But he was making a life for us and for himself. He stayed with some colleagues in Agra and they would take turns in cooking. Every time, papa was home, we would ask him to cook something similar

for us as well and it would turn out, not at all great..(giggles)

I also clearly remember him pursuing MBA through distance mode to get to a better scale in the bank. He would come on the weekends and take classes for MBA and make assignments. I would see him do all this but not understand a bit as his handwriting was not something for any of us to comprehend that quickly.

And when after the struggle of so many years, he got posted in Delhi, it was the head office of PNB at Bhikaji Cama Place. When he was here, he ensured accompanying us to all our PTA meetings, mumma was relieved to a huge extent. He and mumma were a blessing to everyone in the family, in the sense that they would get them new notes, packs of new currency, every time it was out. People from the society, relatives, their friends, everyone would reach out to them. Papa would even get petty coins for a chemist he was friends with. For any wedding, these two will be looked up to for new currency notes. From head office, papa ensured getting us all our printouts very conveniently. It was a life we had never seen before, things were at our door step, whatever we required.

When I started working in 2013, papa was posted at Gokhle Market, Tis Hazari. He was the branch manager there. I cannot forget this particular incident; it always stays close to my heart. I was travelling with a colleague to the tis hazari centre of our organization when she happened to mention that she would join a bit later as she had to go to PNB for some work. I asked her if my father could help as he was posted in the same branch. She gave

me the details and I checked with my father and her work was done. She mentioned then that there must be two good people at this branch as the one person who always supports her, is the most genuine person she ever came across. She also clearly said that the man would help and guide everyone in the bank, each customer would always feel delighted to meet him and that he was the one who smoothly opened her account there. I got curious and checked with papa and he told me that it was him who got her account opened. And later, she came to our house to meet him, to thank him. This small experience left a big impression on my heart that our goodness is always rewarded and that I would always try to be the same good and kind person to the people I would work with.

Many a times, his over-polite nature would lead him to sadness and disappointments but then, walking would be his thing to do. Whenever something bugged him, he would step out for a walk. During his last posting as the senior manager at *madhuban chowk* branch, he finally started traveling by car as he wanted to enjoy the seniority. He would come home and share how some people would just not work and that he would sometimes guide them or sometimes take those cases himself. Also, if we happened to visit his branch during lunch hours, his table would be piled up with files and forms. Others would be just eating their food and chilling and papa would be helping all the customers there, filling someone's incomplete form; helping someone else with mobile banking; offering someone proper guidance on their next steps. All he wanted was to just help as many people as he could.

During his tenure, a lot of people in the development sector who happened to work with homeless people, were supported. He would take in the relevant documents and open their accounts. And he would always tell me that it was mostly the discretion of the manager sitting at the branch, otherwise, cases were never so complex that customers would go disappointed.

Also, during his final year at this branch, there was a visually impaired employee. Papa would come home and talk about all the work that this boy would do. He also once told how other branch managers had refused taking him in and so papa volunteered because for him, it was always about giving everyone that opportunity. That boy did some significant work for the branch and it helped both papa and him and it was all a matter of mutual understanding.

Another noteworthy incident was when it was papa's retirement day and he was all emotional, good 32 years of banking, being occupied with so much and suddenly, an empty plate - a lot must have been going on in his head. He was also emotional owing to the fact that he wished to look after our grandfather, exclusively, post his retirement but he had passed away earlier the same year. Papa carried his photograph in his pocket on his retirement day, April 30, 2016, to ensure *pitay's* presence at his special occasion. When all of us reached there, mumma, sobu-subu, bade papa, badi mumma, bua, uncle, myself - we found papa sitting smartly on his chair and typing his own relieving letter as he did not want to trouble anyone in the branch with that work load.



Wow, he was quite a man, a funny one too. He had clean shaved for that day, buttoned up his shirt well, tucked it inside his pants, like we all always wanted him to do but he hardly did. And that did bring an era to end!

My take away - He taught me that when we would be utterly sincere and responsible at work and when we would ensure the best interest of everyone involved, everything would flourish. Yes yes, he did work like this, all his life, despite the profession not being of his liking.



Papa typing his Relieving Letter - 30.04.2016



His Retirement day - 30.04.2016

## **Papa as a True Guardian, A Protector**

Yes, he was one guardian angel for me, which I realised quite late but am forever grateful for how he protected me, always. I am not saying this because he is my father and he had to protect me at all costs but because he did some really beautiful things that stayed with me and I can never thank him and my mumma enough for each one of them.

After I finished college and started my internship or started working, I had this sense of ultimate freedom and independence in my head, like most of us have, at that age. Every time a friend or a colleague would get married, papa would drive me to their wedding. No matter how much I insisted on traveling on my own or with other friends, he would come along. He would even pick and drop my other friends too. While I would be enjoying the wedding, he would happily stay outside, probably in the car or walking. He would carry a bunch of newspapers with him to read. He wouldn't even call me before two hours. And then, would bring us all back and come home and have his dinner.

I remember, once, my college friend moved to Greater Noida for her masters and I planned on visiting her. Greater Noida seemed like a big deal then. There wasn't any aqua line metro also. So, papa volunteered again to drive me there. For that matter, he was happy for me to

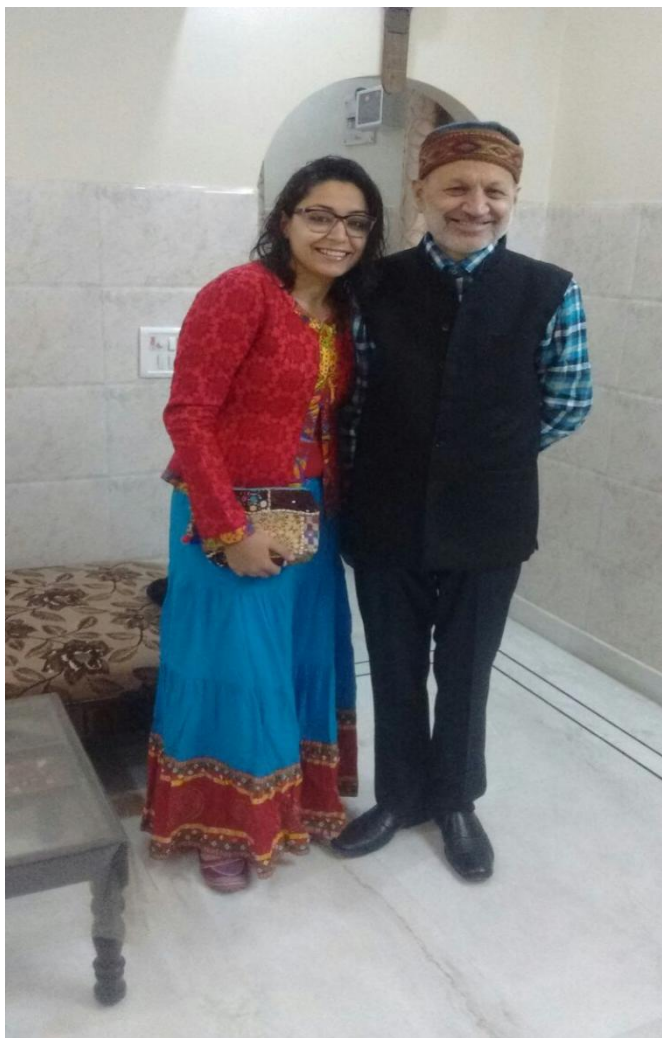
drive one side and he could drive us back. I stayed at my friends' place for three to four hours and only once did papa call to check on me. He walked down the streets of the neighbourhood; read all the newspapers he had brought and happily and patiently waited for me. I wish I could be as patient as him. Back then, when all this used to happen, I would feel differently many times that why he is accompanying me everywhere. Sometimes, I would also feel a bit embarrassed in front of my friends and colleagues and I would argue with him over this. But he would happily and smilingly still come with me. Oh my God, how much love and care he had in him, for me and for everyone, for that matter.

And this one particular incident, I cannot miss out on. I had to join my first job at Gurugram, in 2013 and it was a really big hype in my family that how would I be traveling to Gurugram every day, such an unsafe place. But papa, being my biggest blessing, came to my rescue. A day before I had to join, he and mumma took the metro and traveled to my workplace to make sure that the route was convenient and not extremely tiresome. Not just that, they traveled back from an alternative route to figure out which one was economical, shorter and safer. Could they be any nicer??

And when he reached my workplace and took a tour of that residential home for girls, he immediately called me to say that he was so happy that I was starting to work there; the kids; the home; the environment was so lovely that he could not wait for me to start my work there and make a difference. Ohh..I miss him and all such conversations, full of love and life!! But this particular

thing made me a laughing stock for some of my colleagues and I would complain to him about how his so-called care would bother me so much at work. But after every argument with him, when I would go to sleep, deep down in my heart, I would question myself if it was really something that bothered me or rather it made my life a bit smoother.

My take away - I have been working in the child protection domain since 2012 and it is precisely these small gestures; these acts of love and care by him and mumma that helped me nurture so many kids and young lives. Long before we lost him, I knew that I was able to do my work with utmost sincerity, only due to the goodness inherited by them.



**Papa-Sumi - 17.12.2014**

## Papa as a Movie Person

Oh my god, this is definitely one of my favorite chapters of his life - his love for movies and songs, especially the era he belonged to and something that has certainly come very strongly into my genes. He would talk about old songs, old movies a lot of times, or I should say all the time. Whatever we would say, he would just pick one word from that and sing an old song; he would cheer us up, guide us so many times through various songs.

We would sit at night from 9 pm to 10 pm to watch Golden Era with Annu Kapoor on the *Masti* channel. The songs and their description, whatever Annu Kapoor would tell, papa would fondly listen and would also add some different information from his database. He would share such minute details with us all the time, of who joined the film industry when and who became a hit, who didn't. I recall him telling me many times that Rekha and Rakhi joined the film industry together.

It was very difficult to continue watching that show after he passed away. I would just switch it on at 9 pm and weep throughout. Sometimes, my sister would join me but eventually, I stopped watching it as it was not helping in any way.

I, very fondly, remember how he was unable to ever come up with a song that had the word *jhaadu* in it and so he would come up with the songs that had *jhaadu* in

their video. He was sheer fun and entertainment to be with.

Movies constituted a significant part of his life. He would share stories of watching all the movies at Amba and Batra theatres, near the Delhi University north campus, sitting in the balcony or top most rows or wherever he would get a seat. His stories had such a deep impact on me that I would also go and watch movies there despite the fact that the two had noticeably degraded in their quality but only to relive papa's special moments, I would go there.

The television and entertainment industry were very close to his heart. One reason was that he found the industry to be the most secular of all the major industries and being a person with an inclination towards social issues, this fact would always keep him inclined towards the movies. On this front, he loved watching parallel cinema a lot. He would make us watch those movies and explain the beauty of the script, the depth of the story, like he really wanted us to feel exactly how he felt for those movies. He made us watch so many movies, so many classics. He would always share how Dev Anand was once banned from wearing black as he looked ultra dashing and that used to make women go crazier.

He would share all these things with such interest that it became an integral part of our upbringing.

Every time, mumma would be upset with him, he would sing that song, '*Kya kisi ne meri jaan ko jaate huye dekha hai*'. Mumma would not bother much but it created a deep rooted-impression on my heart. Also, whenever either



my sister or I put on *kajal*, he would sing the song, '*tune kajal lagaya din me raat ho gyi*'. I mean, we had background music and amusing references from the movies, moving around in the house, all the time.

On July 27th, 2016 when I had my last conversations with papa - they too were full of his movie knowledge base. That day, in the afternoon, myself and a few colleagues were discussing some bollywood movie of old times and got stuck at *aandhi* movie, where none of us was able to recall any of the songs from the movie. So, I immediately picked up my phone and called my google, my papa. I told him the scenario and he told me the song, '*tum aa gye ho, noor aa gya hai*'. A minute later, he called back to share the remaining songs from the same movie, stating that since we were discussing that movie, we might want to know the other songs as well. Truly, I was/am a fan of his knowledge and his style.

Recently, I started an instagram page where I share reviews of the movies I have watched; I love and/or are close to my heart. This particular page is truly dedicated to my father and his love for movies. He made our lives super exciting and interesting especially with his fondness for movies that trickled down inside me, totally.

My take away - I have thoroughly enjoyed movies and songs, all my life, owing to papa's interest in the industry and the fact that situations could be made lighter, funnier, more cherish-able, with tiny references from these movies or songs, is something that will stay with me forever.

## When He Left Us All

As shared above so many times that he was the nicest of all, would greet everyone on his way, all the security guards, shop keepers in the vicinity, fruit/vegetable vendors and this was precisely the reason that his funeral was jam packed. The crowd was full of emotions, full of people; I had never seen so many for any funeral.

Four people came forward to pay tribute to him through their words. One was our dearest uncle from the neighbourhood - just the adjacent house. Uncle sang a beautiful song and said some really sweet things about papa. Then papa's one of dear friends came up and he compared papa to Karl Marx as papa would also talk and study about anything and everything. He mentioned how our papa was open to learning and could talk about the remotest to the nearest of the things. Then, I also shared a few things about him, starting with the song, his favourite one '*Kisi ki muskurahto pe ho nisaar, kisi ka dard mil sake to le udhaar; kisi ke vaaste ho tere dil me pyaar, jeena isi ka naam hai*'. He would always sing these lines and tell me that how wonderful it would be if everyone lived according to the lines of this song.

I also declared about this book on the same day.

It was that evening, July 27<sup>th</sup>, when I came home from work, a little earlier than my usual time. Papa had gone out for a walk. My siblings were watching a movie on the TV that had a scene running that time which had

Anupam Kher in it. So we all just giggled at how our papa resembled him, fair skin tone; half bald head; spectacles. My brother then told us how he was angry at papa for going out with that headache he had.

After some time, papa came home and suddenly rushed to the couch and lied down stating that his headache was not getting any better. Mumma came and checked him, where he had a bit of a fever and started saying random abrupt things which is when mumma thought that was more than a mere headache. She asked my brother to take out the car to rush papa to the hospital, Balaji Action Medical Institute. We informed bade papa as well to meet at the hospital itself. Me and my sister stayed back thinking that it would be alright, doctors would give him some injection and all.

I was very sleepy that time due to the medicine I had taken the previous night and was just waiting to go and sleep for a while to even comprehend what was happening. I went to sleep, meanwhile, my sister went to the hospital to see papa. Later that night, a few of my cousins came to pick me up for signing the indemnity bond that required all four of us to sign before letting papa in the operation theatre. There I got to know that a blood clot was identified in papa's CT scan and a small procedure had to be performed to take it out. Consent for the same was required. Papa was lying unconscious due to the anesthesia. Eventually, all of us, the relatives, myself and sister came home and mumma and brother stayed back at the hospital that night.

Then both me and my sister prayed for a while and dozed off a little later. The next morning, we received a call from

the hospital stating that the procedure could not be performed as the clot spread in the entire brain and that papa was brain dead. We were shocked; chances of his revival were negligible. I wasn't able to comprehend much. Meanwhile, mumma also thought of doing organ donation, if possible, before papa's heart stopped responding but of course, we did not go ahead with it as we thought of taking a second opinion for papa.

Eventually, the next night, on July 29th 2016, his heart also stopped responding and we lost him. I remember receiving a call from my brother when my sister and I were praying, around 11:48 PM that papa was no more. We screamed, cried but then, picked ourselves to rush to the hospital. After completing the formalities later that night, we brought papa's body home. Everyone was sitting in the drawing room, when a discussion around the next steps started.

That discussion took me six months back when *pitay*, my grandfather had passed away on January 18 which came as a shock for papa. *Pitay's* death was followed by various rituals, taking ashes to *haridwar* being one and going to *kankhal* being the other - both these trips brought a lot of realization to papa that he had told me not to cremate him that way and rather electrocute him and dismiss the entire thing of ashes and all, whenever the time would come. Who knew that time was so close.

We cremated him the next morning, wherein, mumma told us not to lose ourselves and to carry forward papa's legacy.

My take away - It all started with a headache only. But he did not go through any major pain or treatments or surgeries. He had lively conversations that last day too, with everyone around.

## Sumi's First Love

Social work came very naturally to me or I should say, it was in my genes. Papa always wanted to do whatever best he could, for society and for this reason, he became my biggest cheerleader and supported me when I chose my field of work. He also intended to start an organization with me, post his retirement, which unfortunately could not happen. But I kept up with my work, doing my bit of what he would have done and appreciated.

Now coming to this one thing that I have been extremely poor at - managing time. Since childhood, I would get late for the bus stop and papa had to drop me to a further location from where I could either board the school bus or metro, half way to my destination. So, due to my poor time management, earlier papa used to drop me to a metro station to save me some time to work. After he retired in April 2016, he clearly told me that he had a lot of time in hand and that he would drop me further, if I got late. So both of us were now waiting for the inauguration of a particular flyover that we could take and that would cover 40% of my travel to work. Papa was very excited as he knew that I would not miss a chance of getting late and then, he would enjoy his scooty ride to the metro station.

It was that day only, July 27th when we first took that flyover and after that, it could never happen. So many

tiny conversations happened that day that keep coming back to me, very often. He had really poured his heart in bringing me up, all three of us, for that matter.

He was one man, my heart fully trusted, where I had no guards - where I knew that this man only intended the best for me - after all, I was his first born. In our infinite conversations, he taught me so many life lessons that I might not have understood right away but gradually I did.

One such was when we discussed getting married and changing the second name for women and all. I told him that I would always carry his name with me, no matter what and he told me that you would willingly change the name when you would find this man - still waiting for that moment. He only once told me that it would be so much fun if the three of us got married in different cultures or religions - to break the monotony of a hindu punjabi culture and lead a more culturally rich life.

On August 11th 2010, I got my parents' names tattooed on both my arms and I was a bit scared as to how they were going to receive it. But, to my absolute surprise, two of them took it so candidly and merrily that papa would call people and tell them about this. Of course, they had initial concerns looking at the soreness of the tattoos but later it was only a happy thing for him and mumma.



When I got their names inked - 11.08.2010

I go back to our old pictures where I see him lifting me in his arms when I was little and how much I looked like him, cute and innocent. He would call me Sumi - the name I cherish so much. And Sumi never sounded any better from anyone else's mouth as to when he would call me like that. He named all three of us like that.

I know he would never be physically there to see the three of us get married and settle in our lives but we have tried and we will try and lead a life like he did to always have his presence in our lives.

My take away - To love like him; to nurture like him; to read like him; to write like him - to be as good and human like him!