

In memory of Munin Barkataki

By Aruna Sharma

On Saturday, the sixth day of November, 1993, the eminent writer, journalist, critic and philosopher, Mr Munin Barkataki passed away. To the world he was a gigantic personality, but for me he was, and will ever remain, my sweet absent-minded "Moha". He was a philosopher in the true sense of the term, and had disclosed his thoughts and ideas lucidly, which became an eye-opener to many.

Almost always, we found him in his own dream world, and we had to bring him back amongst us by answering to all his queries. It never ceased to surprise me to find how much he knew about everyone, and the detailed follow up he had made of even the very small trivialities, yet he seemed always engrossed in his musings, about which we were quite unconcerned and knew very little.

"Moha" was one of those rare human beings who truly enjoyed solitude and wanted to be left alone. On the other hand, he never disturbed or imposed himself on others, but always opened up to anyone who went to meet him. He would lend a patient ear and was very critical, and I liked his criticism because it was constructive, making us realise, admit and clarify our mistakes.

Today, I realise that "Moha" had an unconventional sense of humour, for, his observations and remarks did not bring forth a sudden burst of laughter, but it was thought provokingly amusing and lingered on, for days, making the listener thoughtful and observant too.

In spite of being such an illustrious personality, he never made himself conspicuous by displaying his intelligence. Never did he come to the forefront to be in the limelight. In speech, manner, and behaviour he was always humble, yet dignified. His mode of dress was

simple, and therein lay his unique style.

I was always in awe at his command over the English language. We were very careful when we wrote letters to him, for, any letter that we wrote to him would become the topic of discussion whenever we met later on, and he would point out spelling mistakes and grammatical errors which we were so careful to avoid. "Moha" had often said that letters reveal a lot about a person, as such, the writer must be meticulous in putting down the thoughts.



His love and respect for the country is exemplary, for, he never bragged about his involvement in the freedom struggle of India, though from the stories he related, I have come to know that he played an active role in it. As the years went by, I think he became disillusioned, disappointed, and disheartened at the chaotic state of affairs in the country, which gradually turned him into a recluse.

Today, our affectionate "Moha" is no longer in our midst, but he will live on in our minds and our hearts. We will always remember him because he had created a unique relationship with each one of us. On

this auspicious day of his "Addya-Shradhya", I pray for the departed soul, and may God, the almighty, grant him eternal peace.

An incisive critic

Munin Barkataki, an incisive critic, a thought-provoking writer and ex-director of the Information and Public Relations department, Assam passed away in the evening of November 6 at the age of 78 leaving behind his wife, Ms Renuka Devi Barkakati, ex-state minister for education, Government of India only daughter, Dr Minakshi Bhattacharyya, Ph.D from the Oxford University, son-in-law, Dr Ashis Bhattacharyya and a grand child Mr Amlanjyoti.

Barkataki was often termed as an incisive critic. When Barkataki was requested to write a critical note on the book *Pakhila*, a children literature by Dr Banikanta Kakati, a literary giant and extraordinary researcher of eastern India, unsparingly commented "in fact, the title seems a complete misnomer in relation to the contents unless it is supposed to carry a philosophical inner meaning. The book's drift is, broadly speaking, more towards education and enlightenment than towards entertainment or pleasurable curiosity."

Munin Barkataki spoke less, thought more and was deeply devoted to studies. His friends like Dr Maheswar Neog, Krishna Bhuyan, Rabin Hazarika, Rama Das, Hem Barua, Jnanada Sarma, Promode Chandra Sarma and Iswar Chandra Choudhury were very close to him. Briefly speaking, Munin Barkataki was a gentleman par-excellence, who lived a very peaceful and harmonious life. He was always found amiable, quiet impulsive and absorbed in deep studies.

Kanak Ch Deka