

A BRIEF MEMOIR OF TARIQ ABBA'S LIFE!

One of the many things I learned from my husband's maternal uncle – who is apparently the oldest living member of the family – is to embrace old age!

As Mark Twain once said "Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter" AND Tariq Abba is a fine example of it.

Tariq is his name and *Abba* is a word used in the Urdu language for Father. The man is above seventy years of age and still loves to go on long drives, eat out with family, throws amazing parties, listen to his favorite songs everyday and most importantly is thankful for every single day and every single breath he takes!

As a clear-headed man that he has always been, I must say he has spent a great life. With completing his Masters in Physics and working in a Textile Mill for forty years, he has not just raised a beautiful family but has also lived for himself. From experimenting to working jobs abroad and away from family to travelling to exotic locations and exploring the world, he has done it all.

I mean it when I say it that he is my hero. He survived a Colon Cancer and a Brain Tumor! He is diabetic and has a history of heart diseases. He has difficulty in mobility and uses a stick to walk around. He has difficulty in hearing and as well as eating due to loss of teeth. YET – if you sit down with him for fifteen minutes and talk about anything – and I do mean anything! – You would be astonished by the level of intellect he has and the stories he shares!

Although he is the head of the family, he still is getting weak day by day. His number one rule when it comes to healthcare is to be prepared for anything and everything, and to seek medical help from the most top-rated medical practitioners in the country. His second rule is to be firm and honest with your own self. He has always followed every single instruction of every single doctor he's gotten treated with religiously, and never skips any medicine any day!

He prefers to eat less and homemade. Even while eating out, he remains careful of his portions and never forgets his medicines and his check-ups.

Majority of the credit for this management goes to his wife and daughters-in-law. Yes, he lives in a joint family system which is very common in different cultures in Asia. The expenses are borne by the old man himself and his eldest son to make sure of a quality of care he receives while being surrounded by his loved ones.

From managing the stock of medicines to his monthly appointments; from making sure all the food that he eats is cooked right to the portions of food he consumes; from having a personal chef, a driver and a caretaker at home by his side, each and every single is well-managed.

Once, I saw him cry. His second eldest son had come to visit the family with his wife and two kids. He was meeting his now-six-months-old-grandson for the first time since the family lives in the USA. And

after spending a good two and a half months here, the son was finally leaving. Eid (read as Muslim Christmas) was around the corner and he still had to go because he had utilized all his leaves and off-days that he had been saving for more than a year now. I saw that brave strong man cry for his grandson.

His son promised to be back after two years for another long family holiday to which Tariq Abba replied "I am old my son. I don't know if I will be around by that time to see my grandkids grow". It was a very emotional moment for everyone but they had to do what had to be done and they left the old man crying.

After a few minutes, I saw him wiping his tears off and calming his wife down with a smile on his face and that is something that I would cherish for the rest of my life.

He knows he is near his end. He knows he will have to go one day. He knows he has lived a great life and he doesn't have any regrets! I know he will leave us all crying but he will leave with the same brave smile on his face that he puts on every day when he wakes up.

Yes, he is my hero. Yes, I look up to him and yes, I wish for a long healthy life for him. And when one day I will be of his age, I will tell my grandkids about his life exactly the way he wants to be remembered.