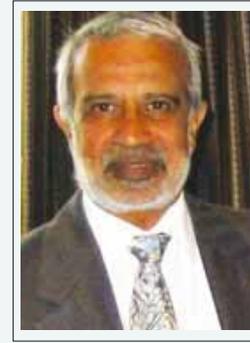


Third Eye

Sequel to the Last Speech

The last issue of the Samachar carried my article, "The Last Speech". Many believe that this article was written after I was diagnosed with two separate cancers – of the lung and esophagus. In reality, the article was written several weeks before I knew I had cancer.



by
Ghulam Sajan
Toronto, Canada.



The article was based on my observations at funerals and the majalis that followed. While I appreciate the speeches before funeral processions asking forgiveness, etc., I am concerned about the numerous majalis after the death at a deceased's home, sometimes going on up to 40 days and then annually. That was the basis of "The Last Speech".

In my case it was ironic that being diagnosed with two unrelated cancers was partially my life saver. Had it been one primary cancer, it would have meant the disease had spread.

Until my diagnosis, I did not really understand pain, having been blessed with good health throughout my life (except for three bouts of flu and the need for a stent in one of my arteries). Now, thank Allah (SWT) I do understand a little bit about pain.

The sequence of events of how I was diagnosed began in February 2009. I asked my doctor for colonoscopy and gastroscopy tests. The results did not show any concern, except I was recommended to take acid reflux medication.

Then I travelled to East Africa in May, 2009. In Dar-es-Salaam, I was constipated, took medication but realised I was not enjoying food. I craved for a coconut drink but would pass by *madafu* stalls without being able to drink what I craved for.

Things started getting worse as I proceeded to Kampala, Mombasa, Nairobi and Abu Dhabi. I was able to eat fewer items as time went by. Returning home, I was able to fast during Ramadhan but my food intake was limited to certain items.

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After Ramadan, I asked for another gastroscopy test. This is when things started to change. The result showed something of concern. This was followed by a biopsy, lung X-ray, CT scan and more tests. This was in October, 2010.

Then my esophagus started to shrink, my food intake was reduced and I began taking more liquids than solids. At this stage I was diagnosed with the cancers. I was told the passage of my esophagus was so narrow that a needle could hardly pass. No wonder no food would go through.

Soon I began throwing up over half of my liquid intake. Three days before my surgery on February 22, 2011, I threw up almost all my fluid intake but I told my family that I was retaining at least 30% in order to prevent them from getting worried. Also, I was not prepared for a third dilation from the fear that my surgery would be delayed since in three months I had lost 56 lbs, being 102 lbs on the day of the surgery. The surgery went very well and what I really want to tell you about is what was going on simultaneously behind the scene.

I am involved with many community activities both within and outside the Shi'a world. I had outstanding tasks that I had to undertake ranging from finalizing events to completing books for some of them.

I have a large family spread across many countries. All my siblings and my wife's siblings wanted to come and see me before the surgery. I made a deal with them. While they were doing duas for me in my living room, I would continue with my work and spend little time with them.

In hindsight, I am glad they came. We had lots of unexpected fun which

included reading my crude *shairis* that I had written between my engagement and wedding. We also read some correspondence between my wife and I, for during this pre-marriage period there was no email and phones were not easy to find.

The night before the surgery, after duas, I insisted that there be merriment for the following day was a big day in my life. I am told that while hallucinating the day after the surgery, I was talking about books of account and asking my wife not to leave even if the hospital building was on fire.

I completed all my work on February 20, 2011 and the next day, during day time I complained I was tired. This was the first day of my fatigue. The night was fine as was the day of the surgery. I want to explain and explore something. I have been fortunate that I had flu only three times in my life, each time not lasting more than two days. On those two days, all hell broke loose. I would be very weak, not be able to drive to the doctor, sleep a lot, sweat a lot, eat a lot and shout a lot that nobody cared for me! But with the cancers, I was totally calm and was comforting others that it was not a big deal. I would tell my family and friends to relax. If I survived, *shukhr* Allah and if I did not, *shukhr* again.

I do not believe this calmness came from me. It was from our Creator and from the duas and aamals organized in different parts of the world, even by people I hardly knew. I am positive these duas and aamals not only gave me the calmness but contributed to my survival.

While I knew my surgeries were serious, it was only after the surgery that I was told that the surgeries were very serious. The surgeons and the medical team were excellent as were the

hospital staff from nurses to personal care givers to porters – they all had a positive attitude and smiles on their faces.

When I reflect, I cannot but give some advice. Always have faith in duas and aamals. The surgeon may be great (in my case he visited me all the 13 days I was in hospital) but it is *tawagqal* Allah that makes the day.

Another aspect is positive attitude. Throughout my ordeal lasting five months, I maintained a positive attitude (of course with help from Allah (SWT)). An oncologist friend told me he had been in practice for over 30 years but had not seen anybody as positive.

I want to give one more example of the power of duas and aamal. The Tumour Board had decided that I was to have radiation and chemotherapy and the surgery would be later. This was while I was losing weight. Appointments were booked but just four days before the treatment I got a call saying that the Tumour Board had reversed its decision and I would have surgery first. I believe this reversal was due to prayers. If the original plan were carried out, I do not know if I would be writing this article today.

My gratitude is to the many who prayed for me in different ways including feeding the poor. I simply do not know how I can repay them except saying *jazak-Allah*.

I strongly believe I am in my ninth life (the proverbial cat has nine lives!) but in my retrospection so far, I have not been able to figure out what my final mission is. I sincerely pray to Allah (SWT) to guide me to fulfill my final objective in this adorable world.