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In this document women are identified with their maiden name and their post married name are in brackets

INTRODUCTION

This document is on family histories of two Kashmiri Pandit families, the descendants of GULAB RAI HAZARI (died 1890) and HARIRAM RAZDAN. From known records, these 2 families were intertwined by marriage when Sushila Rani Razdan (post marriage Durga Hazari) married Karta Kishan Hazari (1888-1954) and when Vidya Razdan (1904-1993, post marriage Chandermohini Hazari) married Autar Kishen Hazari (1893-1966), the younger brother of Karta Kishan Hazari. Sushila Rani Razdan's' father, Lachmandas Razdan was the brother of Hariram Razdan while Vidya Razdan's father, Rooplal Razdan (1878-1927) was the son of Hariram Razdan.

The HAZARI family as [documented](#) by Rajinder Nath Hazari (1900-1980) migrated from Kashmir to present day Pakistan Punjab during the time of Nidanji (died 1847), the father of Gulab Rai Hazari and settled in Qilladar (near Gujrat, Pakistan Punjab) and eventually in Lahore prior to Partition. Post Partition, the Hazaris were primarily based in Delhi with Opinder Kishen Hazari and his younger brother, Rabindra Kishen Hazari (sons of Autar Kishen Hazari) were based in Bombay.

Rooplal Razdan (1878-1927), the son of Hariram Razdan came from Lahore to Patiala and was the Superintendent of the Palaces under Raja Daya Kishen Kaul, prime minister to Maharaja of Patiala, Bhupinder Singh.

The purpose of this exercise is to document oral family history which tends to get lost after the second or third generation. These are a collection of memories, anecdotes and events of individuals of both families which flesh out their characters and personalities for future generations to appreciate.

The Family of MEGHRAJ HAZARI (photo taken between 1927-1930, possibly in Lahore)



Women are identified by their maiden name.

Sitting Cross Legged

L-R: ROOPKUMARI RAZDAN (daughter of Jeoshuri Hazari), **MANMOHAN NATH RAZDAN** (1916-2010, son of Jeoshuri Hazari), **KUNWAR RANI RAZDAN** (1911-2011, daughter of Jeoshuri Hazari), **RAJDULARI HAZARI** (1919-1999, daughter of Karta Hazari), **CHAND KISHAN HAZARI** (1921-2012, son of Karta Hazari) and Saroj Hazari (daughter of Karta Hazari)

Sitting on Chairs

L-R: JEOSHURI HAZARI (daughter of Meghraj Hazari), **VIDYA RAZDAN** (wife of Autar Kishen Hazari, post marriage Chandermohini Hazari 1904-1993,), in her lap **OPINDER KISHEN HAZARI** (1927-1996, son of Autar Hazari), **SUSHILA RANI RAZDAN** (wife of Karta Hazari, post marriage Durga Hazari), **'POSHI'** (wife of Meghraj Hazari), **MEGHRAJ HAZARI** (1848-1930), **KRISHNA MOHINI RAINA** (wife of Sri Kishan Hazari), **LADLEEPRASAD KAUL** (wife of Suraj Hazari), **KAMLAPATHI HAZARI** (daughter of Meghraj Hazari) and in her lap **RAJKUMAR KAUL** (1927-2003)

Standing

L-R: MANOHAR NATH RAZDAN (husband of Jeoshuri Hazari), **PRADUMAN KISHAN HAZARI** (1925-1975, son of Autar Hazari), **AUTAR KISHEN HAZARI** (1893-1966, son of Meghraj Hazari), **KARTA KISHAN HAZARI** (1888-1954, son of Meghraj Hazari), **RAJINDER NATH KISHAN HAZARI** (1900-1980, son of Meghraj Hazari), **SRI KISHAN HAZARI** (1891-1977, son of Meghraj Hazari), **SURAJ KISHAN HAZARI** (son of Meghraj Hazari), **AVTAR KISHAN KAUL** (1907-1988, husband of Kamlapathi Hazari).

HAZARI HISTORY By Rajinder Nath Hazari (1900 -1980)

Parentage

Our stock hails from Kashmir and a pedigree table of my ancestors as far as known is given below:

Shiv Ram

Kewal Ram

Nidhanji (died 1847)

Gulab Rai (died 1890)

Megh Raj (1848 - 1930)

Karta Kishan (1888 - 1954), Sri Kishan (1981 - 1977), Jeoshuri, Autar Kishen (1893 - 1966), Suraj Kishan, Rajinder Nath (1900 - 1980) & Kamlavati

Owing to Muslim persecution of Kashmiri Brahmans the writer's great grandfather Nidhanji migrated to the Punjab. It was a rather hazardous adventure in those days of political turmoil and poor communications but evidently he was forced to flee along with some others of his caste for the preservation of the faith of his ancestors and the safety and honour of his woman folk. The party found a haven of safety in a small tumble down village on the bank of the river Chanab 5 miles southwest of the town of Gujrat known as [Qilladar](#) [in present day Pakistan]. Obviously the migrating party followed the same bridle-track which the Mughal Kings did during their travel to the valley of Kashmir. The party was headed by a man of great piety named Shri [Mansa Ram Ji Razdan](#) [died 1826] to whose blessed memory stands a big shrine called "Dhuni Sahib" at Qiladar the only one of its kind outside Kashmir. The writer's great grandfather and his son accepted the discipleship of Mansa Ram Ji and probably for some years derived their living from the spiritual ministration of the laity. Both were apparently well-off as the writer's inherited houses in Qiladar from his father which he sold off to clear his debts after retirement from government service.

A political storm during the time of Gulab Rai swept our family out of Qiladar. After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh [27 June 1839] the Sikh ruler of Punjab, the land of five rivers became the hunting ground for ambitious chieftains and adventurers. During the [battle of Gujrat](#) in [February] 1849 [[Second Anglo-Sikh War](#)] the shrine of Dhuni Sahib attracted the attention of a band of Sikh soldiers who raided Qiladar. With a view to saving the holy place, the priests, headed by Gulab Rai who was then a Kardar (administrator) of a number of villages and also held charge of the shrine negotiated with the raiders to buy them off and some terms were agreed. But as usually happens the raiders broke faith and pillaged the shrine. Gulab Rai jumped from the temple at the dead of night, ran away and swam across the Chanab River to save his life. Soon thereafter the rule of the Punjab changed hands and the country was annexed by the British.

God alone knows how Gulab Rai rehabilitated himself. All I know is that at the time of the mutiny in 1857 he was a Subedar [Segeant] Major in an Indian Regiment which joined the mutineer's and was disbanded. A year or two later he became a sub-inspector of police in Peshawar and thereafter was transferred to D.I. [Dhera Ismail] Khan [city in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan] as Kotwal [chief police officer], where he celebrated the marriage of his only daughter [Diddajan Hazari, post marriage, Parmeshwari Muttu] who was married at the age of nine to a child [Pyarelal Muttu] of the same age who was the son of a well-known Deputy Collector in the Punjab. In 1931 I met an old gentleman in D.I. Khan and he had a very dim recollection of my grand-father.

From our father's description Gulab Rai was a man of medium height, healthy complexion, lynx-eyed, compact built and of unusual physical courage. In the evening of his life, he turned a recluse and preached Vedanta to one and all he came across. He served as a police officer in Peshwar, D.I. Khan, Bannu, Delhi, Karnal and Ambala and retired from the last mentioned place as Inspector of Police round about 1884. Gulab Rai's wife spent most of her young life in her parents' home. The writer's father was the eldest child. He was born in 1848. Next to him was Moti Lal who died young and next was Hari Shankar who died in 1896. The youngest was daughter Dayaji. She died at Gwalior at the age of 81 in 1944. Megh Raj started education when Christian Missionary was digging in his toes with the bait of school, the hospital and similar charitable institutions, expectant to tear away big chunks off the unsophisticated Hindu society of that time. For a career under the new masters of knowledge of English language was essential and Megh Raj was sent to a missionary school much against the wishes of his father, presumably under the pressure of the European Deputy Commissioner of D.I. Khan. He indirectly put serious obstacles in the way of the young child fearing that he might not be weaned away from his religion; nevertheless, the lad managed to acquire a tolerable acquaintance with the foreign language.

It would seem that Megh Raj was a spirited youth, a kind of rebel son. He was married when hardly six or seven years later he joined the Indian Army as a Cavalry Dafadar [Non-Commissioned officer, equivalent to sergeant] which job he took up in defiance of his father's wishes. Time and again the son and father parted company. Leaving the army service, after a year or so he restarted life as a subordinate official in Revenue Department through his father's help. This was in 1868. He rose to be a Tehsildar [revenue collection officer of a Tehsil] and retired from service in 1903. He has had a chequered life. While still below 30 he lost his first wife and did not remarry until 7 years later. Born during stormy days when the Sikh Raj fell, he saw the great Indian Mutiny of 1857. A self-reliant man, he could face any storm unperturbed. He was somewhat gay in his youth and possibly irresponsible, particularly when he was a widower. But he was endowed with a personality and firmness of character. He held every job with credit and was respected by the people he came in contact with. He loved his first wife passionately. She left a son named Gauri Shankar who also died young in 1887. The writer and his four brothers and two sisters all sprang from the second union. Megh Raj lived in comfort comparatively but when he was about 50 the fortune of our family suddenly took a bad turn. Megh Raj had a nasty fall from a horse while touring on duty in the country-side which caused a fracture of his hip-bone. This calamity brought great suffering to the family. Despite repeated setting the injury left a permanent disability (a limp) for the rest of his life.

He ate up all his savings and invalided out of service on an inadequate pension. My mother fought a losing struggle in her effort to equate diminishing resources with growing expenses and heavy debt had to be incurred. Had a grant of 90 acres farm by the government in 1905 in recognition of father's services not come to our rescue our fate would have been sealed. The old man toiled on the land which yielded good dividends and the family was rehabilitated.

Medium sized, wiry and sun tanned, Megh Raj's features appear to have been wrought for facing hardships. He had an authoritative look and stentorian voice. He had a tender heart and wide catholic sympathies. His command over tongue was remarkable and he had a fund of anecdotes and homely stories to narrate. There was a charm in his spoken word and he wrote excellent Urdu. During his prolonged bed-ridden period he studied astronomy, astrology and religion and compiled some useful notes on Hindu philosophy, Theosophy, Astronomy and agriculture.

He never forgot his first wife, her charms and gift and was indifferent if not rather unkind towards the second. He did not however, have a studied attitude but was impulsive and his mood varied from extreme kindness to extreme harshness towards her. He had unwavering belief in God and was an optimist even during his dark days. *"What God ordains is for the good and everything will be alright"* so he used to say.

I should confess regretfully that I had more fear than affection for him. He was kind to me but his almost total baldness stern and wrinkled visage and expression due to advanced years, his gait and perhaps his harshness towards mother was disagreeable to my child psychology created a gulf between us and even when I was fully grown up I could not fully respond to his love.

DOWN MEMORY LANE IN LAHORE - March 2006 By Vinod Mubayi



Kunwar Rani Razdan (post marriage Kunwar Mubayi, accompanied by her son, Vinod Mubayi, approaching the entrance of her family house in Lahore where she was born and grew up

The city of Lahore often evokes an intense nostalgia among its former residents who were displaced by the Partition of India in 1947. This nostalgia is partly due to the memories of the unique cultural character of Lahore but mostly to the pangs of separation from the many close friends who remained behind with whom the bonds of a shared living space became a memory of loss. This writer was born in Lahore, so were his parents. My mother [Kunwal Rani Razdan, 1919-2011 post marriage Kunwar Rani Mubayi, daughter of Jeoshuri Hazari and Manohar Nath Razdan), now 87, has always had an intense desire to re-visit the city where she was born, grew up, was educated, married, and had her children, once before it was too late. The occasion of the marriage of a daughter of close friends provided an opportunity for her (an Indian citizen) to get a visa to Pakistan and visit Lahore.

To say the visit surpassed all her expectations for recognition, friendship and people-to-people contact would be an understatement. Inside the old, walled city where she was born, a visit undertaken without any notice of any kind on a Sunday morning with our hosts in Lahore (who live in the cantonment area themselves) showed how the past is not really past at all but the present. As we turned into the Wazir Khan Masjid chowk memories of the lanes came flooding back to my mother and she began to walk with a new sense of purpose and direction towards the Kucha Hussain Shah where her erstwhile house was located. But it was the random meeting with an old man on the small winding street leading up to the haveli that

was the clincher. This man not only recalled my grandfather's name (the haveli is still named after him) but he also remembered the names of my mother and her cousin while my mother recalled all her old neighbours, Mirza Sahab, Hakim Sahab, and their children who were her friends when they were 8 and 9 years old. Soon we were seated in the room which she had grown up in surrounded by most of the neighbourhood plying us with tea, snacks, tales of who went where while my mother regaled them with tales of where an ancient well where they drew water was, of how her uncle kept fighting with a maulvi who was their neighbour and how her father used to reprimand his younger brother for doing so.



Neighbourhood gentleman who remembered Manohar Nath Razdan

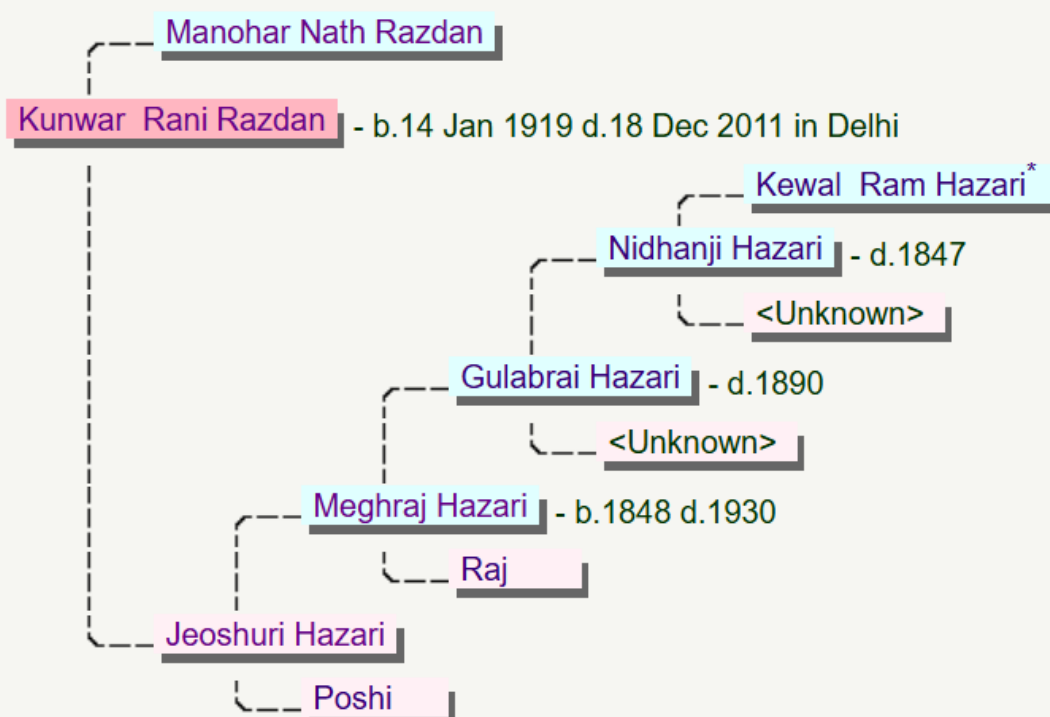
It was difficult to tear ourselves away. The *mohalla* people all said you have come back after 60 years, at least stay 60 hours, if you cannot stay 60 days. Only the fact that our escort's daughter was getting married that evening allowed them to let us leave after a few hours. The affection and desire for contact was simply overwhelming, so intense that it went beyond clichés of Indo-Pak friendship; it was more a re-discovery of the humanity that resides within all of us.



Many neighbours came to see her.

To see the video of the visit click [here](#)

▼ Ancestor Pedigree Chart



AVTAR KISHAN KAUL (1907-1988) married Kamlapathi Hazari

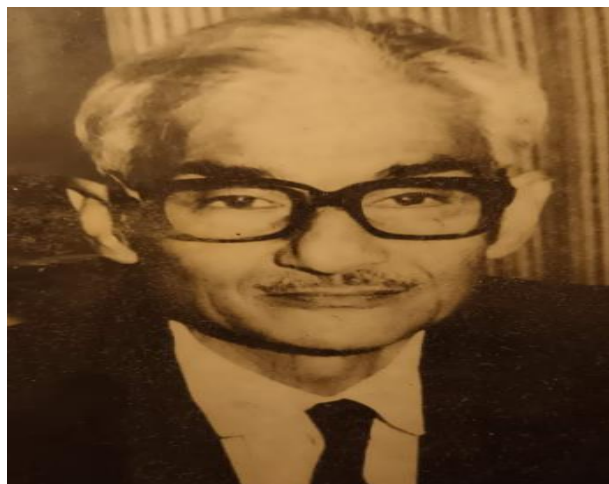


Nilofer Kaul on her grandfather

My grandfather Avtar Krishan Kaul was a handsome man with an imposing presence. As a police officer he was feared and respected. But at home, I am told he was quite a compliant husband, father and grandfather. He doted on his grandchildren. As he was the son of a humble postmaster in Kashmir who died young, Ba (as we his grandchildren called him) grew up shouldering responsibilities for his sisters. He helped get his nephews and nieces educated and settled. He helped his extended family cross the border during the violent days of the Partition. He was very devoted to his two sons and was keen to have his son, my father Raj Kumar Kaul (1927-2003), study at Oxford. It was an improvident ambition, as it was way beyond his modest means. But Ba dreamed of his son studying in Oxford and went without a winter jacket. His younger son, Brigadier Brij Kumar Kaul ('Nikkoo', 1928-1973) was a promising Army officer who died prematurely. After Nikkoo Chacha's untimely death, Ba turned his attention to looking after his widow Shobha Wali (Shobha Kaul, 1931-2014) and the two bereaved sons. The tragedy was compounded by the elder grandson's (Sunil Kumar Kaul, 1957-1986) tragic death. It has to be said that Ba received these cruel blows with grace and equanimity.

But my fondest memories of him are of his long visits when he played Scrabble and endured my childish babble for hours with merriment. And most of all, his arriving on my birthday with a little pup Kaloo who was with us for 13 years. For all this and so much more, I feel very grateful to Ba.

PROF. RAJ KUMAR KAUL (1927-2003), son of Kamlapathi Hazari and Avtar Kishan Kaul)



Varun Kaul on his father

Born in Lahore in 1927, graduated (B.A.) from Government College, Lahore and M.A. from Delhi University (1st Rank). He did Honor's from Magladden College, Oxford, M. A. / Diploma and a Ph. D. from Birkbeck College, London, Topic - Dr. Samuel Johnson on the Doctrine of Nature, under Prof. Geoffrey Tillotson. He first joined Punjab University (PU) as Lecturer and came to Rajasthan University as Reader as he was not getting his due promotion in PU. He later went for a Fullbright Fellowship to Yale University 1970-1971.

Joined as Lecturer at Punjab University, Chandigarh (1955)

Joined as Reader at University of Rajasthan (September 1962)

Promoted as Professor at University of Rajasthan (1967)

He held various administrative positions at University of Rajasthan as follows:-

1. Director- School of Humanities
2. Dean - Faculty of Arts
3. Member- Vice Chancellor (VC) Committee under Justice Vedpal Tyagi (Retired Chief Justice, Rajasthan High Court)
4. Director- University of Rajasthan, Library
5. Acting Head- Department of Foreign Languages
6. Member – Syndicate
7. Acting VC - University of Rajasthan
8. Retired - June, 1988
9. Re-employed - 7 years after retirement
10. Last Assignment - Director (Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla)

Nilofer Kaul on her father

My father Raj Kumar Kaul was the elder of the two sons of Avtar Krishan Kaul (1907-1988) and Kamla Hazari. From an early age, he was a reader, drawn to literature, philosophy and history. Unlike his worldly wise father, my father lived in a library of his mind. He was loving and generous to all, as long as he was allowed his undisturbed time with poetry, philosophy, and music. He was a student not just in Lahore, Delhi, Oxford and London, but all his life. He was always teaching himself new things- be it the Devnagri script or computers. My father had been a Gandhian and while England changed his thinking in many ways, he retained an austerity learned in his youth.

He was playful and fun too and the first storyteller in my life.

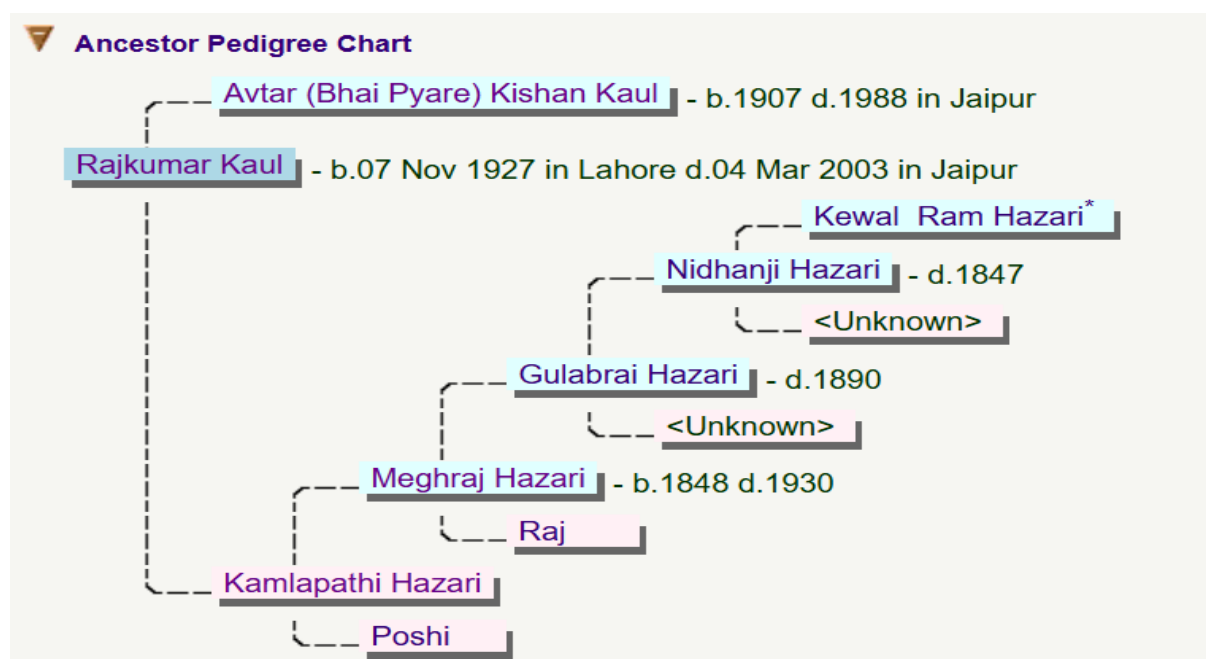
Most of all, it was his students and colleagues who respected and loved him as much for his depth of learning as for his unwavering integrity.

Anil Razdan (son of Manmohan Nath Razdan and Kamla Malla (Razdan)) reminisces on Raj Kumar Kaul

Dr Raj Kumar Kaul. Bubboo Chacha to us.

He was an alumnus of Government College, Lahore, Punjab University. He taught English in Punjab University Hoshiarpur, and Chandigarh and later in Rajasthan University.

His students in Punjab University at Hoshiarpur and Chandigarh, and subsequently at Rajasthan University, Jaipur, were in awe of his dedication and depth of knowledge. He had a deep knowledge and appreciation of Urdu poetry. An extremely affectionate, transparent and a straightforward person.

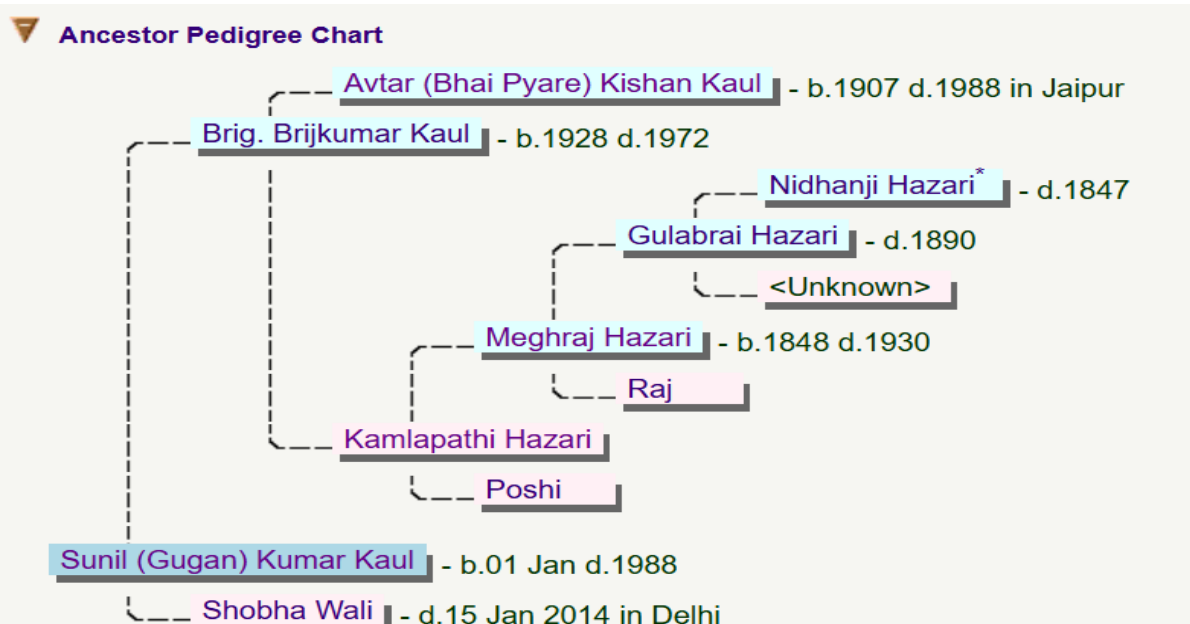


SUNEEL KAUL (1957-1986), son of Brig. Brij Kumar Kaul and Shobha Wali (Shobha Kaul)



Suneel Kaul was born in 1957 to Brig. Brij Kumar Kaul and Shobha Wali (Kaul). Since his father was in the Army and with regular transfers, he was put into boarding school and passed out in 1973 from Lawrence School, Sanawar. Post schooling, he got selected in Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi.

After completing his mechanical engineering degree he worked in a public sector organization and then, subsequently joined State Bank of India in 1979 as a Probationary Officer, and was posted to Canada for three years. Unfortunately, he expired in 1986.



RABINDRA KISHEN HAZARI (1932 – 1986), son of Autar Kishen Hazari and Vidya Razdan (Chandermohini Hazari)



Rabindra Kishen Hazari (born October 21, 1932 in Patiala, died November 8, 1986 in Bombay), M.A., Ph.D , was educated at Government College, Lahore, St. Xavier's College, Bombay and School of Economics and Sociology, Bombay University.

He taught Economics at St. Xavier's College, Bombay (1951-1964), during which he also contributed frequently to *The Economic Weekly*, assisted S.D. Mehta in "Cotton Mills of India 1854-1904", participated in the Columbia University Law School project in India on Public International Development Financing and was honorary director Research Programme Committee, Planning Commission.

He was appointed Professor of Industrial Economics at the University of Bombay in 1964; during his three years there he was also honorary consultant, Planning Commission and Government nominated director on the board of *The Times of India* group. His scholarly work, *The Corporate Private Sector: Concentration Ownership and Control*, 1966 exposed the concentration of power and the managing agency system in the private corporate sector. The Hazari Report on *Industrial Planning and Licensing Policy*, 1967 was widely debated in Parliament in 1967.

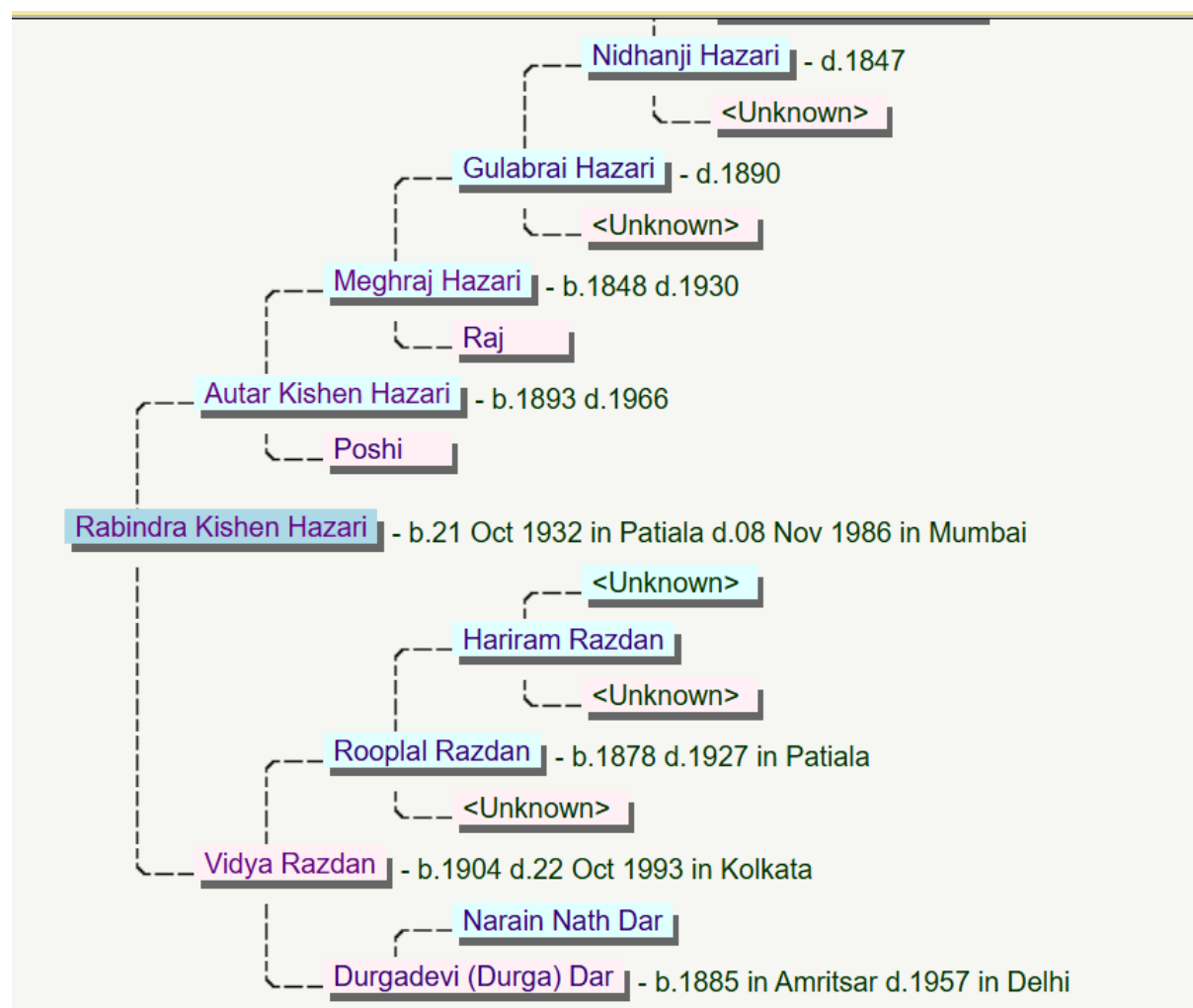
He became editor of the *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)*, Bombay, in 1967 and simultaneously director of Bharat Electronics, Ltd., Bangalore and Visiting Professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.

Soon after the major commercial banks were nationalised in 1969, he was, at the age of 37, appointed Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, the youngest person to hold this post and in 1977, at 45, the youngest person to relinquish it upon completion of his tenure. Subsequently, he was associated with a number of companies as director or consultant and was Visiting Professor at the National Institute of Bank Management, Bombay (present campus in Pune) and the Xavier Labour Relations Institute, Jamshedpur. He was also Visiting Lecturer at the Economic Development Institute, World Bank, Washington D.C. and was on two RBI Committees, one on sick undertakings and the other on reform of the monetary system ([Chakravarty Committee](#)).

K.S. Krishnaswamy, economist and former deputy governor, RBI wrote in R. K. Hazari's obituary, "[Ravi Hazari: A Remembrance](#)", *EPW*, November 29, 1986,

"He had a presence and an air about him which made it easy for people of all ages to believe that he was their contemporary...Ravi left suddenly, taking away from the world of those who had the privilege of knowing him more than a little bit of its rich flavour. He lived, not long enough to rest on his oars or accumulate riches, but meaningfully enough to leave a memory that one can cherish."

Ancestor Pedigree Chart



Remembering Napoleon and Dad by Rabindra Kishen Hazari Jr.

Napoleon was very short. He was my father's hero. Dad, Rabindra Kishen Hazari, was also very short, barely 5'3, and he didn't wear platform shoes.

Dad would read out Napoleon's speeches and those of Cicero, Seneca, Tacitus, Nehru and many others from Plutarch's Lives and other classics from ever since I can remember.



When I was around 2 to 4 years old, I would wait for Dad to return from his lectures when he was a Lecturer in Economics in St Xaviers College, Bombay, or from New Delhi, where he would be working on Commissions from the Finance Minister.

I would eagerly scramble into Dad's lap with books which I couldn't read then but I would point with a grubby finger at various extracts I had marked and have Dad read them to me again and again and again.

Dad would explain and answer my hundreds of questions with incredible patience whilst my mother and grand-mother would scowl and scold me for not letting Dad rest, eat or sleep. I often fell asleep in Dad's arms midway through these readings and intense quizzing.

Later, when my younger brother, Sona, and I were older, we would accompany Dad on his private and official trips to some of the most beautiful, remote and most backward places in India; all over the North East, Himachal, Kashmir, the areas which were later hotbeds of insurgency, Konkan, Deccan, Kutch, Rajasthan, Punjab, all over South India, the Sunderbans and tea gardens in the Nilgiris, Assam, Darjeeling and the Dooars, North Bengal, where I much later worked briefly on a summer job whilst in College.

Rabindra Hazari Jr. and Somindra Hazari Accompanying R K Hazari on Trips in the 1970s



L-R: ?, Sona, R K Hazari, ?, ?



Rabindra Hazari Jr. extreme left and R K Hazari third from the right

My happiest memories of Dad is of listening to his reading out speeches and extracts of famous books, attending his public speeches and travelling with him all over India especially by train and road.

What do you make of this countryside, Dad would ask?

Nothing, my brothers, Sona [Somindra Hazari], Hemu [Hemindra Hazari] and I, South Bombay born and bred, would reply.

Look again, carefully this time, Dad would urge.

What are the houses like? *Kucha* or *pucca*?

Are there electricity transmission towers and power cables?

Is there water? Wells, tanks, canals? Pumpsets? Tractors?

That showed whether the land was irrigated or non-irrigated. Tractor meant prosperous farmer.

Roads, dirt or tarred?

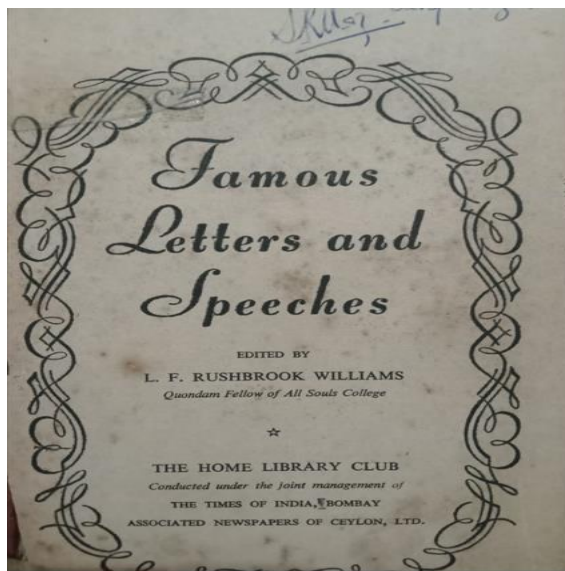
Later, the kinds of crops grown; food single crops for sustenance on arid non-irrigated soil, bajra, jowar; whilst wheat and sugar cane are double cash crops on irrigated soils, with huge differences in farm income and rural wealth.

Coconut and fruit bearing trees; these take years to bear fruit. What does the farmer live on until his trees bear fruit? He must have fruit bearing trees already or alternative income. Poor, landless, marginal farmers cannot suddenly start with fruit trees. If they do, it's often a scam to get farm credit in the names of benamis.

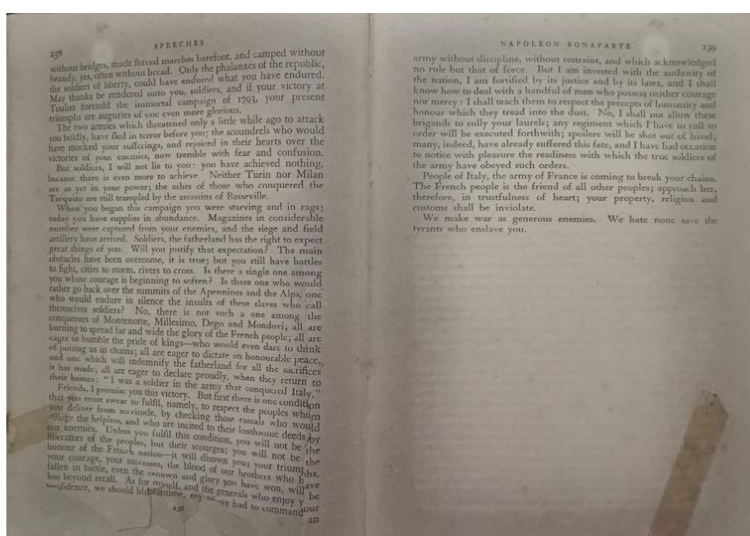
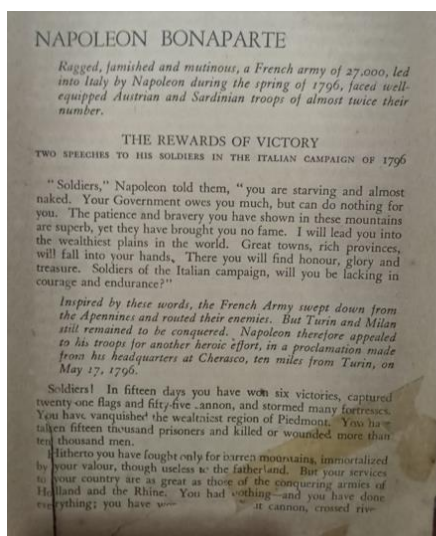
These are the indelible memories of my father who sadly died young, aged just 54 in 1986.

My family still reeling in shock at Dad's sudden death was at a loss of what to do at his funeral. Dad had warned us umpteen times since we were knee high, when I die, no priests, no prayers, no rituals. We obeyed. None of the above. However, there was a vacuum, we needed something to say or said, some closure.

Then I remembered my father's hero, Napoleon. I pulled out the precious book, "Famous Letters and Speeches", which Dad would read to us.



Standing next to my father's body, I read out his favourite speech, [Napoleon's speech in 1796](#) at the start of his celebrated Piedmont Campaign, when following Hannibal's footsteps in the Punic Wars of Carthage [264 - 146 BC] versus Rome, Napoleon did the unexpected and the impossible, he crossed the Alps with a French army of conscripts, peasants and artisans, starved and in rags, and with great valour and brilliant generalship routed several Italian and Austrian armies, conquering Italy.



And so it was with the stirring words of Napoleon's great speech still ringing like a war mantra in our ears, exhorting us to do the impossible, we said Bye Bye to Dad.

SOMINDRA KISHEN HAZARI (1961-2021), son of Rabindra Kishen Hazari and Sarojini Rao (Sarojini Rabindra Hazari)



Remembering Somi by Rabindra Kishen Hazari Jr.

March 31, 2021

Mes Amis. Thank you all for your messages and calls and outpouring of love, concern and grief for Somi, or Sona, as my much beloved mountain bear like brother, Somindra, was called at home.

We are totally devastated at Sona expiring so suddenly. He was ailing for the last few days. His grotesquely swollen and maimed legs which had been gouged with gangrene when his appendix burst inside his abdomen when he was less than 3 years old was a constant ravaging pain which he bore with his customary joke and cackle; the diabetes, the pancreatic and all other miscellaneous ailments, he made light of and charged through like the Rugby player of old that he was and remained at heart.

My Mum spoke to Sona on Holi morning and was alarmed at how listless Sona sounded. "Dont Worry Mama", I assured her, "Sona is Sona. He will get well soon and smash through yet again".

Instead, there was this frenzied banging on my bedroom door at about 4 pm. I was fast asleep. Giddy and disoriented, I opened my door and my youngest brother, Hemu, charged in. "Nika (Sona's wife, Varanika), just called. Sona expired".

It was a bullet to the brain. What followed was unreal. I thought it was a horrible dream, that Sona's characteristic chuckle will be heard anytime soon heralding that this is a macabre joke. Instead, I heard a sobbing Nika say that Sona had his lunch in his upstairs bedroom in his charming duplex penthouse in a rural area outside Madras, that when she returned to the bedroom, Sona wasn't breathing. All their efforts at pulmonary massage, resuscitation, were of no avail. Sona was gone. Poof! Just like that! Gone!

Sona, the Great Grand Daddy of all Pranksters, had played his final prank. He had quietly slipped away, giving doctors and hospitals his beloved middle finger salute, as he did the ultimate bunk of all; from life altogether.

Telling Mum was the most difficult part.

We gently roused Mum from her afternoon nap. The first thing Mum sleepily said was, "How is Sona? I didn't like the sound of his voice when we spoke in the morning."

"Please wash your face, Mama", said I, hoping that my voice didn't tremble.

Our 92 year old Mum, quietly freshened up in the bathroom without a word, then emerged, standing tall and straight, she looked at us directly and with a tremor in her voice said, "You have both come. You have something terrible to tell me...isn't it?"

That is when the three of us collapsed into each other's arms, holding each other tight as we wept for our beloved Sona, the light of our lives, not believing that we will never hear his booming voice again.

What followed was a blur.

Hemu and I flew down to Madras on the 30th.

We arrived at Sona's residence which is in a resort complex in a village in Kanchipuram District of Tamil Nadu, one and a half hours from the Madras airport.



Palmyra Springs, Nariambakkam village, Sriperumbudur taluk, Kanchipuram district

As per our family custom, we insisted on no religious rituals, no priests nor prayers, and that Sona's daughter, Shonali, aged 31, will light the funeral pyre.

This deeply shocked the villagers as women never go to the cremation ground and the lighting of the funeral pyre is a strict male prerogative which is carried out with complex Hindu ceremonies all of which we had cheerfully short circuited.

So the villagers, who adored Sona and Nika, diplomatically set up the pyre 50 metres from the open corrugated roof shed which is the roadside village crematorium.

At home, Sona's body was kept in a Sleeping Beauty like viewing casket cum refrigerated box. I thought Sona was sticking his tongue out which would have been his way to say his last irreverent good bye.

Hemu embraced the casket repeatedly and for long, too choked for words, sobbing his heart out.

I sat far away. I was glad that our mother did not have to see this sight. No mother should see her child dead before her.

Sona seemed too restricted in the casket for my liking. He looked uncomfortable. This is not the way I wanted to remember him. Of course, its a bloody miracle that they found a casket big enough to hold him considering that Sona tipped the scales at a mere 158 kilos, which was down from his proud peak of 175+kilos.

In the meantime, George arrived. We grew up with George when we lived in Bank House when George was an integral member of our household. George hailed from Tuticorin, near the southern tip of Tamilnadu, more than 600 kms from Madras. He had taken a flight from Tuticorin and rushed over to be in time for Sona's funeral.

George and Sona shared a special bond. Sona was perpetually falling foul of the Cathedral School teachers. Not for nothing was Sona called, "Teachers' Pest", an accolade that Sona typically wore with great pride. Dr Krishnan, our celebrated English literature teacher, was fond of doling out punishments, like, "Someeendra! You horrible boy!! You will copy out the entire Act II of Julius Caesar. I want it on my table by 8.30 am tomorrow."

Sona would nonchalantly roll home and rouse George. "George, let us improve our English. And what better way of doing so than by studying Shakespeare. Let us start with my favourite, Julius Caesar. " Of course, the joint study session was just a ploy to get George to write all the detention work which George gladly did thereby earning Sona's undying gratitude.

Soon George became so famous that Sona's entire Galllery of Rogues, all got their detention homework written by George.

Many years passed and George returned to Tamilnadu as an union leader of the erstwhile Vijaya Bank Staff Union but he always maintained his close relationship with our family, naming his daughter, Shonali, after Sona, and his son, Rabindrajeeva, after me.

Seeing George, and holding him tight and close, I wept for how lucky we were to have good, solid, loyal friends like George, and how chuffed Sona would have been, to have George at his side to say the final good bye.

We had to wait a long while for the shops to open in the nearby Padappai town where firewood and other funeral pyre materials had to be bought. More time passed as the funeral pyre had to be laboriously constructed by the villagers.

Finally, they were ready. It was now 1 pm. The sun burnt hot and fiercely with gusts of wind. Accompanied by shrieks from the women, who usually are barred by custom from proceeding further, Sona's refrigerated Sleeping Beauty casket was wheeled out of his apartment.

A paltan of about 15 solidly built Thambis lifted Sona out of the refrigerated casket, then down from his penthouse apartment to a gaudily decked out open hearse, which was a cross between a Mahabharat charriot from a Tamil mythological potboiler, and an Election Special Rath Yatra of our warring DMK parties.



Sona was laid to rest on the top of the flower decked bier, while his wife, Nika, and daughter, Shonali, sat on the steps of the flower decked celestial charriot. Rose petals were liberally strewn while Hemu, George, I and many villagers, males only, accompanied the charriot on foot.



I was pleased. Sona would have been happy. He loved pomp and pageantry. Going out in style, lying on top of a flower decked charriot, with half the village following in his wake, was something Sona would definitely have approved of.



Walking in the burning Sun, we walked out of the resort complex and onto the kucha village road until in a patch of scrubland we came to the pyre.

I gazed dumbstruck at the laboriously constructed pyre, which had obviously been made with much skill and expertise, but it was unlike any funeral pyre I had previously seen, and I had seen plenty.



Firstly, it wasn't all wood. I was horrified to see that the bottom layers consisted of old tyres. Burning tyres I associated with street protests and black smelly smoke!! Then I grinned. Sona always loved cars as did his son, Somi Jr, who was sadly stuck in far away Toronto. Father and son were happiest talking cars, or even better, driving into posh showrooms all dressed up, pretending to buy those over priced four wheels, which they would take out for a spin and return the car with a trembling salesman who had often wet his pants at their high speed skid antics.. "Just testing the brakes, old chap.."

Sona, would have approved of a pyre made of tyres!

What the Hell, Get the Show rolling, Sona would have hollered.

And so the show began.

With more wailing from the ladies, and grunts from the Thumbi Paltan which had to be reinforced, Sona was placed, swaddled in a Toga like bedsheet, on top of the pyre of old tyres and logs of wood.

I remembered Sona's 5th Standard class play, in Middle School, in 1971, (I was in the 7th), when Sona played King Midas, he was similarly caprisioned in a toga. Rags, Ravi Khote, was feeding Sona porridge as Midas couldn't feed himself because everything he touched, turned to gold. Sona, ever greedy, was thrilled at being fed porridge on stage. "Mama, they are feeding me real porridge in my school play", he informed my annoyed mother, who had tartly enquired whether he was fed fake porridge at home.



Dilip Panniker feeding Soni as King Midas, 1971

Sarcasm had no effect on Sona. Food was food. It had to be supplied liberally and fast. This, Ravi Khote, to his misfortune, forgot. He dithered in feeding Sona the porridge at the requisite speed whereby Sona lost his patience, and caught Rags in an armlock on stage whereby Rags fed Sona porridge superfast while being throttled while the audience roared.

More was to come. Sona, as all those who knew him, knew that he was fascinated by shit. Scatology was Sona's all time favourite subject on which he could effortlessly hold forth for hours, analyzing every whiff, fart, flavour, fragrance, frequency, colour, consistency and a myriad other variables which would put a path lab to shame.

The villagers now produced bags of dried, flattened cow dung cakes which were distributed like prasada amongst us. We reverently placed the dried dung cakes, totally odour free, (Sona would have been disappointed as he liked them pungent), all over Sona.



Raw rice was then scooped and released in three handfulls by each of us on Sona's mountainous middle. Again, Sona would have approved, as he loved rice, which he religiously devoured like a pucca Englishman, with fork and spoon only.

Chilled milk, another favourite of Sona's, was also poured by the family, including George, at the corners of the pyre.

Finally, a huge bale of hay was produced and the hay was spread all over Sona until he disappeared completely under a mountain of hay.



Then, Shonali lit agarbattis, (incense sticks), which were placed at the foot of the pyre.

Then squares of white wax and camphor were placed strategically on top of the pyramid of hay, which Shonali lit, and suddenly the hay was alight and burning.



Everyone walked away quickly. We were told not to tarry, not to look back, but to just go.



L-R: George Elango SM, Rabindra & Hemindra Hazari

So off we went.

The next day, the villagers delivered Sona's ashes in a Kalash.



We are waiting for Sona's son, Somindra Jr, 29, to arrive from Toronto on Friday, when we will decide where we will immerse Sona's ashes.

Mahabalipuram, one of Sona's favourite watering holes, may be considered.

I am deeply concerned, however, at my beloved Sona arriving at Yama's threshold parched and famished.

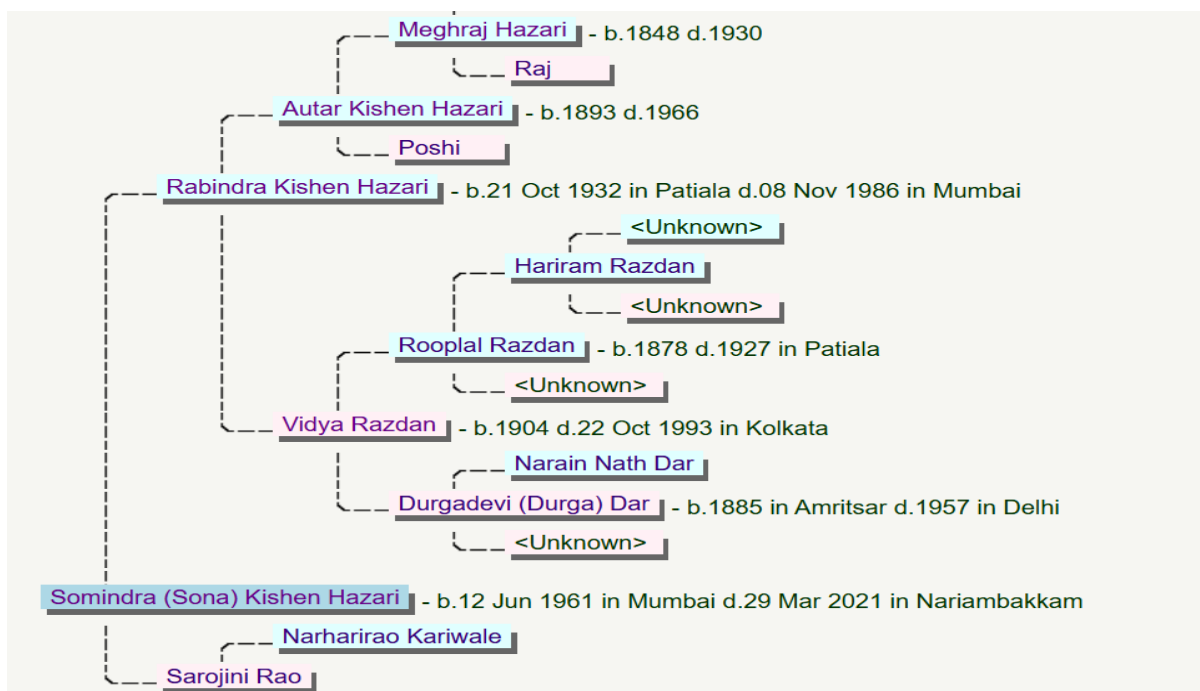
I will hence recommend to our family that the Kalash containing Sona's ashes be filled with Sona's favourite Old Monk Rum and Thums Up and maybe some of his favourite chips as well, so that when Sona meets up with Pal Yama, they have a rip roaring rum soaked Mother of All Parties together.

So, *Mes Amis*, remember Sona with a tumbler of Rum and Thums Up in hand, eats galore, and dance music playing, for Sona lived to eat, drink, crack jokes and be merry, and that is the way to honour Sona!!



April 2, 2021. Somi Jr arrives from Toronto after 3 years. Raising a toast to Somi Hazari. L-R Hemindra (Hemu), Shonali, Rabindra (Ravi) Jr, Varanika, Kiron Kumar and Somindra Jr.

Ancestor Pedigree Chart



Papa, My Hero By Somindra Kishen Hazari Jr.



April 1, 2021

Air India Flight AI-118 Toronto-Delhi, Flying Somewhere Over Russia

Your lessons on life were well thought
 You loved me even though we fought
 Even in silence you understood me
 Close my eyes and a bigger picture I see
 You showed me how to live with pain
 Making others laugh was always your gain
 Clean shaven, and smartly dressed
 You always knew how to impress
 You commanded the respect of the room
 Even though you didn't like to broom
 You picked yourself up when others brought you down and showed them all
 Who is the king of this town
 You were called Sona, a Hindi word for gold
 But I remember you for being bold
 Not only did you show me how to survive
 But also discovered my passion which is to drive
 You made us laugh even when we were angry with you
 How you did this? I still have no clue
 You were one who would love to eat
 While your conversations were always a treat
 I still don't know how you put up with life
 Looking after two kids and a wife
 We would circle around you and listen to your story
 Funny, light hearted and nothing gory
 You always said what was on your mind

Even when others gave you the grind
Eat, sleep, greet and meat
The only thing you couldn't tolerate was a cheat
People would always call on you for a favor
And you showed us how this improves our own behaviour
You knew that I was never really good with words
That I am an animal lover except for birds
We loved our moms you and I
We get upset when they cry
Simple, elegant and true
If only I had more time with you
I didn't know where time flew
As the distance between us grew
For you it was day and for me it was night
At least we didn't have to fight
There were times when I needed to take a tough stand
My intuition was always guided by your hand
Learn from my mistakes was always what you will always say
Thanks to you, in the mornings I now pray
You made me realize my full potential and push myself to strive
Oh, how I wish we could go for one more drive.
A world pandemic came about and we had to realize
About all the necessary things and how to prioritize
We celebrated at the thought of my residency
And I planned to go home and have my loved ones around me

Then one morning I got the call
That shattered me and caused me to fall
For the first time in my life I lost all control
Lost my fighting spirit and my emotions raged
The inner fighting animal was caged
I tossed, turned, wailed and cried
I just couldn't believe that you have died
Will time ever make me heal?
The next day was just unreal
I know now that your laid to rest
But I just couldn't get over this pain in my chest
You will always be in my heart and thought
No matter how often we fought
So from now on no matter how things can get bad
I will always be proud of you my dad
Nothing may ever be the same
As I carry on your name.

Good Bye My Brother, Sona by Hemindra Kishen Hazari

Rabindra Kishen Hazari Jr. edited and contributed to this article

April 15, 2021



Sona and I over the Years

We lost our father, Rabindra Kishen Hazari, in 1986, when I was in my final year (TYBA) in St. Xavier's College, Bombay. I was just short of being 21 years old. The suddenness of Dad's death, (he was only 54), was repeated 35 years later when on Holi, 29th March 2021, Yama embraced my elder brother, Somindra Kishen Hazari, ("Sona" to his family and "Somi" to his friends). Sona was 59 years old.



The Family Hazari. February 11, 1984, Calcutta. L-R: R K Hazari, Rabindra (Vicky) Jr., Saroj, Somindra (Sona) & Hemindra (Hemu)

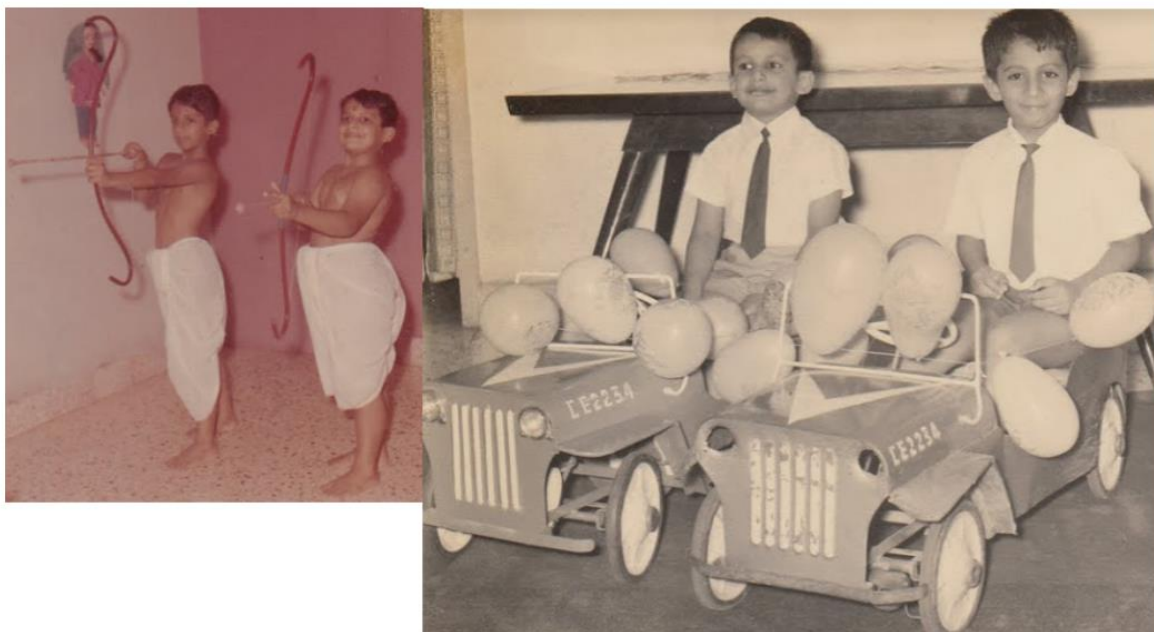
My eldest brother, Rabindra Kishen Hazari Jr, Ravi, (or “Vicky” as we call him at home), wrote a moving [tribute](#) to Sona, while Sona’s son, Somindra Kishen Hazari Jr., penned an emotional [poem](#) on his flight from Toronto to India. Sunil Khanna, (“Kheru”), Sona’s schoolmate, modified the Cathedral and John Connon school song to a rousing [ballad](#) in Sona’s memory. Sona leaves a painful void in our lives and is survived by our mother, Saroj, wife, Varanika, daughter, Shonali, son, Somi Jr., and innumerable friends and relatives, who are all shocked at his abrupt departure.

In 1964, when he was less than three years old, Sona miraculously survived a burst appendix, with gangrene ravaging his small body resulting in massive surgical wounds which erased his navel with horrific scars which covered his abdomen. Sona, lacked an inner stomach wall, and hence had to wear an abdominal belt throughout his childhood.



Rare photo of Sona as a baby with his navel

My father had warned my eldest brother, Vicky, in his incessant fights with Sona, that he could hit Sona anywhere but never in his stomach. My two elder brothers were notorious fighters. They fought constantly. They fought in our home, in the homes of our relatives and friends, in parks and playgrounds and just about everywhere. At home, chairs were smashed as they ripped into each other. My mother would scream in panic but my father, puffing away at his pipe, enjoyed the fisticuffs, egging both sons on, interfering only when the furniture was at risk of getting damaged. Only then, would Dad swiftly stop the fight.



Mid to late 1960s

My elder brothers, (two years separated them), were called “Laurel and Hardy”. Vicky was slim, supple and wiry while Sona was always big and heavy like Yogi Bear. Looking at the pair, it appeared that Vicky never stood a chance. Sona’s fighting strategy was to knock Vicky to the ground and then simply squash him by sitting on him. In contrast, Vicky kept dancing out of reach, hitting Sona with fast, vicious punches and kicks using his skill as a gymnast combined with a street fighter’s cunning. In all the bloody fights I witnessed, the honours were even with Vicky having the edge.

When Vicky and Sona were not fighting each other, they ganged up and thrashed everybody else. They soon became notorious as “the Hazardous Hazaris”, an accolade which they mumbled proudly with puffed chests and bloody noses.



Left: On Sona’s wedding day, April 2, 1989. Right: Around 2010-2015

As the age gap between Sona and me was 4 ½ years, my physical fights were restricted to Sona and never with Vicky. All my fights with Sona were completely one-sided and they all ended with me running wailing to my mother for protection.

Sona was famous for his hilarious one-liners. I was the perpetual victim of Sona's jokes and taunts. Once, when I had a particularly painful abscess on my backside, which made sitting very painful, Sona, gleefully introduced me to all and sundry as "the boy with a boil on his bum!". My anguish, was Sona's delight, as Sona liked nothing better than roaring with laughter at his own jokes.

Sona's fond nicknames for me were, "Slave" and "Dog". I retaliated by calling him "Pig". Sona was rather porcine in appearance and habit; as hygiene and cleanliness were never Sona's strong points. Visiting relatives were aghast at our terms of endearment for one another. They sternly coached us to address the elder brother with proper respect as "*Bhaiya*". This made both my elder brothers hoot with horror as they vehemently objected at being confused with "*Doodhwala bhaiyas*"; the Bombaywala's derisive nickname for men from the Cow belt.

One bright summer morning, my mother discovered some pictorial magazines hidden in my brothers' room. The treasured magazines were, of course, promptly confiscated by an apoplectic Mamasan. Mum flipped out and screamed herself hoarse ending with the dreaded threat, "*I shall speak to your father about this.*"

Dad, though usually quite lovable, packed a wallop in his open-handed slap which was destined for your face. Just when you thought that the first slap was bad enough, he followed through with a terrific backhand smash. Dad rarely slapped only once but was a combo slapper with a formidable forehand-backhand combination.

The next morning, both my brothers sat silently at the breakfast table, glumly watching Dad sip his tea and peruse the *Economic Times*, fatalistically awaiting Dad's celebrated combo slaps. After carefully noting that Mum had exited the dining room, Dad looked up and said, "*Your mother has informed me of your reading habits. She has handed me your magazines. In future, when you get such magazines, kindly extend the courtesy of promptly sharing them with me.*"

Thereafter, as per the Concordat arrived at between father and sons, we faithfully shared with Dad whatever magazines we got. Likewise, whenever Dad returned from his foreign trips, he dutifully handed over the latest magazines for his boys. In school, Dad became a celebrity as Sona and I became the librarians of our respective classes for the treasured, well-thumbed issues which Dad so thoughtfully provided. In the years to come, whenever we recalled those lovely ladies, we sang hallelujahs of praise to Dad for spurring us on in the pursuit of happiness.

Hailing from a hard core carnivorous family, my mother, a Tulu speaking Mangalorean, who loved chicken and fish, and Dad, a renegade Kashmiri Pandit, who relished mutton, beef and pork, our world revolved around non vegetarian food.



HEMINDRA HAZARI

Our mom had a tradition of dressing each of us as Krishna. But one look at Sona and a relative observed, "Yeh Krishna nahi, yeh to Bhim hai."

Sona, ever the Glorious Glutton, was obsessed with food. Always hungry, with the size, appetite and temperament of Bhim, Sona jealously watched my mother doling out portions of meat or chicken at mealtimes, when he would erupt with rage, accusing Mum of favouring me, with the choicest pieces of meat. Sona bitterly complained to Mum with all seriousness; *"You only believe in odd numbers, 1 and 3; I am the even number 2, so I get treated like your step son"*. For several years, Sona caustically reminded me, *"As I was served only bones, I became tough and strong, while you are soft and weak as you were fed the choicest cuts of meat!"*

Sona, despite wearing an abdominal belt, secretly enrolled for boxing in school without informing our parents. Fortunately, he did not suffer any injury which would have been catastrophic as he did not have any abdominal wall. In the 8th standard, Sona underwent a major four hour surgery whereby multiple hernias were corrected and his stomach muscles were reconstructed. Sona no longer had to wear an abdominal belt.

The surgery magically transformed Sona who lost his big paunch and he could now play rough games with impunity. Sona was now dashing handsome, with a physique resembling Michaelangelo's David and he was constantly surrounded by a bevy of girls who fawned all over him. Sona's Harem was Sona's Pride and Brothers' Envy.



Early to mid 1980s

While Sona and I regularly fought and Ravi occasionally ribbed me, the rules were clear: only my brothers and nobody else could tease me. No other boys, senior or bigger than me, dared bully me as my brothers suddenly descended on them with fraternal fury. However, when it came to boys of my own age and size, they did not interfere. Instead, they coached me in boxing, in which they both excelled. My brothers taught me to fight well and hard with no quarter asked nor given. Non-violence was never an option. The lessons in fisticuffs came handy. Decades later, when I tread the lonely path of exposing the powerful, the corrupt, the greedy, and the incompetent, in India's revered financial world, I was never really alone, as in my corner my guardian brothers always protected my back. Taking on the high, the mighty and the privileged never deterred us. Whenever the occasion demanded, we stood up to be counted and fought the good fight. We were, after all, the Hazardous Hazaris.



February 20, 1984. The Hazari brothers

In Cathedral School in those days, boxing started in the 7th standard. The boxing ring was traditionally erected in the senior school quadrangle with screaming students lining the balconies on three sides looking down on the ring, reminiscent of the blood thirsty Roman mobs of the gladiatorial arenas.

When I entered the 7th standard, I jokingly told my brothers that I will not box. My brothers were appalled. Vicky sternly rebuked me stating, *"Your real education is not in the classroom. It is when you are blooded in the boxing ring and are trampled and torn on the Rugby field."*



*Cathedral & John Connon School Boxing team, 1978. L-R. Sitting: Sanjay Ghosh, Mr Pal, Sanjay Khanna (Boxing Captain), Mr Wally Abrahams (deceased), Juddah Gabbe (deceased). Standing: Phiroze Dubash, Vikram Malani, Kevin Malaney, **Somindra Hazari** (deceased)*

And so it was that I was well blooded in the Inter-House Boxing Tournament. Sona was in my corner as my second. Vicky had already passed out of school. In the first round, I was hammered hard; my face being a mess of blood, sweat and saliva. As the bell sounded for the end of the first round, I returned to my corner, bloodied, bruised and in shock. In those thirty seconds between rounds, Sona pumped me with courage and cunning, and in the next two rounds, I gave as good as I got, eventually losing narrowly in a closely fought fight. Later, Sona counselled me, *"You panicked initially when you got hit. It is only when you get hit, that you learn. You learnt. Don't worry. The lessons of the Ring; are the lessons of life."*

Years later, when I left Cathedral School for St Xavier's College, I returned to the boxing ring in our school quadrangle to cheer my former classmates. The school boxing captain, [Arjun Erry](#), a fine technical boxer, was about to commence his bout. Knowing how butterflies flutter furiously in a boxer's stomach before the bell sounds, I sauntered to his corner and said *"Erry...When the bell rings, you hit first, you hit hard and you keep hitting."* That's what Erry did and that's how he won his bout. These were the lessons of the Ring; learnt hard and

well with blackened eyes and bloodied lips, which were to guide me as a beacon in my future career as a research analyst.

Sona had a heavy hand and boy did I know it well. My last physical fight with Sona was when I was in Junior College. I took the family car, a classic 1961 FIAT 1100, BMF 7658, which was the love of Sona's life, without informing Sona. Worse, I came back late and on seeing Sona frothing at missing his date, I made the cardinal mistake of laughing in his face. Sona shrieked with rage and rushed at me like a maddened bull elephant in musth. I thought I stood a chance as I was at the peak of my fitness but then so was he. Sona's right hook slammed into my jaw. My head snapped back bouncing off the wall behind me and I was stunned, Dad sprang to my defence, lashing Sona with his celebrated forehand-backhand combo slaps, restraining Sona from administering me the coup de grace.

Sona continued with boxing in Sydenham College participating in the Bombay University Inter-College Boxing Tournament. Vicky was very excited and rushed back from Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi to coach Sona. In the final bout, Sona out fought his opponent to be crowned the heavy weight boxing champion of Bombay University. The following year, an over confident Sona did not bother to practice at all. Instead, Sona kept preening himself as Sylvester Stallone in "Rocky", whose lisp he faithfully mimicked along with the dark aviator goggles which he tirelessly wore all day and all night. Vicky could not come from JNU to act as Sona's second. In a keenly contested fight, Sona lost his heavy weight boxing crown but broke his opponent's nose.

While I gave up fisticuffs after my last scrap with Sona, both my elder brothers, even in their late-fifties, remained incorrigible, gleefully wading into fights with fists flying, baying with fury, the blood lust burning bright in their eyes.



1980s. L-R: Hemindra, Mom & Sona. Sona's trophies in the background

In school and college, Sona was a party animal, rarely to be seen at home. It is not for nothing that Amma, our quick-witted maternal grandmother, nicknamed Sona as *“Road Inspector.”* Sona’s constant partying and being out late with friends annoyed my mother no end. One late morning, Mum angrily inquired, *“What time did you come home?”*

Pat came Sona’s reply, *“I was home early.”*

“What nonsense Sona, don’t lie to me. I was up till past midnight and you had not come home.”

Sona smoothly replied, *“I am not lying Mama. I came home early...early in the morning.”*



Around 2000-2010. L-R: Shonali, Sona, Somi Jr., Varanika

Marriage changeth the Man or so they say. For Sona, marriage meant acquiring a wife who was his unwitting accomplice. Post marriage, Sona went on an eating binge whereby his weight peaked at 215 kilos. Sona, however, remained surprisingly quick on his feet. During a stay at the Taj Malabar in Cochin, with his petite Anglo-Indian wife, Varanika, Sona was in the loo, performing lustily on the Throne, when there was a thunderous crack followed by a roar of rage from Sona. Alarmed, Varanika rushed into the loo to find that the western commode had shattered with jagged shards intermingled with crap all over the floor. Sona was miraculously unhurt but was howling with rage. While Varanika stood thunderstruck wondering how to clean up the foul mess, Sona quickly cleaned himself and rushed out. The next thing she knew was that the hotel manager was in the room with a formally dressed Sona was hollering at him. Pointing to Varanika, he said, *“Look at her size. I can understand if it had been me on the pot, but no, it was her on the pot, and yet your damn pot broke!”*

There was something obviously wrong with the quality of the commodes at the Taj Malabar. In the span of the next two days, Sona smashed a further two commodes. However, each time

he claimed that his dear wife had been perched on the commode when it mysteriously fell to pieces. And hence it came to pass, that Sona earned for his wife the title of “*Commode Breaker*”.

Based in Madras, Sona was a familiar figure in the South Indian Chambers of Commerce with his extensive business contacts with Sri Lanka, Southeast Asian and European countries. A frequent speaker at events he elaborated on the need for growing trade between India and neighbouring nations.



Mid 2000s

Sona's generosity was as wide as his girth which was massive. When I went through difficult times, as I was continually exposing powerful corporate cronies, Sona helped me tide over this tough period. Sona was always there, ever generous with gifts for both Vicky and me, for which Sona never kept tabs. Sona's visits to Bombay were like the first rains following a drought. He came laden with gifts for family and friends and our home filled with laughter as he regaled us with his latest antics. Sona was a One Man Movie, with his stories projected on a 70 mm screen in Technicolour and Dolby sound. Sona played his role of prankster and Court Jester with full zest; remaining at heart the Honourable Schoolboy who never grew old.

Mum, Vicky and I were knocked out when we heard that Sona had expired on Holi. It was unbelievable. It was not possible that our dear indestructible, ever playful Sona had left us so quietly and so suddenly. How could he leave us so? Numb with disbelief, we left Mum in Bombay, and Vicky and I flew to Madras. There we choked on seeing our beloved Sona entombed in a glass covered refrigerated casket. I recalled how Sona had found humour even

in the most sombre of moments. Many years earlier, when accompanied by his langoti friend and fellow prankster, Arun Rao, (aka Rho), they attended the funeral of a colleague lying in an open coffin. As they stooped over the body to pay their last respects, Sona turned to Rho and enquired, *"Do you know why cotton is stuffed in his nose?"*

When Rho pleaded ignorance, Sona replied, *"To stop the smoke from coming out,"* as the gentleman was a chain-smoker throughout his life.



The 3 Stooges from School. Visit to Haji Ali, Bombay, 2009. L-R: Arun Rao, Somi Hazari, Phillip Thomas Kovilakath. "We converted to this religion but converted back just before Happy Hour"

Death is not a pretty sight but as I gazed with tear soaked eyes at Sona's face for the last time, all I could see was the goodness in him for he was my elder brother who loved me fiercely and I too loved him with all my heart



April 5, 2021. Immersion of Sona's ashes, Juhu beach, Mahabalipuram. L-R: Somi Jr, Shonali, Hemu, Varanika, Vicky

SAROJINI RAO (1929 -, Post marriage Sarojini Rabindra Hazari) married to Rabindra Kishen Hazari

The Case of the Mesmerising Mother by Rabindra Kishen Hazari Jr.

April, 27, 2021



As Mum tested positive for Covid last week; we have been inundated with queries about how Mum is doing, and so I thought I would write the following:

Mum is at home with me. She is stable. Mum personally monitors her O2 and blood sugar levels on her own.

I hover around her like a pesky bumble bee screeching at her to wear her mask, while Mum looks at me reproachfully as the errant schoolboy who never learnt any manners.

She is right, of course. Manners were never my strong point. Mums with narrowed eyes immediately target your many failings which are unerringly brought to your immediate attention to make you wriggle with discomfort.

I have vast experience over the last 61 years and more of Mum inspired wriggling discomfort.

As we are both Virgos, according to the rest of the family, our tempers and temperament and war like disposition are identical. This is news to both Mum and me as we do not recognize any similarity whatsoever between us.

Last year, at the start of the lockdown in March 2020, I insisted that Mum shift from her own apartment across Peddar Road to mine.

Last week on returning to Bombay from Madras, I was apprehensive on learning that our housekeeper had fever and a sore throat which she had passed on to Mum. The tests showed that our 75 year old housekeeper was negative for Covid, while Mum, all of 92 years, tested

positive. The housekeeper immediately fled remembering to take her salary but forgetting about the mess in the kitchen which I cleared. Mum's personal maid who came from outside also immediately stopped coming. We were all alone. Just Mother and Son. No other relatives. Worse, no servants. None at all. Not even those servants who come and go. By Indian upper middle class standards this was a horror story.

I told Mum that we can shift her to a hospital or hire help from hospitals or agencies but all such suggestions were summarily rejected. Mum insisted that we will manage without any housekeeper, who ran off, or nurse, who was not needed. End of discussion.

Not having any maid nor any housekeeper or any household help has been a challenge but Mum has been incredible.



Hemindra with Mum on her 90th birthday, August 24, 2019.

My youngest brother, Hemindra, is a constant support, his elder son, Akhil, stayed with Mum, while Hemu and I were away; my sister in law, Nika, niece and nephew, Shonali and Somi Jr., call constantly. As do many relatives and friends. Mum has been wary of what she eats but she greatly relished the shudh Gujarati tiffin meals which Viral so lovingly sent from his own home.



L-R: Akhil, Shonali, Mom & Arav, August 25, 2018



Somi Jr., December 2013

There is no TV in Mum's room, which is now her prison, which she does not seem to miss at all.

Mum is very meticulous and self-contained. She writes everything down in different note books very systematically. Phone numbers are all written down in her diary. None of this nonsense of tapping contacts on the wretched mobile which she views with suspicion as a sly student who is not to be trusted. So, into her notebooks are recorded readings, medicines, advisories, accounts and admonitions. Everything. Or at least, something of everybody of note.

My collection of ex-wives used to freak at my habit of taking copious notes in my pocket notebooks. I used to politely request them to please rewind in slow motion their litany of complaints against me so that I could record their grievances more fully but for some odd reason it would only aggravate matters and send them ballistic. They should have seen my Mum. I am nothing, just a novice compared to her; while Mum, of course, is Mother Superior.

Mum hobbles all over the quarantined seclusion of her room, which struggles to contain her, holding her rubber tipped steel stick like a Field Marshal's Baton, while she inspects the massed ranks of my floor to ceiling book shelves for books which she considers worthy of her time and attention.

Most fail muster. Most reek of gunpowder and shot, spear, sword and shield, the blood and gore of battlefields littered through time and space.

However, occasionally, Mum finds something in my library which she fancies.

Mum's hot favourite by far is not Shakespeare or Thomas Hardy or other similar boring authors which English Literature Departments like the sort she once headed, have been inflicting on generations of long suffering students from time immemorial.

Mum's hot favourite is Erle Stanley Gardner.

Erle Stanley Gardner is the pseudonym of a very successful California based criminal trial attorney who made his reputation defending immigrant Chinese clients in the 1930s, who faced terrible racist prejudice and persecution.

Gardner wrote the celebrated series on Perry Mason, a criminal trial attorney, who always succeeds in not only getting his client acquitted but also exposes the real murderer.

Mum absolutely adores Perry Mason. With single minded devotion, Mum has been going like a Panzer Leader through my entire Perry Mason collection, which I mostly bought second hand on pavements. I used to study Perry Mason novels from cover to cover as a 18 year old student litigant in St Xavier's College in 1978-79, as these novels gave fascinating tips in advising my lawyers on what questions to ask in cross examining my Jesuit opponents, and later, when I was cross examined myself.

Perry Mason is brilliant on cross examination technique especially of eye witness testimony which is devilishly difficult to contradict. Perry Mason novels are full of realistic scenarios

obviously drawn from the author's experience as a trial attorney, which were a great inspiration in my own student case and in many professional cases much later when I became a lawyer.

Seeing Mum *blitzkreig* my Perry Mason collection brought forth a wave of nostalgia for those years in St Xaviers' College, where both my parents had studied and taught, had fallen in love, courted and married, and where I too, and my youngest brother, Hemindra, had studied as students.

Living with Mum last year, and this year, has been a revelation. Mum is a rock and is remarkably perceptive. I was soon reminded that her eagle eye and x-ray vision missed nothing and that there was so much that I could and did learn from her.

I was particularly enchanted by her stories of growing up as a 3 year old girl in Mangalore in the early 1930s; their Catholic, Muslim, Jain, Billava, Bunt, Saraswat, Malyali and other community neighbours; of how the family migrated to Bombay and lived in Walkeshwar, Girgaum, Opera House and finally, Gamdevi, in the 1930s before World War 2; of life and festivals of the different communities in their neighbourhoods and of the trams, tram lines and tram stations which defined Bombay.

It was like rewinding an old sepia toned film of Bombay from the 1930s to the 1960s.

I am grateful, very grateful, for these precious times with Mum. These are privileged moments. I wish I had recorded her reminiscences which are remarkably lucid and evocative of a bygone age.

As with much else, there is so much that we can learn from our Mum's.



Mum's 90th birthday, August 24, 2019. L-R Ravi Jr, Shonali, Varanika, Sona (who died on March 29, 2021) & Mum

I have to learn from Mum on how to handle grief with poise and dignity.

That I have not been able to do at all.

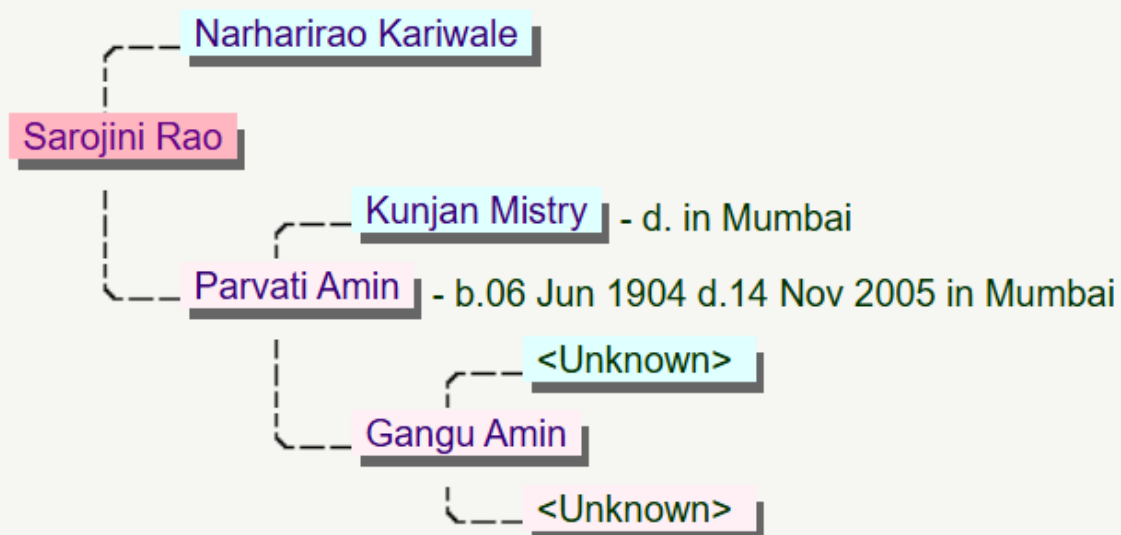


Sona's birthday, June 12, 2017.

HEMINDRA HAZARI



Ancestor Pedigree Chart



GROUP CAPTAIN (R) AJIT GURTU (1947-), son of Lalita Razdan and Anand Kishen Gurtu



I was born in Patiala then known as PEPSU (Patiala and East Punjab States Union, was a state of India that existed from 1948 to 1956, formed by uniting eight princely states, with its capital at Patiala. It was eventually merged with the larger state of Punjab in 1956) just after Independence. My maternal grandfather was Pandit Roop Lal Razdan who came to Patiala from Lahore and was in Patiala State service as Foreign Service advisor to the then Maharaja Bhupendra Singh who was famous for keeping 108 queens. He was adept in 4 languages English, Urdu, Persian and Gurmukhi.

My grandmother was Durgadevi Dar (post marriage Suhagrani Razdan) daughter of Narayan Das Dar.



Durga Devi Dar (post marriage Suhagrani Razdan)

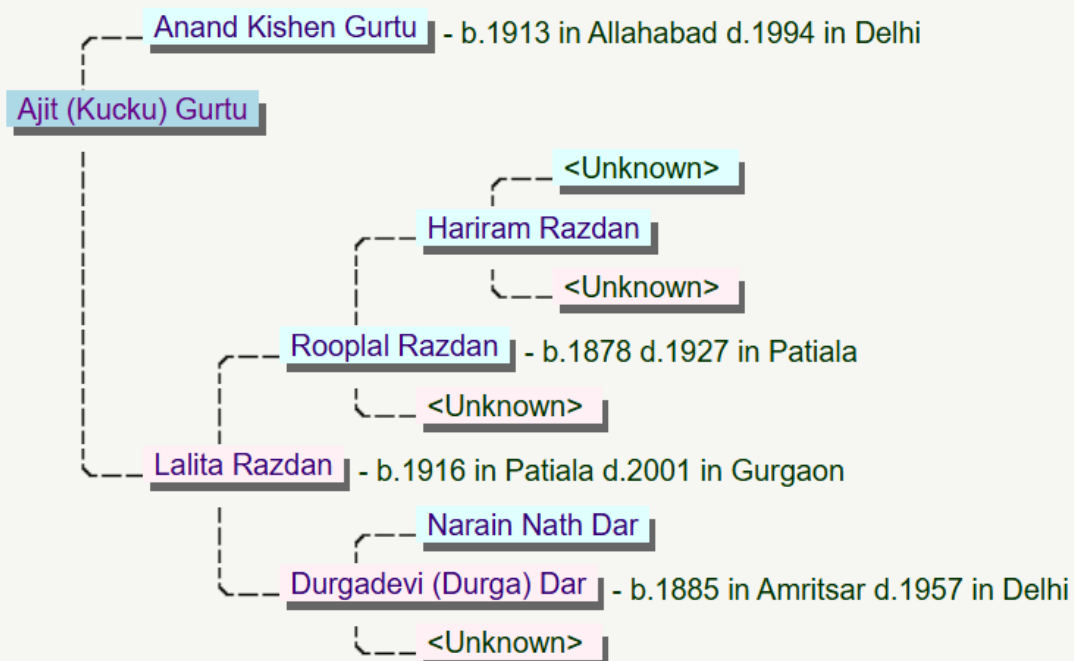
My father Pandit Anand Krishna Gurtu was the son of Pandit Raj Krishna, son of Maharaj kishan s/o Karta Kishan s/o Mehtab Rai S/o Gulab Rai S/o Narayna Das who came to Oudh in UP in 1795 from Habba Kadal (locality in the old city of Srinagar) in Kashmir.

My grandfather's brothers were Pt Sri Krishna Gurtu of Gwalior and Harikrishna Gurtu also from Gwalior.

My grandmother was Lilawati Gurtu nee Lilawati Nehru daughter of Pt Bihari Lal Nehru whose younger brother was Brij Lal Nehru father of B K Nehru and Ratan Kumar Nehru.



Ancestor Pedigree Chart



Contact Hemindra Hazari hemindrahazari@gmail.com, www.hemindrahazari.com

Click on this link for the [Hazari, Razdan and Amin Family Tree](#)