PHOENIX

TRIUMPH OF LIFE
(A BIOGRAPHY)

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Dr. M.A.Afzal Farooq

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my beloved mother Alhaj Mazida Begum, an embodiment of all saintly attributes whose selfless love, unconditional support, immense forbearance and long companionship with my father Alhaj Wazed Ali helped him emerge triumphant in all the odds, adversities and challenges that life threw to him at different points of time.

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FOREWORD

Great minds are born great. People born with silver spoon in mouth are undoubtedly blessed and when they carve a niche for themselves and become world leaders and great figures in course of time, it is little unexpected or least surprising because such minds inherit a predictable greatness. However, when someone with a life characterized by struggles and strife without inheriting a remarkable background makes a headway in life and becomes known to the society after firmly establishing himself is far more inspiring and adorable. It is fairly easy to learn to swim with the aid of expert trainers, but learning how to swim all alone with one's own volition, will power and perseverance, makes a better and more remarkable swimmer. Appropriate guidance in appropriate time proves beneficial for a young mind but when a young mind makes himself or herself visible in the society outstandingly without any one to guide him or her, that proves awe-inspiring. The biography at hand is a modest attempt on the part of Dr. M.A. Afzal Farooq, the youngest son of Late Alhaj Wazed Ali brilliantly portraying the self- made man's rise in life through thick and thin. From a doomed life Wazed Ali had risen to the zenith of name and fame giving a firm footing to his family in the society. The odds that he encountered in life and the way he galvanized those odds to his favour go to prove his mettle. I appreciate a son's unfailing love and respect for his father and Dr. M.A. Afzal Farooq's minute observation of his father's life, flawless and faithful depiction of events that made Wazed Ali adorable and exemplary for upcoming generations. His patience, perseverance, calmness in adversities, intrepidity, inner urge for bettering human condition and above all, his humanism are worth emulation.

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Life is fraught with surprises: sometimes pleasant and at times unpleasant. It has its own scheme designed in an unperceivable way by the Universal Designer which no scientific or technological developments can affect. My friend Wazed Ali's successful surgery removing the 29 mm stone from the gall bladder at AIG, Hyderabad was a welcome news for me. His children's conscientious efforts to restore him to health were ephemerally answered; but what happened within one and a half month after his surgery proves God's invincible design which no human intervention could alter. His life could not be prolonged perhaps he was to live the span of time predestined for him. As I write this 'Foreword' in the troubled time of all pervading Covid-19 Pandemic when one hears only about deaths all around putting humanity into the vortex of utter depression and helplessness, I realize that death is nothing new and every death deserves a peaceful space. While one goes through this book, will discover that my friend, the hero of this book embraced a remarkably peaceful death after a self- prediction about the time and manner in which he would die. I was keenly aware of the spiritual height he had attained because all his conversations with me inevitably ended on a note of limitless trust on the Omnipotent that allowed me enough space to gauge the profundity of his spirituality. His spiritual growth and attainment impressed me and drew me irresistibly towards him.

A post-human and post-modern world that witnessed devastatingly dehumanizing trends, forges grounds to presume that human condition is precarious and entails great uncertainties. Death is the ultimate reality of life. The book is a tribute to Wazed Ali embodying most of the incidents that happened in his life. Though my friend was not a man of high social standing, he, as evidenced by this book, could inculcate values in his children, instill confidence in them and set them free in the world of competition to fight out their own space. Indeed a visionary, he left an indelible impression on his son Dr. M.A. Afzal Farooq whose minute observations about his father's life and experiences demonstrate the degree of impact he left on the son. Dr. Farooq's frequent discussions about his father and his struggles, allowed me enough ground to fathom the deep seated respect of the son for the father. I was overwhelmed,

and could not help appreciating the father-son relationship—the type of which is sadly becoming rare today.

The stormy adversities as well as the hilarious aspects of my friend's life are faithfully presented in the book and thus the biography satisfies the precondition of a true life narrated by a third person. It is a great endeavour on the part of a son that calls for appreciation. In an age marked by cruelties of all sorts, when old parents are seen forced into the Old Age Homes, left uncared for, subjected to abject treatment and indignation, a son like Dr. Farooq has come forward to put on record as to why a father needs to be remembered; thus giving reasons to children irrespective of time and space to be grateful to their parents. Besides putting on record the strife and successes of the father, a son closely attached to the father has left an example for all to love, adore and respect old parents. The book throws ample light on the princely life of the father in the early years of his life when his *Nana* (maternal grandfather) and *Dada* (fraternal grandfather) were alive in the1930s and the opening years of 1950. The biography takes the readers back and forth in time marking an attempt on the part of the biographer to compare the protagonist's past with the present and future. The natural innocence in the personality of the protagonist coupled with his blatantly honest approach to life came to be depreciated in the society in which he was living and thus he was considered an unsociable man by the people who actually feared his overpowering intellectual capabilities; whereas, the reality was that his ability to articulate the hypocritical nature of his detractors posed a serious threat to their mean strategies of keeping the illiterate simpletons of the village in the dark about the self- styled leaders' true nature. The biography, since, is a true account of life narrated therein, permitted the biographer to draw in all the characters that surfaced and resurfaced in the life of the protagonist during his life time, especially post 1965 when he landed in the village from the district headquarter of Nowgong.

Despite stiff resistance from the society to deprive the protagonist of social visibility, he educated his children, constructed one of the first pacca houses in the village, enjoyed all the privileges of life and led a

truly happy life of a successful father. He is the only man in Batamari since the existence of the village who sent his son to SSG, a military school so far. He is the only man in Batamari whose children are the highest educated in the village. The two daughters he has are lecturers in government Higher Secondary School and Junior College respectively. His three sons are well established in life: the first son Iqbal Faruk, being an M.Sc (B.Ed) in Physics heads the Department of Physics at DPS, Duliajan. The second son, Late Mustafa Kamal Farooq was an established Pharmacist who curved a niche for himself early in the thirties of his life having owned his own plot of land in the town, car etc. and comfortably settled as a family man. Though an accident had cut short his life, which seems to have been used by the protagonist's opponents as a point of vintage, the protagonist was able to handle those perilous situations with remarkable confidence and ease. The third son, Dr. M.A.Afzal Farooq, whom I know personally is a popular literary figure known in India and abroad for his literary writings and research acumen. This is indeed a rare achievement for a man like Wazed Ali crushed by poverty and societal bad blood. The evidence of his honesty and scrupulous life reflects in the way he shaped the careers of his children and carried himself through turbulent times. His grandchildren as I interacted with them are cultured and well on track in career pursuit. The biography beautifully sums up the last few decades of the protagonist's life when he enjoyed everything that he missed out during the years of struggle. He enjoyed the blessings of life and was able to retain the unity of the family members. His is the only joint family in the village of Batamari living in peace and harmony.

The leadership quality of the protagonist has been splendidly explored in the book. A vibrant student leader, Wazed Ali mesmerized his audience with his oratorial skills which remained his permanent asset even in most adverse situations of his life. His desire to open the Reserve/ cattle grazing field in Batamari-Haidubi single handedly to the poor villagers goes a long way to demonstrate his inner urge for public welfare. Though betrayed by the people he trusted and gave land, he went on thinking about his people and extended his help in every way possible to them in their needs.

His affiliation with the religious and educational institutes offers evidences of his concern for the spiritual and educational growth of the people of his fraternity. Friend of the poor, Wazed Ali's attitude to women education is but adorable and appreciable. His ability to connect himself to the needy and indigent is equally commendable.

Sudden illness that brought him first to Apollo Hospitals, Guwahati and then to AIG, Hyderabad was truly a sad news for me. I was almost assured that my friend was finally out of danger when Dr. Farooq called me up after the surgery and their return from AIG, Hyderabad. His health began to improve giving him good appetite as well and that was encouraging. However, the gradual deterioration of his health that started from the first week of May, 2020 became a cause of concern since the nation was under a total lock down due to the first wave of Covid-19 Pandemic. Inspite of efforts of his children, he could not be shifted to AIG, Hyderabad for a second round of treatment in a condition when communication and transportation remained suspended. His demise on 19th May, 2020 sent a wave of shock not only to me but also to all who knew this noble soul.

My association with Wazed Ali goes back to the beginning of 2009 when his youngest son Dr. M.A. Afzal Farooq introduced him to me over phone. Farooq was a Ph.D. student then and since I was one of his supervisors, I was easily drawn to him by the way he defended the title of his proposed thesis at the time of his interview in the university before his registration. I could see a future scholar in young Farooq vibrant with the required spark of research. As he got registered, his simplicity, honesty and research acumen brought him close to me. One evening, Farooq expressed his desire to make me speak to his father and that is how my first conversation with Wazed Ali took place and the intimacy that developed was to leave an indelible mark on my mind turning him into one of my best friends. We spoke over phone and I could sense the genuine urge in him to see his son as a Ph.D. We spoke for about twenty minutes and he reposed his hope on me several times in the course of the conversation that under my guidance his son would scale heights of academic growth. He was articulate and expressive. His voice still echoes in my ears as firm and assertive.

My friend Wazed Ali spoke to me often on phone and enquired about Farooq's progress. However, every time he spoke, his talk would invariably end on a note of his trust in God and His blessings. I remember, in one of his conversations with me, he was referring to Farooq and wanted me to guide him like my son in the future as well. His sincere and unfeigned trust and confidence on me really impressed and overwhelmed me. Sometimes, he would also refer to the premature death of his second son late Mustafa Kamal Farooq, but as a pragmatist, he would always show his optimism in the future. He was an impressive speaker, articulate, wise and knowledgeable. His demise has been an irreparable loss not only to me or his own society but to world community at large. I pray for the eternal peace of the great soul. Simultaneously, I appreciate Dr. M.A.Afzal's Farooq's strenuous efforts in writing the biography incorporating most of the happenings in his father's life in a span of one year after the demise of his father. It is a true tribute of a grateful son to a great father as my friend was. This biography should be a trend setter in the society.

I wonder, why should one read this biography at all ? To explore this question I went through this book and am in a position to vouchsafe a meaningful reading to the readers. It will be very natural to identify oneself either with the father or with the son. This probably is the justifiable reason for this interesting and aesthetically gratifying text that unravels the secrets of a gentleman who hardly lived for himself but for his fraternity and surroundings. Furthermore, the village politics explored in the text with verisimilitude merits the readers' attention.

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PREFACE

This biography is not about a 'man of high degree' or a political heavy weight nor is it about a great writer or a valorized war hero copiously popular and known to the world, it is rather about an unsung and unrecognized hero—an ordinary man whose extraordinary potential to be greater than great was marred by life- long struggles and deprivations ad *infinitum*.

Grandes ames, the great minds, in most cases are self-made ripened by experiences of life. It is indeed *tache ardue*, a daunting task for me to have ventured to confine my visionary father's life to a few pages of a book, because his magnanimous, versatile personality defies being confined or circumscribed. A conspicuously articulate man, whose soft-spoken yet firmly assertive nature might have been nauseating for many of his detractors who miserably failed to understand the cache of knowledge that lay hidden in the tiny head of a legend who thought of his fraternity first before thinking about himself. I am truly intrigued by his multifaceted personality and marvel at his versatility. A rare combination of utmost self- confidence and overwhelming wisdom, my father would continue to command adoration and admiration not only from those who knew, acknowledged and recognized him, but also from his light weight critics who feared his presence and compelling personality that radiated a level of wisdom that his critics could never ever expect to reach. It is because, in their heart of heart they know that whatever my father uttered was sheer truth without an iota of falsehood in it. He was always his natural self, untouched by artificiality. Adversity had remained his companion throughout his life, but he never lost his composure—a great trait of his personality he desired all his three sons to inculcate. He was *oratorem natus est,* whose eloquence and powerful

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