# Good-Bye, Rina Phupu

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Some time back I had a dream. It was an amazing dream. I was floating over beautiful land and water bodies. The scene below was extremely serene and peaceful. I felt completely relaxed and at bliss with no stress, no worries floating slowly and feeling perfectly happy. I have often wanted to have that dream again, to feel that ultimate sense of peace and tranquility but it has not returned. Today, once again I was thinking about that dream as I grieve the loss of a dear one – my Rina Phupu. Razia Sultana (1939-2013).

Rina Phupu left us very unexpectedly. In the wee hours of Monday morning, May 20, my sister Deepa from Dhaka sobbingly informed me: "Ammani is no more". Ammani, as Deepa calls her mother, is my Phupu (Aunt), Razia Sultana, the third sister out of the eleven siblings on my father's side. Rina Phupu was unique, original and a gem of a person. Her younger brothers and sisters called her Shona Apa, aptly so for she had a heart of gold. In my early years I remember her as the aunt who lived in London. She had lived most of her life in London migrating there right after college. She was well known for her beauty and she was also a gold medalist in sitar while in college in Dhaka. She had settled in London and when we were growing up in the 70s we saw her occasionally visiting Dhaka. I remember that she always used to bring gifts for everybody and she did that till the last day of her life. We visited her in London in the early 80s on our way back to the USA. It is beyond words the way she took care of us those two days. I have heard similar stories of relatives, friends, casual acquaintances that stayed at her place and enjoyed her warm hospitality. She could become a friend to a stranger on the road or market in a second and the next thing she would do is bring a gift for that person.



Razia Sultana

Her life was not the smoothest, especially after Phupa (her husband) passed away unexpectedly. She struggled on her own to lead the tough life of a widow in the bustling city of London. In her younger days, she was known for her fashionable and trendy upkeep but as a widow she completely transformed herself to wearing a long white tunic with white shawls. Her hair, cut short, no makeup, no jewellery, and with the all-white attire – she kept her appearance as simple as possible. But her natural beauty mingled with her warm soul made her always glow, so that last year my friend commented "your Aunt is so beautiful". She had just turned seventy-two.

Last two years were very tumultuous for her. She came back to Dhaka to be with the family as it was getting more and more difficult abroad. But health issues took her back to London. Last year she had an open heart surgery with post-operative complications. She underwent multiple operations to get rid of the infection she contracted and if that was not enough, she had to undergo another surgery to remove a malignant breast tumor. She continued to battle with death head-on and came out successful during those times.

Early this year, it looked like her health was getting better. She seemed happy that she was once again settling down in her old stomping grounds in London. She always wanted to be independent, living life her way, having her own little place so that she could cook and entertain others. She always wanted to give – give love and gifts symbolising her love. The night before her passing, she was in good spirits, spent time with a close relative, bought Cheesecake for visitors next day and took the bus back to her place. Early morning she had pressed the emergency button for help but by the time the ambulance arrived, her visit in this world was over.

But why did I think of that dream? I was praying that Rina Phupu had experienced that ultimate peace eternally that I had felt momentarily in my dream.