

INTRODUCING KAUSHAL

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(Kaushal is my grandson born on 17th May 2017, to Deepti my daughter-in-law and my son Aditya. This article is about a few sentiments and emotions I have for him).

Every month has become effortful for me to spend in gloom on its seventeenth day. I saw it as a sinister day in my life. It was the time a year and a half ago my wife Mani went down consumed by deadly cancer. For the first six months it was not her death that troubled me but the burden of pain and emptiness Iâ??m left to handle. Every month, come 17th hours weighed heavy, minutes stung, and thoughts inhospitable as I curled up passively mulling over memories wishing the day would end soon.

In mid-May the summer in our city throws all the regular schedules off-guard. People hardly move out as hot winds adamantly fierce and humid heat descends like liquid fire forcing everyone to stay indoors. There is no escape but huddling in the comfort of air-conditioned rooms.

During one such blistering summer, a new baby busied himself to step out with a miniature body bearing bright eyes and a tuft of black hair. The parents named him Kaushal, and he is my grandson.

What a coincidence!

As if he is in a hurry, perhaps hastily assumed the outside world would be more comfortable than the congested womb of his mother, my daughter-in-law, my grandson Kaushal chose a wrong date to mark his coming. His first cries filled the hospital room teasingly, on the same date. The seventeenth of May just four months after my wife passed away. The call that announced his arrival ripped into my mixed up emotions.

Even after eighteen months of Kaushalâ??s in his toddlersâ?? realm, that stub of sentiment of the date he is born wouldnâ??t leave me. It would hurt, but I quickly have to adjust my frame of thoughts, â??itâ??s not right in my way to have such unreasonable assumptionsâ??.

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I couldnâ??t escape a few poignant twitches crying out inside, â??How I would have gone together in a celebrating mood and cuddled the newborn, had my wife been alive today.â?? Again the reasoning would help push me out of the rut of my sensibilities. I jerk myself into saner moods.

â??I have got to be responsible now,â?? I jumped into my car the next day morning cursing the sweltering hot spell. A four-hour drive to reach the city: for an endearing first glimpse of my grandson Kaushal.

By the way, Kaushal takes one more credit. He is born in the same city Kakinada where I was born five and half decades back. It is an upcoming port city standing on the Bay of Bengal: a part of the Indian Ocean. The city has an advantageous gift as a legacy left by British Raj. They designed the entire city in one disciplined geometrical layout. Every road and adjoining streets appear as straight and perfect and wide as if someone stood there with a scale and pencil while building them. I carry a bagful of nostalgic memories; I was too young then, where I ran, cycled along the roads, streets during our annual summer visits along with my mother. One more fact that claims my affinity to this city is that all my maternal uncles live here.

I reached the hospital and amazed by its attractive exterior. As I approached, the neo-natal room I noticed a tinge of excitement in my walk. Perhaps the moment Iâ??m about to face carried a blend of extreme delight and a pinch of anguish: that could be the void of my wifeâ??s absence.

Here he comes. The hospital room fairly spacious has two beds. On one bed I saw Deepti, my daughter-in-law, half-awake looking pale. Exhaustion is prominent on her face, perhaps, due to the fatiguing delivery procedure she could barely move in her bed. I see two tubes plastered to her wrist, maybe, liquid nutrients sent into her body.

Looking at me, she could only manage a brief smile, meekly moved her eyes directing me towards a bundle of soft clothes.

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I peered closely into carefully wrapped clothes; there is my little boy, tiny toes making small movements, half-opened eyes still unadjusted to normal light. A pinkish ball like face covered with rich black hair: a signature legacy of our paternal ancestry. My hand cautiously moved forward touched and shuffled his shiny hair and felt the tender heartbeat only a day old. I couldnâ??t believe how small he looked and how magical his presence made me feel.

I secretly amused at one more fact: Kaushal almost looked as a miniature version of my son Aditya. For a moment I shoved aside by tormenting past. I wished Kaushal will be my life changer. Blessed are these finer moments, I froze them to give me a hopeful perspective of what I live for in the days to come.

In the next twelve months, Kaushal has been commuting between his parents in Hyderabad and his maternal grandparents at Kakinada.

The days he has frolicked in my home, stumbled into my library disturbing my routine didnâ??t happen in any gratifying frequency. But when he did, perhaps a few times, I noticed he explored stacks of books haphazardly thrown around my workplace.

One gesture of Kaushal fascinated me. He moved in his unsteady steps whenever he sneaked into my study. He offered me a toothless smile, his bright eyes shining like morning sunshine, as if announcing, â??Iâ??m here and you see me.â?? I wondered how small he is, yet he has enough vibrancy, the heart-warming aura I stopped my work for a moment and couldnâ??t help thinking, â??he will be an invisible force that can keep me going, in the days to come.â?? I at once gladdened at the power a grandchild reserves for his grandparents.

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Then here comes the cutest scene: he takes tiny uneven steps towards the life-size portraits of my wife that dot my library. Positioning himself he takes one step back and surveys the colorful frames before him, touches them with his chubby hands and gives the widest grin he could manage. He beams at the lively image of my wife in quick succession and then turns at me as if checking, â??did you know how much I like the grandma.â?? The petite expression, from that moment, kept on flashing like a film reel in my mind. His innocent attempts to reach his grandmother would tug me so strongly every time I muse about him. And how I dearly wish, â??how much fun I could have if he stays with me in my home.â???

However, for reasons, I donâ??t know in the months so far he hasnâ??t allotted me much bonding time; far less intermingling space I loved to spend. Perhaps his tiny heart has already guessed that I stay alone. Whatever his littleness required: the feminine presence to comfort him, cajole him, to nurture him is no longer obtainable in my home the way he enjoyed with his parents or his maternal grandparents.

I know he will never relax in the arms of my wife, he will never have a chance to listen to her voice and play with her, and he will never get

to snuggle up hearing her mellifluent lullabies. Kaushal will never know he marched into this world four months behind, perhaps he never expected death would fast-forward the doom and gloom of my wife and his grandmother so soon.

Dear Kaushal, your presence is a joy for all of us. Iâ??m blessed to know if I want you to take into my arms you are less than four hours away to make it happen. If I want to play with you, if I want to listen to your first babbles, if I want to hold your hand, wipe your tears. I know you would love to wait for me. And Iâ??m rewarded you are in my life, and I love being the center of your world. And Iâ??m blessed to know you are the promise of my future.

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