

EULOGY FRIDAY 11TH MARCH 2016

Greetings, for those of you who have not met me before my name is Jonathan Hawkes and I am the immensely proud but very, very sad father of Rahoul.

I married a wonderful woman called Deepa Biswas and we were blessed with two beautiful and very special children, our first born daughter Debjani and our son Rahoul. So those of you who were not previously aware now know exactly how it was that we, all of us present here today, and many others from all corners of this world and beyond also came to be blessed with this wonderful young man, Rahoul Biswas-Hawkes.

I was never expecting to have to give a Eulogy for my lovely, smiling and happy boy. Knowing that Rahoul was a scholar who had decided to study Classics at University – and he was such an academic all-rounder he could have chosen any path – Greek seemed a good place to start. So it proved to be the case, as the word Eulogy does indeed come from the Classical Greek Eulogia: - “Praise”.

Unfortunately the linguistic approach gave me an immediate problem. Even though Rahoul was fully deserving of more praise than I, or anyone else, could give him in a thousand Eulogies he was so modest that the last thing he would have wanted would be for me to tell you all how wonderful and special he was.

And in any case you all already know that Rahoul was truly very wonderful and very special.

Gathered here today are family and relations, close friends of Rahoul, close friends of the family who came to know and love Rahoul, neighbours, school friends of Rahoul and their parents, and Rahoul’s teachers from both his School and his University days.

We all have our own very special and cherished memories of Rahoul. Rahoul loved music and this service concludes with some pieces of music during which you can sit in contemplation and recall your own fondest memories of him which we hope you will share.

(PAUSE)

Since Rahoul was born on 13 November 1996 I can honestly say that the only unhappy and sad memories that I have of Rahoul are those of Saturday 27 February 2016.

Rahoul knew how deeply so many of us here today loved him and he loved us back in return.

He was busy discussing and making all kinds of plans for the future, including where we should go for our next family holiday, buying tickets for gigs in the summer and which of the Festivals he might visit with his friends.

(PAUSE)

From an early age Rahoul seemed to attract love and affection from all of those around him and everyone with whom he came into contact.

Rahoul soon displayed his Epicurean nature and as a toddler enjoyed nothing better than being wheeled around the supermarket sitting majestically in his throne, more commonly referred to as a shopping trolley with breadstick in hand – and mouth- whilst dispensing emotional largesse to his adoring subjects.

As well as Rahoul loving food of all kinds, from fine dining to Kentucky Fried chicken, he was also a great eater.

I recall a family visit to Paris when Rahoul was only seven years old. We went to a traditional brasserie just off the Champs Elysees and Rahoul ordered the plat de fruits de mer. For those of you unfamiliar with this dish think Neptune's wedding cake and you would not be far from it.

The French waiter who took our order expressed concern that this was too large a dish for a little boy. We told him otherwise and our confirmation was met with one of those wonderful Gallic looks and a shrug which told us we were considered fools.

However as Rahoul progressed through the abundance of the oceans word spread amongst the staff. By the time the last morsel was being consumed by Rahoul, with obvious relish, all of the waiters had gathered around our table and were ignoring the other diners. After the last swallow they spontaneously gave out a mighty cheer.

The Champs Elysees is French for the Elysian Fields, the paradise for dead heroes in Greek mythology. Rahoul you were my hero.

Another one of Rahoul's early joys was making jigsaw puzzles. He quickly outgrew puzzles appropriate to his age group and so puzzles suitable for much older children were duly purchased. These challenges were also quickly mastered and so Rahoul took to flipping the box so that the pieces fell out picture side down and the puzzle would be duly completed by reference to piece shapes only and absent any pictorial assistance.

From an early age Rahoul was obviously a bright and intelligent boy. Deepa and I both vividly recall Rahoul, aged three and a half, taking an interest in Debjani's school project about the Universe and Space Exploration. He looked up at us and declared solemnly, with a wisdom far beyond his tender years, that "Black Holes were like vacuum cleaners in space, sucking everything up in their path".

Rahoul loved unconditionally and even as a nineteen year old rather than surly grunting he was not ashamed to express his emotions. It made my heart sing to hear him say "I love you Mum" unprompted and with genuine affection and emotion. He loved me too and he loved his sister and he loved us all. How lucky we all were – how very lucky.

From a young age Rahoul would diligently apply himself to whatever it was that interested him, and to the extent that one of his affectionate nicknames – and there were many – was "The Silent Worker". We were accustomed to the fact that although he was never voluble Rahoul would always busy himself with something. He would spend his time on something that he enjoyed and that gave him pleasure and that was important to him.

This trait manifested itself in a love of music and Rahoul would often excuse himself at the end of dinner to go up to his room and discover more diverse and eclectic artists. At University Rahoul curated and presented a radio show under the pseudonym "Continuous Play" which you can hear on Mix Cloud.

As well as listening to music Rahoul would often go to concerts – sometimes with his sister Debjani - and they shared some special times together enjoying seeing bands that they both loved. Rahoul was his sister's best friend and vice versa.

Some of you here will also fondly remember Rahoul's performances of close up card magic. Even here Rahoul used his gifts to help other people. I recall him being asked to perform at short notice at a large gathering where an "atmosphere" was potentially developing.

His urbane and charming delivery and jaw dropping illusions soon made everyone forget whatever differences there were that had been bubbling under the surface and that had seemed so important to them but a moment earlier.

In the same way Rahoul used his magical gifts to entertain the residents of an Old Peoples Home that he visited on Wednesday afternoons as voluntary service at School. Whilst he never mentioned it himself –Rahoul was far too modest for that - we were told of the compassion and kindness with which he treated the residents, giving them the dignity they deserved and reading to them, engaging in conversation or performing a card trick or two.

Rahoul's sincerity and genuine nature were also reflected in the voluntary service he performed for his Duke of Edinburgh Award. There was never any perfunctory "box ticking" with Rahoul. Through a family friend Rahoul worked with a charity and gladly gave up five hours many a Friday night over a four-month period helping to serve hot meals to the homeless on London's Embankment.

Rahoul also had a phase of cubing or whatever the correct terminology is for those Rubik Cube type rotating puzzles. A four by four puzzle was soon outgrown and Rahoul moved on to a five by five, a seven by seven and the ultimate nine by nine. These larger puzzles had to be ordered online from a specialist company in the States and yet even then Rahoul needed a further challenge – so he dismantled and reassembled these puzzles.

I recall the dismay I felt the first time that I saw a mound of hundreds of elaborately shaped grey plastic pieces, some having a coloured square face. But this is Rahoul we are talking about, and rather than an act of vandalism it was a challenge. Soon enough the mighty nine by nine was reassembled by Rahoul and returned to its former splendour – and in fully working rotational order to boot!

Rahoul was clearly a builder of deep and lasting friendships as well. We have heard or received loving words from so many of his peers, including members of his School Tutor Group and fellow Old Paulines, some of whom have visited us at our home during this difficult time.

Rahoul's close friends have described him as the glue who held everyone together. We also learnt that unless Rahoul was present it was not going to be a good night out – something that we had never really appreciated - but we were soon shown the video evidence of this and I particularly enjoyed the clips – captured on a friend' smart phone - of Rahoul letting his hair down at Carnival.

As well as being a good friend Rahoul was always very sincere and loyal. Once he had made his mind up about someone or something that was it and he was not going to change. If that meant taking the difficult path then so be it – Rahoul had an innate integrity which I found amazing in one so young.

I recall Deepa telling me about a conversation she had with Rahoul when he was perhaps fifteen or so. He said to her that when he was "grown up" – whatever that means – all that he wanted was a nice home where he could be happy.

Well Rahoul, I hope that now you can build that house of yours. I know that it will be everything that you could have ever have wished for - with solid foundations made of love, with walls built of kindness and a roof constructed from compassion.

Rahoul - I hope to come and visit you in your house one day and that you will be as happy to see me again as I will be to see you.

You have been the most wonderful son that a father could ever wish for and someone who I was blessed to have known and loved during your short but beautiful life. I am sure that every one of us

who is here today and those who could not be present but who loved Rahoul feel exactly the same way.

Rahoul we know that you are in the next room but we do wish so very much that you could have stayed with us here.

Mere words cannot express how much your Mum, Dad, Sister, Grandmothers, Uncles, Aunts, Cousins and Friends will miss you; but we will always carry you with us in our hearts.

(PAUSE)

Rest in Peace Rahoul.