

YOU NEVER LEFT ME

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(Mani, my wife died on January 17, 2017. I took six months to learn to live with the bitter memories. As a teacher, I have advised hundreds of teachers, scores of parents and students helping them in troubled times. But suddenly I was facing them myself).

My wife was petite, graceful, collected and fiercely determined. One early night a decade ago, I received a call from my wife, and I was behind my driving wheel, itâ??s not a call, but a sharp, frightening wail -something we do when we see a sleek snake in darkness in front of us. My mind and body shivered at once, and I forgot to breathe for a second.

A year ago my wife and I celebrated our twenty-five years of joyous communion. We are both experts in the departments of mutual consideration and high tolerance, and hence I had no occasion to witness my wife, Maniâ??s crying or at least softly whimper. Now I heard a hysterical cry from my wife.

Mani went for a medical check-up; she never explained the reason why she was seeing her doctor friend. Later, I came to know she got mammography done.

She lost her mind by the ferocity of truth in the report, â??A high probability of a cancerous mass in one of her breasts.â?? She broke down instantly, following from that moment both of our lives transformed forever.

Mani underwent a successful operation in 2008, to have the infected, cancerous mass removed. She had recovered so well and began her routine teaching and

administrative duties as devotedly as if nothing ever happened to her. Though she was on chemotherapy for more than a year, the side effects were horrendous; her hair thinned out. Immediately in the following year, recouping from the last bout of the scheduled chemo, she got herself a graceful wig to take part in the marriage festivities of our daughter Neelima.

Mani seemed going well recovering fast from whatever has left as the aftertaste enduring the chemotherapy sessions set for every twenty days for over a year. But in December 2014, her scan reports showed that cancer had spread to other parts of her body. Two years later she passed away.

Mani died on January 17, 2017. I took six months to learn to live with the bitter memories. As a teacher, I have advised hundreds of teachers, scores of parents and students helping them in troubled times. But suddenly I was facing them myself, and I knew Iâ??m mentally not strong enough how to deal with the ordeal.

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Quickly I have carved a weapon of recovery from this punishment of pain. I cultivated writing skills. The whole process of writing has taught me how to endure the hard times. Every day early in the morning I dive deep into memories, drown myself as long Iâ??m done with for a day. This obsession has given me a destination: realizing my dream, reinventing my skills, telling my stories, reliving my past. Writing has become my new meditation, my path for self-examination. It has freed me from self-disapproval and to live in an intuitive security space within myself.

A year ago, I wanted to gather a few attributes of my wife, especially her demeanour in her position, and duties. I invited two of her colleagues in our school. Lokeswari and Reshma; both are ardent devotees of my philosophy of beliefs and in my flexible learning systems which my wife and I carried out in the classrooms and dealt with one fifty odd staff members. They were with my wife and me for twenty-five long years. It was a point of wonder for many how anyone would remain so faithful, for such long periods, giving untiring support and prudence to our school. Surely, I believed their enormous trust has helped in hoisting the fame of our Kennedy High School to eminence.

Three of us have chatted for three hours over tea, in my library hallowed by portraits of my wife and that of my fatherâ??s. Though there was a tinge of grief written on our faces, despite, we dipped into the past, recollections, reflections, and images. Listening to them a few heart-warming episodes, I could compose a few impressions, some â??not taken note by meâ?? facets of my wife. The whole narrative of theirs seemed soaked with a melancholic out-pour of past and painful. It was hard for them

to hide their misty eyes, I noticed, as the exchange picked up the threads of their friendship and sentiments.

Reshma was quick to warm up the moods to soften the hanging gloominess in the room. Both the teachers seemed too choked up for a cheerful banter at the moment. But Reshmaâ??s chirpiness took over, â??do you know she favoured pink, in many simple things she selected and would ask for pink tinges, she carefully chose the caring, calming pink colours.â?? They never tired her of wearing pink and its variations.

Now excitement showing on their faces, Reshma continued, all the time her eyes on the portrait of my wife in front of her, â??For her everything is in pink, she believed in the rosiness of life, the possibilities, the future, her spiritual health, her childrenâ??s interests.â??

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Reshma could recollect plenty of ordinary niceties of my wifeâ??s etiquette. That her walk was slow, calculated steps. Her facial expressions were perfect, never giving out much to conclude what she has in mind. In her daily pink optimistic attires, she radiated an intelligent fervor. Her eyes shone with a scholarly sharpness that could detect anyone lax in the staff academic duties. This firmness in her walk and talk created a flutter among the teachers during her daily inspections of the classes, scanning for quality and merit. However, most of us used to wait, fondly, to hear her refreshing lilting voice.

More than an hour Reshma spoke with her spontaneity in full flow. She paused for a while, and I gestured to let the other teacher Lokeswari to speak. But Reshma quiver in her tone, quite unwilling, said, â??I havenâ??t done yet, this is only a short fragment of my attachment I showed out.â?? I nodded my head, sideways, meaning we will have another discourse on some another day.

But she refused not to give in without her conclusive lines.

Madam, as they reverentially addressed my wife, â??she is a fierce woman, never showing a hint of what she is inside. She was strong, spiritually learned, exceptionally qualified, soft and practical womanâ??. That is how I remembered her, and as she paused, I could catch Reshmaâ??s face flush with a painful pink.

Lokeswari seemed lost in her ruminative mood; how to serve the stored up a testimony of her three-decade-long relationship with my wife. She is senior to Reshma, worked in our Kennedy High School as the headmistress, assisting my wife in her day to day administrative conduct, academic guidance. She was like â??a one-

man contingency armyâ?? and support gear for the care and smooth handling of the wheels of the everyday events.

Lokeswari had touched upon much deeper emotive features of my wife. Honestly, I did not understand these aspects would be so notably worthy from a womenâ??s point of view. She sentimentalized the professional angle of my wife.

Lokeswariâ??s, softly worded narration created a piercing spin in me which was not known to me earlier. â??Madam defied the stereotype of a womenâ??s personality. As a teachersâ?? group, we saw her as a dynamic, sensitive, and dependable boss. She was tenacious as she never compromised when she believed if it is good for the school. Thus she is more decisive and highly accomplished in proposing tough decisions. On many occasions, her success relied just on her good team playing attributes.

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I saw my role as a husband like more of a facilitator. I left to her skillful fastness to locate solutions for many pricky problems as she defused many awkward no-win situations. These irritants are a common feature in our regular academic work.

Very early in our marriage, I knew where my priorities should take the precedence. I quickly realized I have a penchant for teaching. Defying the rigid traditional norms of my parents, I allowed my wife enough space to reach whatever stature she could attain: artistically, (she is a classical dancer and vocalist) scholarly, and maternally.

She enjoyed the freedom of confidence and lapped up the empowerment mantra as I stood behind her wearing a â??good husbandâ?? badge. In return in the times we lived together for thirty years she has given our children and me the happiness, fulfillment, and inner peace.

Itâ??s when Iâ??m going around, proudness set in my gait, carrying a cupful of happiness; fate banged me from behind. I hardly enjoyed the cup I held. I havenâ??t had time to claim its contents. The punch didnâ??t target me but my wife.

But for me, the hurt presented the worst description; the malignant plunge for my wife was unexpected and fast. I was there with her in all my care giving alertness. But her departure was too immediate. I could only afford a stutter as the last farewell to the glass coffin where my wife lay down resting: unflustered, serene and still.

In a month, Iâ??ll remind myself of two years of the absence of my wifeâ??s presence is everywhere in my home. Today I quickly adjusted and settled in a healing reverie. I have trained myself to brace simple habits and keep on my writing ambitions selflessly

worthy.

Iâ??m just living in as much optimism as my sober living style could offer. Finding time for trips into the past and roaming forward in the present living reappearing as written words. Perhaps, deep inside, I would want to remain and remembered and respected for who Iâ??m as a person. And so let people recognize me, â??Here is a husband who lived the life together with his wife and weathered all the calamities as valiantly and as thoughtfully and unitedly only they can fulfill.â??

Let me give you my two-year revival report card. I sometimes intercept waves of pain and loneliness, but now Iâ??m able to deal with them less upsettingly. Iâ??m able to smile back at the enshrined elegance of you when Iâ??m down by gloomy days. Recovering quickly I find my stride taking a stronger pace, and thoughts more expressive. Iâ??m healing, finding my core relevance, creative latitude. Learning to love who Iâ??m and writing what I love the mostâ??your memories. Iâ??m indeed glad that today I found my anchor and anthem in your reflections and remembrances.

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1. Uncategorized

Tags

1. #mywife
2. #neverleftme
3. #teacher

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