

His Last Wish may 2022



His Last Wish

In February of 2015, as a journalist, for an interview, I met Biker 67 years old Biker, Hemant Bhai Narottam Bhai Patel, who came to New Delhi from Navsari, Gujarat on motorcycle. It was a time when Arvind Kejriwal was sworn in as Chief Minister of Delhi as a result of Anti-Corruption Movement of Anna Hazare. This biker had banners and posters on his bike and was distributing free pamphlets against Corruption to everyone he could find on road.

His first impression, seemed a bit too proud and over confident in spite of his economic stature. During pre-interview chit-chat he was smoking beedi (local cigarette) like a movie actor; but anyhow, we sat at a small road-side tea-stall and started conversation. Chai-wala (Tea Stall Owner) had a good acquaintance with him and was calling him <<Biker-Baba>>.

Why Motorcycle I asked? Train and buses are like shoe boxes with small windows! I like to see, to feel and roam around in world like a free bird! I love freedom! I love motorcycling! All these posters on my motorcycle are messages of my protests, my prayers for a better society.

I asked him, what prompted you? He said, <<Some years ago, when my father passed away, I went into severe depression. Situation worsened with severe financial, emotional, health, family and social problems. But God answered my prayers and helped me out. It was divine intervention, a blessing that God saved me, only God could have saved me”. He added, “As I look back, my heart fills with gratitude for His Mercy. Then, I decided to give my remaining life to God and my Country. I am travelling across India to submit my protest against corruption and black money. I have also submitted a 20 pages letter to President of India.

How do you manage expenses? He replied, I’ve some fixed deposits. I eat only once a day. Sometimes I sleep in parks or on road side, when weather is good. Where will you go from here? No Idea! Like a leaf fallen from tree, wherever wind takes me, wherever God takes me...

After completion of interview, I asked him if he had any expectations from the society for his social awareness work? He paused for few seconds before replying, “I secretly wished that someday a TV, Newspaper or Magazine journalist will acknowledge my drive. You are God sent; my wish is fulfilled. Other than this I have no other wish. Please give me some copies of your magazine. I nodded, “Sure, by the end of this month.”

End of the Month was very busy. It was time for Magazine distribution and delivery to subscribers. In the night of 4th or 5th day of the month, around 2h00, my cellphone rang! <<Biker Baba Calling>> cellphone screen said. “When will you bring my magazines?”, He asked. I replied, “I am a little busy this week, May be after 2-3 days”. He requested, <<Please make it soon, I have to go.>>. I said Okay and went back to sleep.

Two days passed, around 4h00 of early morning, disturbing my peaceful morning sleep, the cellphone rang - <<Biker Baba Calling!>> “When will you bring my magazines? I told you have I have to go; I don’t have time! Come soon”. He sounded upset, disappointed, almost angry... “Okay I will come tomorrow”, I said. He insisted, I have to go, I do not have time, I have to go, please come soon. “ok! ok!”, I hurriedly disconnected. With reluctance I stood up, went to my study table and added this task in my daily to-do list and went back to sleep.

Next morning on my bullet motorcycle, around 11am, I reached at Baba’s meeting place. He and His Bike was not there. Where is your friend, Biker Baba, I asked the tea-stall owner?

He died, “10 days ago!”, chai-wala replied disinterestedly, while preparing his tea.

“What?”, I said in disbelief. “Nonsense! Don’t Joke!”, I said to Chai-wala. He did not reply. I loudly said, “He called me a day before, where is he? I have brought him printed magazines.”

He repeated, “He died 10 days ago, how could he call you?”, he replied, stirring his boiling tea.

My hand immediately went to get my cellphone from my pant pocket. Hurriedly, I clicked my way to “Received Calls” to show him call records. But adding to the shock, there was no record of his incoming calls!

I don’t remember deleting it, why is it not showing his name in received calls? He called me twice! what is happening? This is insane! is this real? I speechlessly looked at Chai-wala, expecting a reply which could reconnect me with sanity. I asked Chai-wala what is the date today, to double check today’s date and time with my cell phone. Cellphone is working fine. Am I awake? I pinched my stomach, to check If this is a dream or a reality?

“He came in your dream...” Chai-wala said, perhaps to console. << Biker Baba was really happy that you took his interview and was waiting for magazine>>, He added, while pouring tea into the cups, for his customers.

Struck with the bad news and his casual disinterested manner of sharing of news, I felt weakness in my knees. The temporariness of the existence, was bending me down and I sat on my knees, on the road, then and there itself. I sat in silence there on road for few minutes with absolutely no sound coming into my ears for next 2-3 minutes.

Suddenly, Chai-wala’s voice brought me back from silence to the road-side noises. “He passed away in his sleep there”, he said pointing his finger towards the park. Chai-wala further added, <<Police took his dead body away as unidentified body. He was a friend to me and that security guard there but we are not his relatives, we have no right to cremate him. Also, we are poor people and could not afford his cremation, it is responsibility of the family.>>

“Do you have any phone number of his family or friend”, I must give this magazine to them, I asked Chai-wala, while standing up... “Check with the local police station”, he replied.

I started my motorcycle and went to the local police station. Police officer was kind enough to show me records, details, photos confirming indeed, the biker baba has passed away; and he was cremated as unknown, unidentified dead body. Biker Baba has left; and that too forever!

Feeling guilty with this strange experience, I started my motorcycle to return my home office. On reaching, first thing I did was to check if there was an entry in my to-do list. Yes, there was a task entered of “Meet Biker baba”!

For two days, I felt very low, upset of not being able to do what I could have done. I felt guilty. I have betraying him by not fulfilling his last wish. I tried to console myself that this was an act of God. They say, we all are guilty of not doing good things we could have done but it seemed impossible to forget or forgive. It was hurting me badly...

Next morning, to make myself feel better, I went back to the place where he parked his motorcycle, near that tea-stall. I offered flowers, a toy dinky motorcycle, apologized and with joined hands, prayed for forgiveness and I also prayed that God gives his soul rest and peace.

With heavy heart I went back to my motorcycle, for the return. I started my motorcycle but suddenly someone tapped my shoulder from behind. It was that Chai-wala! He said, I know one person from his village, you said you wanted to give that magazine, he can help!

I was happy, God is prompt, prayer answered! This person was a security guard at nearby building. I gave few copies of the magazine and requested him to please get it delivered to his family, his children, as this was his last wish. He assured me, he would.

After a month, one day I received a call from Biker Baba’s wife and son. They were speaking in Gujarati, which I do not understand. Few words of Hindi here and there but in spite of this language barrier, from the tone and expressions, it was safe to assume that it was courtesy call of thank you.

I was glad they called; it gave me some closure. I failed to give magazine to Biker Baba, but God managed to do the second-best thing, that is to send magazine to his family, his children.

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