

My Family

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In this essay 'family' is used in an extended sense; it includes my grandparents (paternal as well as maternal), my parents, my uncles and aunts (maternal as well as paternal) and cousins and their children, my siblings and their children, our spouses, our children and our grandchildren. In short, it includes my grandparents (paternal as well as maternal) and their descendants down to our grandchildren in the same hierarchy. It is a concept of hierarchy with five layers.

I do not know the name of his father, but Shri Shankar Mishra was the grandfather of my grandfather Shri Johari Mishra (son of Shri Munshi Mishra). My father, Shri Anant Mishra, had two brothers, Shri Girija Mishra and Shri Ambika Mishra, and three sisters, Smt. Shishta Devi who was married in Dih Dariyapur located beside Bhagalpur-Nathnagar-Amarpur road, Smt. Nita Devi and Smt. Bina Devi both married in Chandreli, a village beside Chanan river near Banka.

My maternal grandfather was Shri Baijnath Jha and my grandmother was Smt. Jayarupavati Devi. They had two daughters, Smt. Tara Devi (my mother) and Smt. Kaushalya Devi (my maternal aunt or *mausi*) and only one son, my maternal uncle (*mama*) Shri Bachchan Jha. They lived in Jagarnathpur, near Sajour beside the Bhagalpur-Nathnagar-Amarpur road.

My parents and my siblings: My parents, Smt. Tara Devi and Shri Anant Mishra had nine children; I am their second son and 7th child. The eldest sister of mine was Gauri Devi, married to Shri Shukadeo Thakur of Mahamada village near Munger. The second sister, Smt. Katyayani Devi also was married in Mahamada to Shri Mahendra Thakur. Third is my elder brother, Dr (Kj.) Budh Kumar Mishra. The fourth among my siblings was Bimla Devi, married to Shri Dinanath Jha in village Lalmanichak near Shambhuganj. Younger to Bimla, two sisters were there, Hira and Sandhya. Hira died young. Sandhya was married to Shri Kamal Krishna Mishra at Champanagar (Nathnagar, Bhagalpur). I am about three years younger to Sandhya. A brother, named Khuda, younger to me by some two and half years, died young when he was about two years old. My next younger brother was Himanshu, who died in 1990 at the age of about 34 years.

I am not in a position to write about my elder brother, Dr. (Kj.) Budh Kumar Mishra. He is about 13 years elder to me (born January 26, 1936) and by the time I could have come to understand what is what, he was a student in Ayurvedic College at Nathnagar, Bhagalpur, doing his GAMS (Graduate of Ayurvedic Medicines and Surgery), which has been renamed now as BAMS in which classical Ayurveda contents have been significantly diluted. I have been told that he was considered an extraordinary student by his teachers who were very good *vaidyas* and scholars of Ayurveda. I have been told that my father, after training him under his tuition in the major books of Ayurveda and making him a 'Madhyama' certificate holder, took him to the principal of Ayurvedic college. The professors at the college did not believe that the boy, who was in his early teens and also appeared to be just a young boy entering into adolescence, could have done his 'Madhyama' and was fit to be admitted to a college. But my father insisted and asked them to examine the boy. He was given "Charaka Samhita" and was asked to read some passages from it. My brother's natural reaction was: what was there to read in it. He had all that learned by heart, and he recited them. A professor, though

surprised, asked him if he could only recite or he knows its meaning as well. On this, my brother explained the recitals in Hindi. The professors became interested in him and asked him to read from Sushruta Samhita. My brother displayed the same feat at Sushruta Samhita also. As a result, the professors were very happy and welcomed him to the college. He was admitted to the first year of the 5-years GAMS course. My brother remained the blue-eyed boy throughout his stay in the college. He also obtained excellent marks in all papers in his examinations, except in the viva voce on gynaecology, not because he did not know the subject well but because he felt extremely shy in explaining many things to the elderly examiners.

My elder brother, being the first son of our parents, was not only most loved but also most harnessed by our father. He was the first object of educational experiment of our father. He was almost separated from our mother when he was barely three years old and used to live, play and sleep with our father. His bath, his feeding and every care of him was taken over by our father. Practically, he became the 'child of our father' and got distanced from our mother. I think he was emotionally starving because our father, who was much more of a teacher, trainer, disciplinarian and guide but much less of a mother-like healer and affectionate. In my view, this distancing from our mother affected my brother psychologically. He could never develop an affinity to our mother and always suffered from some mild sort of sibling rivalry. He did not fight because he was taught by our father to overcome emotions with rationality, but in so doing he learned to distance himself from his siblings. The circumstances also helped him to become what he became. He left home to his college when I was barely two years old. After doing his GAMS he underwent the training of a house surgeon. Then he became interested in general education for which he took admission to Marwari College for doing his BA and then MA in English literature. My father was not in favour of this venture. Moreover, my father was neither capable of nor willing to finance my elder brother's college and university education, after my brother already had a medical degree, license for practice and brilliant aptitude to treatment of diseases. But, so determined, my brother took a lot of pain to self-finance his own studies. He was married while doing MA. After completing his MA he returned to his profession (of a physician) and left for West Bengal and lived there. We (I and my younger brother) grew at home that he only occasionally visited and did not stay with us more than a day.

The details I do not know, but to the best of my knowledge, my elder brother became affected by communism, which was a very attractive ideology of young people in that generation. Indian politicians, especially those in Congress, invented a number of attractive concepts such as 'socialistic pattern of society', 'planning', 'mixed economy' 'progressive thinking' and so forth. India also had very good relationship with the USSR. Not many people could see through that India was simply hatching capitalism (Jha, 1963) in the disguise of 'socialistic pattern of society'. Socialism was painted so attractively that none would take Animal Farm (Orwell, 1944) seriously. In India, the things were not as dramatic as Orwell has painted, but prudence, saving, suffering, shortage, ration etc. were meant only for the poor and the ignorant public. The political leaders were building and spreading their empires. The industrialists and the businessmen were enjoying the fruits of independence and building capital. Officers in the public offices worked for themselves, industrialist, businessmen and political leaders. Corruption in the government took deep roots. All these together ultimately culminated into crisis and privatization of the economy. On the other side, communistic forces paved the way to destructive labour unions and their opportunistic leaders. Yet, communism gave a good persona to the leaders and workers for the party.

References:

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