

## Naqas ul Aqal

Prof. Zia Ullah has gone and as a Shaheed. With his death a beautiful chapter of collective lives for a lot of us and a personal chapter for few of us has come to an end. Those who have known him from early 70s would know there was something special about this slim, soft spoken, gentle, extremely hardworking and an ever smiling boy. We met first time in FC collage. He was in Qalbe Abbas Gardaizi's section and because of him we became acquainted. In KE that changed to friendship that kept on blossoming for decades. When I got elected general secretary there was the issue of class attendance I started coming up short So it fell on Zia Ullah to take care of proxies One day in 4th year I attended a class that I had told Zia I was not going to attend He did not see me So when my roll no was called we both spoke. It was one of those extremely rare occasions that he was angry His point was that if I could attend a class it was fine but as I had given him the responsibility of attendance I had no business responding to my roll no!. So on that day it was decided by him that even if I attended class I will not speak when called for attendance as it would confuse him So the dye was cast If a friend had asked Zia for a favour than it was no more that friend's business It was with this clarity that he took care of his near and dear one's. Madam Zahida Mir was a fearful figure You would all remember it was impossible to mark a presence for an absent friend We all had to jot our roll no's on a piece of paper and put it in a closely supervised basket! I don't know if Zia invented it or it was handed down to successive classes by seniors. Yes you got it the technique of writing two roll no's on 2 pieces of paper and then gluing them to gather with one's spit. After a while spit would dry and two pieces separated It was a dangerous ploy with dire consequences if caught But I had a near 100 percent attendance in community medicine... while actually attending half of them. That was what made him stand apart a practicing Muslim from his early teens and with not even a minor vice to his credit he was 'yaroon ka yaar'. Utterly non-judgmental, his friends could never do anything wrong so the rules of engagement were set.

He did his MRCP and started his practice from Iqra hospital. A very difficult phase of his life going to family hospital along with a clinic in walled City But he grew in the profession slowly but surely and ultimately became one of the big names in

Lahore. But nothing changed as far as friends were concerned, the only thing that changed was that now he could pull strings for his friends and he pulled them in bundles. With increasing professional commitment he had less time but he stretched himself more and more. He became guardian angel for his friends, their extended families and his patients. He was the stand in for me for my whole family when I was out of Lahore or Pakistan. He never let my mother visit the hospital until a test needed to be done. He would be by her side at my home.

For the last so many years a group of friends would gather whenever we could. As we gave a free rein to our inner child these occasions became hilarious. He had some extra joy.... maybe because he had otherwise become too busy. For the follies he intentionally committed we used to call him 'Naqas ul Aqal' and he would love it. Somebody who was head of medicine in Shiekh Zayaid and National Hospital, being a leading practitioner in Lahore and having a hearty laugh on being called Naqas ul Aqal, you can have some idea about his inner strength, humility and love for his friends. Actually it was a competition between him and Shaukat that who was behaving more stupidly and the title would keep alternating between them.

Since his death there are two phases: a phase of remembering him with all the fond memories over last almost 50 years and then there is a phase when I want to howl like a wounded animal. He touched so many lives this I always knew. That he was a very special friend I always knew but how his death would devastate me and rest of our close friends was not so clear.... because we never thought he would leave us so soon. It was always implied that whenever we needed him he will be by our side. That he was not made for this world was pretty obvious but what we did not know was that he would stump us all and reach to the distant shores so early. With that ever present warm smile I can almost hear him say it "how was that? Naqis ul Aqlo!"

Good bye my friend. It was an honor to have known you, befriended you and lived so closely for almost a life time. Good bye Zia Ullah.

