

Lessons I am learning from Father which I want to live on through me

Lesson 1:

1. Focus:

In whatever he did he always did it with total focus without diverting his mind. One day, in Neel Sadan, which was our ancestral house, now demolished and are now apartments, I was searching for something which he had told me to search. While searching, I started looking at something else at which point he told me that I should just focus on what I was searching and not look at something else. At that time I did not understand the point. I felt, so what, if I spend a few minutes looking at something else while searching. It was not until later in life that I realized the importance. It was not about looking at something else, which may feel trivial, it was about being focused.

I have come to believe that how we behave in small matters we tend to behave in important and bigger matters. This has proved true in my case. I just let the matter pass then and it was not until later in life I realized this and to learn to focus on what we are doing at that point of time, it could be as simple as driving, while eating, being in the present moment, it could be achieving major goals or anything else in life.

Whether it was fighting corruption in Pune Municipal Corporation, against construction of the Balbharati road which is against environmental norms, ensuring oil flows inspite of the agitation in Assam in the early 1980s, building bridges during the war, my Father has always ensured that focus remained in what he did.

Lesson 2:

2. Hard Work:

He was a master at this art working often upto 16 – 18 hours a day during his prime when required.

An expert committee was set up in 1976 for reorganization of the Indian army which consisted two future chiefs, General K.V. Krishna Rao, who later became Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, then a Lt. General, who headed the expert committee. General K. Sunderji, Lt General M.L Chibber, Brigadier A.J.M. Homji, and my Father who was the junior most. I still remember, I was 14 years old and he working late nights and getting up early morning to complete the work of submitting the report to the Indian Army. This was my first lesson in hard work which I still remember.

After that I have seen it countless of times, whether it was later in the army, in Oil India, after retiring, where I used to joke that my Father works more after retiring and even more than I do at half his age.

People talk of smart work which is required, however nothing can replace hard work!

Lesson 3:

3. Planning:

I still remember a Saturday wherein there was some work which I had at Western India Automobile Association office which used to be in Aurora Towers on Moledina Street in Camp, Pune. This was some time in the year 1990. I had some 5 things to do that day and he saw that I was struggling and did not know how I could complete the 5 things which I had to do which were all outside the house. He asked me the work and made my plan due to which all the work got completed in that day to my relief. I am sure work will have got left out if it was not for the guidance. This may seem trivial, however, is very important as in bigger things, the attitude remains.

Does it not happen that we spend a lot of time in planning one's holidays, what to eat, what clothes to wear? How much time do we invest in planning our lives? This is what I have learned from my Father!

Lesson 4

4. Integrity:

I will never forget this in my life. I was 10 years old going from Mumbai to Pune (or could be Pune to Mumbai) with my Father in the good old Deccan Queen, a train between the two cities. This was main mode of transport between Mumbai and Pune in those days before the Mumbai – Pune expressway was inaugurated in 2000 and became operation in 2002.

We had taken out our tickets, however, we had to pay for the reservation on the train. The ticket conductor, did not come to us for collecting our reservation amount and we noticed after some time that we have not paid for our reservation. At this point, my Father told me to stay put in my seat and he went to hunt for the conductor in the train. For what seemed like a life time for me, my Father came back and said that he had paid for the reservation and all was fine. This small lesson has remained with me since then.

I have seen this with my Father since his time in the army, Oil India, where he refused to bow down to the pressures of the agitators who wanted a cut in deals which he refused which finally cost him his job in Oil India with the Government promoting him from a Schedule B Chairman & Managing Director (CMD) to a Schedule A Chairman & Managing Direct (CMD) in ONGC Videsh, the international arm of ONGC.

Lesson 5

5. Courage:

He could not have been more of an example than courage. I have seen it countless times.

The first time I remember was during the riots which took place in Delhi in 1984 in the aftermath of the assassination of Indira Gandhi. We were in Delhi when the riots took place. I went by train to Pune and this story has been narrated to me by my sister and my future brother in law, at the time, Anil Kulkarni who flew to Pune on the first of November 1984.

They were a little apprehensive about flying on the very next day after Indira Gandhi was assassinated. Our driver, Mohammed Ali, was absolutely terrified. My father said nothing doing, he would personally see them off till the airport. So they got into their car. It was a scary journey. They passed through several barricades and once, they were stopped. The rioters checked the dickey and told them to roll down their windows, to check if there were any Sikhs in the car. They saw my sister's short hair and then told them to go. It was frightening to say the least as they were searching for Sikhs to take out of the car and burn! We saw these poor souls burning at several places.

Another incident related to this. A day or so after the above incident, my father visited a veteran Sikh General. This General told my father about another retired Sikh Army officer, a Colonel, staying in Hauz Khas. At the time my father was living in Asian Games Village which was not far from HK. This Sikh Colonel's daughter, daughter-in-law and the children were left alone in their house in HK at the time of the riots, as the male members had gone to Dehradun to resolve some property matters. The Sikh general requested my father to go in the night to sleep in that house as there were no male members in the house. Thus, my father religiously did so for a week, without a thought to his own safety.

Then, a story which he told me of they going in a jeep during the war with firing all around from the hills on the sides. The driver of the jeep, a jawan, was scared for his life. My Father told him to sit at his side and took over the jeep and drove through the firing in the hail of bullets. There seemed to be no other choice. As going back will have been equally dangerous. The choice was to go ahead which they did and with god's grace came out safely on the other side.

In Oil India, when my Father as the Resident Chief Executive in Duliajan, Assam, there was constant threat with my Father sleeping with a gun under his pillow. I remember my Father telling me of an instance when at 4 am he got a call to come to one of the oil rigs where there seemed to be some problem. My Father suspected something, however, decided to go. He arrived at the oil rig at 5 am to find not a soul there and felt there was an ambush. Luckily, it was not an ambush and was a prank played by someone. The point was he still went and if it was an ambush, he will have payed with his life. This is what I call courage in the true sense with disregard for one's life in the line of duty.

The final story in this lesson 1 is of exposing corruption in Pune Municipal Corporation and other places post retirement with threats being issued to him at various times with him not bothering and going on with his purpose which was beyond himself.