

Ashok Desai: Pure Enlightened Soul in Paradise

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Rarely do men leave their imprints in the mind of many. Imprints which live long after their soul departs to live immortally. Ashok Desai was one such rare stalwart who walked the corridors and court rooms of several courts in India. He shone brilliantly as the Solicitor General and as the Attorney General of India.

Important Cases argued by him can be found in the journals and have been recounted by colleagues. Journey of my knowledge about him began in 1996 when he came to Allahabad to appear for Chemical industries in a petition filed by the sugar industry of UP challenging the validity of the UP Molasses Act, 1961. After the day was over he visited the Sangam and Fort. He was kind enough to drop in for some pegs of whiskey, along with Dushyant Dave, my friend. From him I learnt about " chaser". Take a sip of whiskey and then sip water. Water chases the whiskey to make you spiritual. More importantly he questioned me about history of my city and it appeared he knew more than me. Such was his persona. Unsatiated thirst for knowledge of Law and beyond law. And so amiable, unassuming, modest, and friendly. Just sit next to him and you feel elevated.

A benign soul who could not think of hurting anyone. I appeared in the Supreme Court In a few cases, both with and against him. It was always a learning experience seeing

him navigate through the voluminous facts and string it along with legal propositions. He was not loud, yet judges could not ignore the firmness of his thoughts beneath his softness. On one occasion I slipped on facts and Ashok bhai, as we addressed him, sprung on his feet saying I was wrong. However, he never attacked me by asserting I was misleading the court. He merely said that "perhaps I was not properly instructed". I learnt how not to be virulent in countering. A lesson valid for life. A lesson in morality. Life would be so much more peaceful minus the rage.

Once Ashok bhai invited me to his home in Delhi for dinner. As I entered his office I could see the musical side of him. When he studied alone classical music was his accompaniment. It was calmness enhanced. After a small chitchat over a few pegs I was led to the dining table for a Gujarati sumptuousness beginning with jalebis. He was a good host. There are so many sides to him.

Ashok bhai was a pure enlightened soul at peace with himself and radiating peace to them who swum within his planet. He has given so much to so many in the court and outside that his spirit would live long before the sands of time cover the imprints. May his soul rest in peace in Paradise.

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