

Remembering Dr. Phani Sharma



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Happy Birthday Deta.



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August is a month that I miss Deta the most. Although he passed away in the month of July, I always find myself thinking about him more frequently at this time of the year. However, that's not to say, I sit down weeping and feeling sad on that day; if anything, I like to celebrate in style. Of course, he had his ways to let me know that he is enjoying the day with me too...in style.

Sadly, in life, there is only one set of parents and they don't live forever. The more you can give or/and can spend time with them, the better you feel within. Ailing health didn't stop Deta from his work obligations. One minute he was in the hospital. The next you would catch him attending a meeting under the scorching heat. He never stopped or rather nothing could stop him.



Those who live far from their family will empathise how it feels to receive a call in the middle of the night. I used to wake up in sweats just thinking that the phone will ring any moment until one day my good husband said, "Enough of this, get on the next plane and be with him". Every single day, I just had one small prayer. Don't give me "the news" over the phone. I want to be near him. I had to be of some use to the person who gave me so much in life. If not now, then when? Emotionally I think I needed him more than he needed me. I quit my work in London, packed my bags and spent most of 2007 with him and that was the best decision until date.

Deta is known to the world as Dr. Phani Sharma, the entrepreneur, philanthropist, social worker, sports enthusiastic & politician. For me, he was an entrepreneur above everything else. An entrepreneur who loved sports and felt that we can build a better world through sports. He was awarded his doctorate degree for his contribution to sports. When he was appointed as the Mayor of Guwahati, I asked - Why take that offer? He said, *"Guwahati has given me a lot. I want to serve this city"* and he surely did.

Son of a school teacher, he came from a very humble family. From the remote corner of Dhemaji to make it big in the city without knowing a single soul is truly inspirational & brave for me and I still can't fathom how he did it. The city loved him.

One thing he surely had... Hunger! Hunger for work & dedication. Whenever I moan about overload of work, he had no sympathy and told me off- *"Maa, If you don't work now then when will you work? Stop complaining. Tough love!"*

Lessons in Life: Life is a marathon not a sprint:

I say he was brave because he had nothing to give except his dedication and hard work. During his initial days he visited the then newly build Guwahati Refinery and requested for work. *"I have neither past experience nor any recommendation but I can promise you quality output". Try me once at least"*. After several attempts, the kind person did approve a small job and Deta delivered as promised. That was the first of many. Two years later the entire department work was vested on him. *"When you cheat at work, you cheat yourself before cheating others. You think you are smart but for some momentary gain you close doors for the rest of your life. Silly isn't it? Maa, Life is a Marathon not a Sprint"*

Lesson in Life: Make money run after you!

Another lesson I learned from Deta was not to run after money. *He said: Rather, be so good in what you do that money will be compelled to run after you. Work for free initially if you have to. Learn the trade, know the secrets and listen, for that's how you learn.* I didn't take all of this seriously until recently. I trade the currency market. The first thing my guru (who has 25 years of trading experience at the city) told me, don't think about the money, just concentrate on the process of making a good trade. I had that knowledge from my Dad and I ignored it so far..well better late than never!

Visionary:

I love tea gardens and I want to own one someday even if it isn't a pragmatic decision. Ma once said you almost bought a tea garden but despite several criticisms you went ahead and built a cinema hall from scratch Deta. Why? *No labour problems and I had control on what I received. Besides, there wasn't any cinema hall in that area.* Well..his exact words were: *Look, there is this ticket counter with a small outlet in it. All I see is a hand with money coming in through and once it's inside my premises, I have full control over it. No slippage or commissions to anyone.* Agree? I had to!

When he started Anuradha on January 1st 1971, there wasn't any concrete road leading towards the Theatre Hall or any transportation beyond Chandmari where the city ended. He arranged for a special bus from Anuradha to Chandmari and beyond especially for the night show audiences. Once this happened, his ticket sales soared.

While in London, I like to celebrate his birthday watching the film I made interviewing him about his life journey. Then flick through the photo albums and remember the best parts we had together. Our family celebrates the day publicly every two years by giving a financial grant to a promising sports player of Assam from a deprived background, something that he wished the family continued after him.

More on <http://www.drphanisharmawelfaretrust.org>

This is the first time I am attending the occasion here in Guwahati but to be honest, I rather have him next to me by the fishing pond at our farm and watch the thrill in his eyes as he catches a Rohu. That would have been so much better.

Happy Birthday Deta!

Bublee (Sanchayita Sharma Goswami)

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