**The irreverent adman**

**Shakir Husain | Mehrene Shah**

Paying tribute to Masood Hasan (1942-2014).

Masood Hasan passed away on June 1, 2014 at the age of 72. He had been unwell for the last couple of years, progressively worsening in the last six months. Yet he never stopped working and living life to the full.

When I [Shakir] met him a week before he passed away at his Lahore home, he quipped: “My Lord, scene acha nahin hai”.

I suggested that an Estonian nurse was what he needed, to which both Uncle M (as I [Shakir] called him), and his lovely wife, Ira, laughed.

​And that, intrinsically, is what connected Masood Hasan to people of all ages and walks of life.

His ability to laugh, acknowledge the absurd and remain true to himself made him a very special human being.

A teacher, mentor, friend, humanist and a dedicated family man, Masood Hasan was one of life’s gentle souls, a lover of art and music, a freethinker, libertarian and indeed a rebel, but with a steely conviction, a perceptive and unclouded eye.

An avid jazz fan and critic, Masood Hasan reviewed performances from foreign troupes, compeered a 14-part series on jazz for PTV and for the last two years produced a weekly jazz show, All That Jazz, for CityFM89. He was well travelled, both in and out of Pakistan, and a pretty handy amateur photographer. “Jack of all trades, boss, master of none,” he stated many times with his standard self-deprecating humour.

A voracious reader and best known for Over the Top, his Sunday column in The News, Masood Hasan wrote about anything and everything irreverently and pulled no punches. His biting wit and sarcasm amused and educated his readers on issues that were dear to him. From conservation to the rampant corruption around him, he was disdainful of the steady degeneration of a society. His words struck egos across Pakistan and gained him fans everywhere. His anthology, The Doggone Years was published in 1996.

​Masood Hasan was a natural storyteller and wordsmith, and so it came as no surprise that he became one of Pakistan’s leading and most gifted admen. His advertising career was as diverse and interesting as the stories he loved to tell.

Starting off as an advertising and PR manager in the 70s with Dawood Hercules and later for NFC (National Fertilizer Corporation of Pakistan), Masood Hasan became Managing Director of an ad agency called Midlink in 1982, leading the accounts of some of the largest and best known business houses in Pakistan. In 1997, Masood Hasan founded Headstart, which a year later was acquired by one of the largest global advertising groups in the world – Publicis – headquartered in Paris. Under Masood Hasan’s guiding hand, Publicis became one of Pakistan’s leading agencies.

​Advertising is an industry that deals with people, their wants, needs, dreams and desires. Above all, Masood Hasan was a people’s person, and his love of people gave him the insights to develop both wonderful and effective work. A mentor to all, Masood Hasan cajoled and encouraged an entire generation of Pakistani advertising professionals. Ever smiling and generous with advice, the environment he created was warm and exciting but above all, professional.

Amongst Masood Hasan’s notable achievements was a series of comprehensive and integrated campaigns aimed at the rural farming community during the 70s. Disseminating agricultural information and educating Pakistani farmers with the latest techniques and technologies was an extremely challenging communication brief as the audience was often illiterate and did not have access to traditional media channels. However, Masood Hasan arduously designed, produced and tested messages over a seven-year nationwide campaign. His dedication to the campaigns ensured a significant rise in awareness of the use of fertilisers and in educating farmers in acquiring the very latest in agronomic practices.

From the 80s onwards Masood Hasan oversaw the launch of many international and local brand names, products and services including British Airways, Nestlé and Volvo. He was also instrumental in bringing some of the country’s most prestigious sporting events to prominence including the Standard Chartered Lahore Marathon in 2005 and of course the 1996 Cricket World Cup. Also in 1996, Masood Hasan played a key role as media advisor during the PML(N) election campaigns resulting in a landslide victory at the polls.

Masood Hasan’s last days were painful, both for him and his loved ones, but true to form he asked his son Mekaal to bring him some jazz on his iPod. His funeral too was something he would have smiled about. All the people he loved together in one place, trading Masood Hasan stories, an excellent dinner, and his favourite music. It was refreshing to be at a funeral where friends shared their loss and were not afraid to laugh at the jokes Masood Hasan told so well throughout his life.

He leaves behind such wonderful tales. As his family, friends and colleagues come together from all over the world to celebrate his life, let’s remember what this big-hearted man once said: “So many stories, so many memories! For what is life other than stories pieced together?”

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