

.... The Army has been truly magnificent, this (now) battle-hardened entity has rendered sacrifices in Swat above and beyond the call of duty. The icing on the cake would be the elimination of Fazlullah and Baitullah Mahsud. While the rumours of their imminent demise may not be greatly exaggerated (paraphrasing Mark Twain), the war against terrorism is far from being won. While teenager Mohammad Aamir was vowing Pakistanis at Lord's, others barely past their teens were dying for their country as per their oath. Meeting the father of a Shaheed, one was nonplussed by Col (Retd) Afzal's stoic acceptance of his son's loss.

Both our civilian and military hierarchy need to answer Col Afzal's query in a poignant article, "What after Capt Omerzeb Shaheed's death?" To quote: "Let us not make 'Rah-e-Rast' another episode of a great drama, which the nation runs every few years, the last being Kargil. Who remembers the Kargil Shaheeds? How many were they? For what cause did they shed their blood? What has come out of their sacrifices? Let this one be not another such venture. Let us not forget that if the blood of these Shaheeds also goes past our realisations, there will no chest forward in future to blunt the onslaught of our enemies whether within or external. Let us stand to the realism and not be fast asleep saying all is well. Let us unite all and sundry, evolve a long-term strategy cognising short-term goals in the best interest of our dearest homeland, since if it is there, we have our recognition both individual and collective, otherwise India has many more Muslims than our total population. Let the honour and dignity of our country be much above our egos. Let us be more united and pragmatic rather than oratorical. Let us be thinking of the oneness of our country rather than our communities, sects and districts, because all this is dovetailed to Pakistan. Let justice and merit prevail in its true sense. Young leaders like Capt Omerzeb Shaheed and many have taken the lead, have shown us the way – the path, it is now the leaders at the decision-making hierarchy to give their bid and show vision, sincerity, strength of character and commitment towards their motherland, and if they do so, I assure you the national virtuosity will be an automatic fall out. Long Live Pakistan."

Families like Col Afzal's do us all proud, before them we are all small people. The really smaller ones are those who sent young ones to die in Kargil and FATA but never heard a shot being fired in anger themselves, with any number of farmhouses, houses and plots to their names stashed all over the country. What Shaheed Omerzeb got was a lonely grave!

By Ikram Sehgal