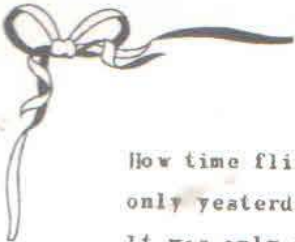


MY FRIEND NAGAM



How time flies! It was some fifty years ago that Nagam and I met and it seems only yesterday! I had known him briefly for some time and then he disappeared! It was only when he returned from Australia with a degree in Business Management that we got together again. In those early years Business Management was not a much favoured subject for study. That Nagam undertook it shows how far sighted Nagam was even in those times!

Then, once again, we separated. I went abroad in 1959 and returned only in 1966 to find a changed Mumbai. Everything seemed to have gone to pieces for a young man - well, not all that young! - who had spent seven years abroad and lived in beautiful cities. Coming back to the dirt and squalor of Bombay was an emotional shock.

Such was our friendship that Nagam was among the first I contacted. Both felt the need to do something to improve matters. We agreed that it was better to light a candle than to swear at the darkness. From that understanding sprang our wish to do something positive. It was to lead us to form what we called The Indian Centre for Encouraging Excellence. We knew that we won't be able to remake the world in a month, a year, a decade... But we felt that if only we could do something to encourage excellence in all fields of life, we would have done something worthwhile.

Nagam was the inspiration behind the Centre. He put in his time, his hard-earned money and all his enthusiasm to get the Centre going. We held public meetings. We arranged a couple of seminars. On my part I must have addressed several Clubs, Schools and educational institutions on just one subject; Excellence. Nagam even instituted an Award for men who had achieved excellence in their particular fields. He conceived the idea and he paid for it out of his pockets. His commitment was total.

I was out of India again 1969 and only returned in 1978 and once again we got together. I noticed that Nagam's enthusiasm was as great as ever! Age had not lessened his enthusiasm; he was the same young man whom I knew in the forties, full of mature ideas and a willingness to put/through in practice. The great thing about Nagam is that not only is he a creative thinker, but an active participant. Lighting a candle comes naturally to him. He would rather do something positive - even if it is just writing a letter to a newspaper - than sitting back and mourning the decay around him.

For me he is a model of what a friend is and should be; and even more, what a good citizen should be. He has been a great support in times of distress. He goes about his work quietly, without any fuss, never wishing to attract attention to himself. For any good work done he would ~~rather~~ rather give credit to someone else. That is second nature to him.

On his eightieth birthday I salute him. May he live long to lighten the darkness around us by lighting more candles.

M. V. Kamath

*M V Kamath*

