



Advocate Supreme Court
Shabnam Ghani Lone

And then all at once, on a terrible August day of 22nd 2015 Jasbeer Kaur was not with us any longer. She died of a heart attack in hospital. All too soon her life was over, this was yet another ending for which none of us was prepared. Jasbeer, as I knew her was one who was never overawed by any one, she was brilliant, sharp and focused. She mastered computers and was a genius in IT.

In a way no one could match her zest, zeal and passion to report Kashmir's untold human stories. She started off, as a reporter for the legendary Doyen of World of News in J&K Khawaja Sonaullah Aftab. She told me Sonaullah Sahib had in fact taught the common Kashmiri to read the news and she always felt very privileged of that association. Then she worked with Imroz and Mirror Kashmir for some time.

Jassi as we knew her was restless for more independence in reporting. She had her way because she had the will and finally launched her own English weekly Jehlum Post. She encountered Himalayan difficulties. Some times prejudice that she was a lady trying to enter a male bastion, some times the discrimination in granting advertisements. I recall she would even fight valiantly for five to ten centimeters of advertisement on the principle of being treated equally. In fact it was through her determined effort to have what she perceived was right from the information department in the form of advertisements that I came to know about most of the people working

there. Be, it Director of information or Joint Director and or any other officer she fought her wars and won many battles with them. Indeed, it was very stressful. Her surge for excellence in journalism to report about politics, economics or social issues kept her going on like a warrior. There were information Director's who listened and some who didn't. The, then director information Mr Farooq Renzu shah heard her focussed arguement about inequality of big newspaper v/s small upcoming newspapers and simply ruled in her favour. She had won her case as Mr Renzu directed information department to issue sufficient advertisement in her favour.

This fight did not stop at the door step of information department only. She did on the basis of her own merit, intelligent arguments get advertisements for her website .I recall way back in 2007 she wrote to the then J&K Bank Chairman Mr.Haseeb Drabu about being singled out for discrimination, who took note of what she had to say and issued advertiements to her news paper. This was a beginning of a great journey for her and she never looked back. She would spent hours and hours looking for stories that were real and human and also uploaded her own website without having many people working for her in the office. She would go to Khidmat Printing Press whenever her paper was to be published .

Head of Khidmat press Late Mr Qureshi was so impressed by her professional attitude, hardwork that before leaving for Haj he called her. He conveyed to her that he had left instructions that she should face no problems. It so happened that the present magement headed by Mr Bilal extended the same courtesy to her. She was sincerely involved in the betterment of her staff and their families. Once in Delhi she was looking for some thing that one of her staff had asked to get for his small daughter, it took her an entire day to

find it. Mr Shaheen, Mr Ghulam Nabi, Mr Abdul Ahad, Mr Zahoor, Mr Manzoor, Mr Parveez, Mrs Mubeena are deeply grieving for her as you grieve for family, same is the case of her friends, who have travelled all the way from Delhi, Jammu and many far off places, leaving their families behind to be with each other and console her untimely demise. This was her unique quality she elicited deep abiding loyalty without any effort. Jehlum Post in a way gave her an identity she wanted, independent journalism. Nothing gave her great joy than to extol the stories of corruption, discrimination, gender equality, justice and fair play. It was through her perseverance , focus Jehlum Post had scored eighteen lakhs hits on the NET and had twenty seven thousands likes on the face-book and she was raring to go forward, but death stopped her.

I must tell this story where it began with my friendship for a very gracious, elderly lady Shant Kour wife of Sardar Kishan Singh of Maisuma. Jassi was the youngest of her children. Her two elder daughters were highly accomplished in the medical profession one in the US Dr Manjeet Kour and one in UK Dr. Gurdeep Kour. In the 90's when militancy was at its peak, mother and daughter were staying at Taramuni annexe. It was that atmosphere of unease and silent violence which was putting every body on edge, Beji would wait for me every evening and ask me where I was if I did not go to see her . After the upsurge in violence she felt insecure and her health started failing rapidly. Despite coming from a well off background Jasbeer looked after her mother in a way children rarely do now. She, sacrificed her wish to go to London for further studies, to look after her ailing aged mother. Beji died in US.

Jasbeer found solace in friends as family, as we were all there to support her, particularly my parents, Abdul Gani Lone and my mother Hanifa

Lone. My father told her to realize her dream of becoming a journalist. Since he felt a lot of respect for her patience, dedication in looking after her feeble mother at such a young age, he supported her which meant a lot to her in those tough times when militancy was at its height. Then all of a sudden she was hit by a bullet , it seems some one fired at me in SMHS in 1990 and she was caught in this crossfire. She fought a deadly bullet and one deadly duel with death and won back her life at that time.

After recovery she joined prestigious institute of Journalism in Delhi and started living her life in a real sense after a long time. She was a most loyal, accomplished and intellectual friend to have. A sister in many more ways when she would just direct you to understand the difference between right and wrong, one of her outstanding qualities was to be with her friends in difficult times. I recall when my father Late Abdul Ghani Lone was booked under PSA in that summer of intense millitancy in 1991 many of our close friends and relatives did not visit us. She was always there for us. She had a fetish for cleanliness and when you came to know she is coming we would be very careful that every thing should be in order, all of us her friends felt the same way. She added so much more to our lives as a friend, mentor and was deeply fond of her two elder sisters Dr. Gurdeep Kour and Dr Manjeet Kour. She would always regale to me that one common legacy we had was strong willed fathers, who believed not only in loving but respecting their daughters, that is how even as far as in 1965 her father Sardar Kishan Singh allowed his daughter Gurdeep Kaur to have a job in London and allowed his other daughter Dr Manjeet Kaur to study in Lady Harding when girls were not normally allowed to go beyond the corners of their Home Towns and Mo-

hallas. She would often say that Gurdeep would lookout for the younger family members and she cared greatly for them. Gurdeep showered her youngest sister with so many presents from U.K which was a big deal in those days. Jassi, took on the mantle of being the special one. All cousins would request her for little presents which she gave generously as a little girl but instilling sense of pride and confidence in her which shaped her future years. No surprise that Dr Manjeet took loving care of her when she had her third surgery after a bullet injury in AIMS. Dr. Manjeet had realized her dream to journalism and was very proud of her younger sister. Jasbeer was fond of Dr. Manjeet's two daughters her nieces Monika Risam Barrister and General Council and Roopsi Risam, Assistant Professor in Boston Unviersity. Here in Kashmir she was in regural contact with her cousins prof. Gurmeet and Sr teacher Guddi from Baramulla. Noted Punjabi writer Late prof. Prem Singh her uncle she talked about many times and missed him after his death. It is so difficult to comprehend that a dynamic person like her is not amidst us.

It is all gone now-the life-affirming, life-enhancing zest, the brilliance, the wit, the cool commitment, the steady purpose. She had dreamed of achieving more yet has accomplished so much. Investment in human relations, brave civilized, questing, exultant in the excitement and potentiality of bringing those human untold stories to the horizon. Yesterday her office was silent, ghostly and strange. Like always for Jasbeer it all ended as it began, she had miles and miles to go yet. We promise you Jasbeeer your spirit will live through Jehlum Post and continue your relentless fight for the common man your dream.

Rest in peace.

FOR A VERY PROUD MAISUMA GIRL Gritty and honest Jassi reported stories as they unfolded never compromising on truth

Radha Mishra close friend

Jasbeer went away in a flash like a candle in the wind. I was in Delhi, when I heard about Jassi's untimely demise. I could not comprehend then, I cannot comprehend now, that the relentless fighter for justice, equality is no more. In a way I, feel, I will never be able to come to terms with her loss. My daughter who is Business Director in DM is inconsolable. Jasbeer meant a world to me and my family. She had this very special quality of endearing herself to people in a very special way.

In 1990 when militancy was at its height, Jasbeer and I were living in my father's house at Rawalpora, known as Taramuni House, Opp. Abdul Gani Lone's residence. She and her mother Shant Kour were living just right behind my father's house in our family compound. What actually inspired a deep and abiding respect for Jasbeer's grit, determination was flawless independent character. Her capacity to look beyond herself was her outstanding quality. Comfortable and well off she and her mother lived alone in that house and were probably waiting for an American Visa which it seems did not materialize at the right time. Beji, Jasbeer's mother as we fondly called her was a pious, simple and graceful woman. As the strife in the valley continued to gain momentum Beji was a little insecure which told upon her health greatly. In this hour of her sun-set years, it was Jasbeer who scarified her personal ambition of going abroad for further studies.

On, a dull afternoon in the Autumn of 1988 when Jassi told her Mom that she will not go abroad but stay with her and she need not worry, I recall how pleased her mother was. Shabnam Lone and I visited Beji and Jasbeer regularly, apart from uncle prof. Prem Singh whom she fondly called prem papa. Despite Taramuni annexe where they were staying being located in uptown area she always told me I am a very proud Maisuma girl.

This is a story which I have to tell and I owe it to Jasbeer to give her that credit of personal sacrifice and devoting every single hour, to look after her mother whose health and memory was rapidly failing. Jasbeer would help her mother from change of clothes, to breakfast, lunch and dinner , her medicines in every aspect. As Beji developed diabetes Jassi would take her test every day herself to the doctors and get the results in the evening. Most of the time she would be in touch with Dr. Susheel Razdan and seeing Jassi's dedication he started coming for personal visits to see Beji despite being very busy. One incident i remember vividly her mother at around 11: 00 PM fell and fractured her arm it was a time when due to millitancy the city wore a deserted and dark look

by 6.00 PM no one would dare venture out. She took her mother in her car at 11:30 PM but stopped and gave me two phone Nos saying if i dont return or get caught in some firing incident ring them up. But the brave lady she was they made it back in the early hours of the morning with mother's arm safely in a plaster.

This is how Shabnam Lone and I decided to be part of this wonderful mother daughter team, not only we, they had a sufficient strong team, like local Baker Mr. Abdul Ahad, local washer man Mr. Rashid, watchman Parmeshwar, and local shopkeepers, who were as loyal as we. It was really the Kashmir sentiment of reaching out to each other that generated a sense of family for all of us, otherwise unconnected. So this was Jasbeer's routine fondly known as Dodi by family. From morning



With her dear friend Radha Mishra

till evening she was connected in every single way with her mother. When Beji's health failed, she could walk no more Jasbeer was a splendid daughter, who never left her mother's side. Beji finally passed away in US.

After this Jasbeer decided to go for her passion that was journalism, she was always interested in knowing about current situations and very informed about International Political events. It interested her no end to seek a report about social, political ,economic issues on a minor level too. She was clear she wanted to be a journalist. Her father Sardar Kishan Singh was a well respected man in the Sikh Community from Maisuma gave preference to education over every thing. Maisuma had a great impact on her. It was that community sentiment sharing caring, for each other she carried with her when they sold off there three big houses in Maisuma. Jasbeer's five siblings in US and UK are all doctors and she wanted to go for a different profession. Her father died before they shifted to Taramuni residence, my grandfather's house. Yet she would also tell me it was her father's desire to make her judge as he was a little fatigued by having so many doctors in the family. Jasbeer would often tell me that Journalism and untold stories was what inspired her to take up this line. I left for Delhi in 1990 and we both were in touch regularly. I remember she like me felt protected by her Muslim neighbors despite a spurge in militancy. That is where Lone Sahib who was our neighbor also told Jasbeer that she was like a daughter and that she must stay put in the valley de-

spite Beji's death. I recall Lone Sahiba, Shabnam, and Begum Sahiba sitting at Lones residence where Jasbeer and I were graciously hosted at every Iftaar by Lone Sahaib and Begum Sahiba. In fact nearly every day she and I had dinner with them and Jasbeer's confidence and trust build with Lone Sahib backing her to take up a profession of her liking. They were protective towards her and I recall one day when some people were with Mr Lone since Jasbeer was a very intelligent conversationalist and knowledgeable about most current events, they asked her where do you work. Jassi kept quiet for a fraction of a second but Lone Sahib Promptly told her Jassi why are you quiet , you did the best job in the world, looking after your feeble mother and I remember every one smiled, with respect for her. They were so pleased to meet her.

I left in the early spring of 1990 for Delhi and kept myself in know about Jasbeer's well being and her will to pursue her career in Journalism. Suddenly in the fall of 1990 I got a call that she had received a bullet injury at SMHS Hospital as some body tried to fire on Shabnam Lone. She managed to defy those violent bullets by showing extraordinary recovery. She went through three major surgeries in a span of eight months, yet rose like a sphinx from debris of violence. Shabnam I remember was there for her and got a message from her father from Tihar Jail that Jassi should not feel let down by all of us. Her third surgery was done at AIMS and the doctors told us that they had never seen such a brave woman who had handled colostomy so well.

She recovered with her will power and just two months after her surgery she went for that course in Journalism from a reputed institution in Delhi. Her sister Dr. Manjeet Risam a very well known doctor in Maryland, Jasbeer told me was supporting her and it gave her great pleasure and joy. Then Jasbeer after some years told me she was working with the Doyen of the news paper world Late Mr. Sonaullah Aftab. She was very happy and told me that he was the person who had actually taught the Kashmiri to read and know the news. Then after some time she told me that she had finally realized her dream of having her own news paper. She and I would some times take walks on the Bund and she loved the River Jehlum . So it was not a surprise for me, she had named her news paper Jehlum Post. In fact today I am here deeply grieving for my sister, friend, and I am standing actually at that very spot of Bund where we could see Jehlum flowing by. She told me that last year Jehlum was in angry spate. But today when I am looking at the Jehlum I wonder if the spate of pain that I feel at her loss could match that anger. Jehlum Post gave her identity that she had craved for, and allowed her to pursue a journey of truth and excellence of human spirit. She was gritty and honest to the last call and just wanted to tell the stories as she knew they unfolded, never compromising on truth.

Rest in peace Jasbeer.

Dearest Jasbeer
aunt you mattered
so much to me then,
and you will continue
to matter to me

Freya Mishra
Business Director Digital Media Delhi

Jasbeer aunt is no more" will haunt me for the rest of my life. Its a reality that I don't want to be reminded of, but it somehow doesn't leave me. The pain of losing her so early cannot be healed. Her being alive was a symbol of strength and unconditional love. She was not just my guide, she was my biggest supporter, my mentor, my inspiration to excel as a woman- no not for things that were superficial but on the realness. I loved her as my mother because thats how she made me feel. So while my most loved and sweetest aunt has left me to be with God, her spirit lives on. My dearest Jasbeer aunt you mattered so much to me then, and you will continue to matter to me. For the world your acts of goodness and courage will never be forgotten. For me, your 'choti' as you fondly called me, you will forever be tied to me for the rest of my life. Love you always.

On Sat, Aug 29, 2015 at 8:03 PM, Freya Mishra