

In Loving Memory of Capt. Omerzeb (Shaheed)

Many of us never knew personally Captain Omerzeb and his comrades who laid down their lives. However these chaps will always have a special place. We may be silent and not able to express our thoughts eloquently but that will not diminish the highest regards we have for these men of honor. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of this special breed.

Blow out, you bugles, over the rich dead!
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,
But, dying has made us rarer gifts than gold.
These laid the world away; poured out the red
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
Of work and joy, and that unhop'd serene
That men call age; and those who would have been,
Their sons, they gave their immortality.
Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our dearth,
Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and Pain.
Honor has come back, as a king, to earth
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
And nobleness walks in our ways again;
And we have come into our heritage.'

Since the operation against militants began in April last month, over 1,100 militants had been killed and over 60 soldiers had been martyred so far. Yet I never felt the pain of those dying in the name of their country's sovereignty against terrorism so excruciating as the martyrdom of my sister's fiancé.

He was only 24 years old, a month older to me and he was very smart and handsome boy. He loved my sister and she loved him and we all loved him just as much as his own family loved him. He was engaged to my younger sister and they were looking forward to getting married by next year.

On 11th of May, 2009, he was deployed to Lower Dir as part of the Operation 'Rah-e-Rast' against Militants in Swat and near-by areas. He left from Rawalpindi and we all prayed for him. We never knew he was leaving forever. Let me narrate to you what happened just 10 hours before he embraced martyrdom – we Muslims call 'Shahadat..';

It was mid-night – the beginning of the painful 21st May, 2009. He called up my sister and wished her a very happy birthday. The 21st of May was the day when 23 years ago my younger sister came into this world. He sang to her 'birthday song' in 6 different languages, he gave her his prayers and told her how bad he feels for not being there with her on her birthday.

He was in Lower Dir and she was here with us in Rawalpindi. She said to him, "I wish you were here on my birthday. I wish I could have celebrated my birthday with you." And he replied, "Do you want me to come over? Should I come over to Rawalpindi in the morning and we celebrate your birthday together?" She said, yes, please, please do."

He did come over on her birthday but not the way we wanted him to come over. He didn't come to her walking on his feet, holding a bouquet in his hands just the way he promised to her last night. Instead, he came on the shoulders of sad soldiers in a box we call a martyr's coffin! He had been martyred on the 21st of May, 2009 – The very day my sister came into this world, he left this world forever – On my sister's birthday!

I received a call at around 11:30 in the morning, I was in Islamabad. It was my ill-fated sister and she was crying like a mad woman. She was literally screaming in the phone so I couldn't understand what she was trying to tell me. I heard something like a blast in Lower Dir, a strip running on a TV channel showing my sister's fiancé's name among the martyred. She was hysterical. She wanted me home right away.

I left in panic, I kept praying the news I just heard was false. It took me an hour to reach home from Islamabad to Rawalpindi. I was met with screams of my sister who was out of control of almost everyone. She wasn't accepting the fact that her love has left her on her birthday. She kept screaming, "You guys are lying to me. He is not dead. He cannot leave me. He promised me to celebrate 93 birthdays with me. This was our first. He can't leave me on our (her) first birthday, he promised me 93 birthdays together."

I couldn't see her like this; I had broken down into tears. My mother was half-living half-dead. We all left for his house. What I saw there, I cannot narrate in words. His mother was still, tears in her eyes, she hugged me and the first thing she said was, "Hold on to your sister, she will die. Take care of her." I was looking at her. This was the mother of a brave soldier, a soldier who was our loved one, but a soldier who came home on his love's birthday but not the way any member of his family or mine would have ever imagined or wanted him back.

Even if I want to tell you what my family on the whole and specifically my younger sister is going through, I won't be able to because there are no words to put down my pain, my family's loss, his family's sufferings and most of all my sister's desolation. Two families were destroyed when one soldier died. 14 hearts wept dry of blood when one heart stopped beating on the 21st of May. All sacrifices in the name of a peaceful, safe, terrorism-free country.

Capt. Omerzeb, like many soldiers sacrificed his life for the greater good of his nation but is the nation even thankful to those families who have been left scarred for life. When sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers die every other day while fighting the militants, how many people in our nation pray for their safety, their long lives, their safe return? They know that when they are sitting in the comforts of their homes, it is these brave men fighting on the borders for them to have that sense of security and comfort.

My heart breaks every time I see my younger sister who has not regained herself so far. Who wakes up in the middle of the night and weeps like a child, who hasn't eaten in 24 hours, and whose eyes have swollen dry of tears that have drained her off completely. I wish this fight against the militants come to an end soon. Till now every time a soldier died, we thought we felt the pain but no, we couldn't. Nobody can until your loved one goes away when you are least expecting. Now, I can truly say I know what a martyr's family goes through when their beloved leaves them forever.

May his soul rest in peace, may all those soldiers who have given their lives for this noble cause, for their country rest in peace. Most of all, the families who have lost their sons, their brothers, their husbands and their fathers, may God give them strength, patience, and peace of heart. I post this true story of a distraught family, of my family, of my loss, of my younger sister's anguish to pay tribute to the brave Capt. Omerzeb for his valor and all the love that he gave us in whatever little time we spent with him. God bless us all!

By Sadaf Majdy