

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

1. Amazing!! The lovers of the Ahlul Bayt a.s are truly in every corner of the world and Subhanallah completely united because of their mutual love for these blessed personalities!!!!

Imagine my surprise, a few months ago during the summer, when I went through this Tim Horton's drive-thru for a coffee and the young lady serving me (Parveen Humayun Yawari on far right in the picture) excitedly exclaimed,

"Oh my God! Zakira Shyrose it's you!! I simply love your majlis!!! It was my dream to meet you in person!!"

And then she called out to her fellow employees and friends, "Come quick!! This is the lady I was telling you about!! This is my preacher from my mosque!!"

Subhanallah now whenever I go through this drive-through these 3 ladies, Parveen, Arlyn and Lily Beth give me a glowing welcome and their love and their brilliant smiles simply light up my entire day.

With the boost they give me, I don't even need the coffee to perk me up lol!!

Since then, Parveen has attended most of my morning majalis this Muharram and has even started to drive long distances to attend some of the majalis at the private homes that I recite in. She finds her own way there (even if she doesn't know the hostess of the majlis) and attends as my special guest. And most of the time we barely even get a chance to say hello to each other. But she comes anyway.

Now that is true love, indeed.

What's even more beautiful is that when I first met her at the drive-through window (a few months ago) she had told me her special news that she was just a few weeks pregnant.

And now the baby is almost due and she insists that I help her name it.

This picture was taken just a few hours ago. Please do pray for Parveen to have a beautiful, healthy child who becomes a true and devout follower of the Ahlulbayt a.s, just like his/her mother.

Parveen you are truly a special and very loving human being. I am so blessed to have found you.

I would never have guessed you are a Maulayee and it truly was a delight to know that our hearts beat for the same Master (a.s)

Shaayer e Ahle bait (a.s) Rehan Azmi nay waqye may khoob kaha hay,

"Ham Hussaini hay dunya may pehlay huway!!" ❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️

[Oct, 26, 2017; 115 likes]



2. I actually cried a few tears as I drove on the massive and busy highway.

'Why am I putting myself through all this mental anguish and anxiety and stress?' I asked myself as I battled the huge 18 wheeler trucks and navigated across criss-crossing loops and connecting ramps to other highways.

It was 8 am and I was driving in extremely heavy traffic to McMaster University (a 1 and a half hour drive away) to speak on the topic of "Women in Islam".

Maybe the exhaustion of the past few days (5 km marathon and a back to back schedule of reciting majalis) and the nail-biting drive on this early morning commute was just catching up with me.

But I truly found myself really questioning why I had chosen such a difficult path in life.

Why did I have to put myself in such a vulnerable place and speak on such challenging topics, in this era of Islamophobia, in front of people who would be judging my appearance and my faith?

What made me the expert on the questions they would be asking? Did I truly have all the answers?

Shouldn't I just let someone else, someone much more knowledgeable, handle this very important task?

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Wouldn't it be so much easier to be home in my comfort zone, cuddled up in my warm bed and with people who I didn't have to prove or defend anything to?

I was battling with a huge wave of self-doubt and feeling sorry for myself. Why did I always choose the difficult things to do in life?

And I took the wrong ramp and ended up onto another, much slower and extremely congested highway.

That's when the brimming tears really fell out of my eyes.

Now I was going to be late on top of all this misery. And I had woken up at 5.30 am to avoid this very scenario.

I finally arrived on the busy University campus and made crazy u-turns as I struggled to find the lecture hall and searched for parking at over 3 completely full parking lots.

I entered the lecture hall, miraculously on time, to a full audience of people of all ages and from every religious and academic background.

The huge lecture room became completely quiet as soon as the professor at the podium began to read my introduction.

And then, as he read out my credentials and about my achievements, I heard a voice call out from the back of the hall.

"Wow!" said the person.

"That's amazing!" said another.

And then the best one that made me laugh out loud:

"Can I have a selfie with you after the lecture?!"

"Me too" said someone from the back.

And it all suddenly made sense to me.

I had to be here. I had to do this work. Not even necessarily because I was great at it but because I had to do my part to create awareness about Muslim women.

Just my presence there, as an educated woman, was 80% of the work in helping to dispel stereotypes about Muslim women being oppressed and pitiable.

And subhanallah, as I began to speak, the audience responded so wonderfully. They reacted with wonder, with enthusiasm, with great interest and with also smiles and laughter at just the right places!

And just like that, I was in my element.

This, in fact, was my real comfort zone.

To be able to speak with love and wonder about the true essence of my beautiful faith.

To discuss the role models that have inspired me in the Holy Quran and from the family of the Holy Prophet (saww).

I talked and talked, writing on the blackboard, walking back and forth, barely breathing, barely having a moment to even take a sip of water.

And suddenly there was not enough time.

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There was so much I still wanted to say.

"I think I will have to return for a set of at least 3 more lectures to elaborate on some of the themes I have brought up here", I found myself saying.

"Yes!" called out a young lady. "Can you please come back?!!"

The session ended and people of all ages suddenly crowded me. So many wanted to take pictures and so many wanted to tell me how inspired they were. Many told me they had learned so much.

Some hugged me and sincerely thanked me and when I looked closely they were Muslim. There were young ladies in hijab and some whose names were the only indication that they were Muslim.

The professor for the next lecture had already arrived and so had the students.

But the crowd around me didn't want to leave just yet.

So we moved the group to the hallway and talked for 15 minutes there.

And others followed me to the parking lot and we talked another 15 minutes there.

There was so much thirst for knowledge. So much sharing of interfaith details. And I myself was so intrigued by the discussions because these were not just students from the divinity school but adult students and faculty whose focus of research and majors and thesis topics were completely mind-blowing.

Finally everyone had to rush to their other classes. And I was finally alone.

I sat inside my car and for a moment, I placed my forehead on the steering wheel.

I took a huge sigh of relief and let myself just feel the peace and quiet.

"Alhamdulillah," I whispered out loud. And I talked to God in my heart.

"Thank you Allah for giving me a chance to do this. Thank you for this huge "burden" that is actually a blessing like no other. Thank you for allowing me to be an ambassador for my faith, and for my gender too.

And thank you for giving me the opportunity to have my own faith strengthened each time I do this".

Truly, I am the one who stands to gain the most, every time I speak about Islam.

Truly, I am most blessed and most fortunate, indeed!

[Oct, 25, 2017; 261 likes]

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3. Alhamdulillah!!! my mom just arrived at the airport in Sweden to join me here for Mahe Muharram and in just a few seconds her beautiful fragrance, her warm hug, her uplifting compliments and her loving smile and kisses have made me feel like my world is perfect.

Heaven truly is under one's Mother's feet --just being near her makes a child, no matter how old they are, feel as if they are blissfully content and in heaven.

I had seriously wondered if I would be blessed with her presence beside me this year...

But your Duas have made a miracle for us all. I still get emails from you all asking me if she is okay now!! You all are truly amazing.

Subhanallah! Sweden is another world altogether!! Everyone looks soooo different (completely Scandinavian features--blonde and blue eyed). The language is unlike anything I have heard before.

I have been staring at the locals in fascination and they, in turn, stare openly at me, curiously looking at my black abaya and hijab. Alhamdulillah there is no animosity or hatred in their eyes.

We are just looking at each other and in awe that God has made such different types of people in this world!!! SUBHANALLAH!!

The airport and the inside of the houses look like a giant IKEA lol. Everything is hardwood and low ceilings and everywhere is that classic Scandinavian kind of furniture. The European touch is everywhere and yet everything is pretty modern and state of the art too.

As I walked through Copenhagen airport for my own connecting flight last night and then arrived in Stockholm, I felt tears filling my eyes.

My tears began to flow openly and I spoke to Imam Hussein a.s.

"Mawla, how sincere your sacrifice was for God. How true your actions were in every way that even 1400 years later and in such remote parts of the world, your lovers commemorate your martyrdom so devotedly.

My Master look at how much people love you!! Look at how far reaching your message is--till the Northeast edges of the world!!! That even living amongst such different people and in such a different culture with such different languages, your followers never ever forget their true identity, their true essence:

That they are Hussainis!!!

And every year they raise the flag of Islam and remind the world that the message of Imam a.s will live on forever and ever no matter whether we, ourselves, remain or not.

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Ham rahey Ya Na rahey

Per azadari rahey...

[Oct, 14, 2015; 263 likes]



4. "Do I look too fat?"

It's a rare person who has never been confronted with a question like this. Sometimes it is even asked of us by people that we barely know.

Why?

Because human beings are intrinsically frail and vulnerable creatures-- no matter how put-together and tough they look on the exterior.

And each one of us desperately seeks approval, no matter how much we deny it or appear nonchalant about it.

The fact of the matter is, each of us holds the incredible power of making or breaking other people's sense of selves in our very own hands....

No doubt, the fire of self-confidence comes from within a person. But it is truly fuelled when others see the spark within us and lovingly fan the embers by sending us positive messages.

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When a human being asks questions such as:

"Did I sound okay during the presentation?"

"Did you like my cooking today?"

"Did you think about me today?"

"Do you love me?"

It is actually a cry of a vulnerable soul that feels like it is about to go adrift in a sea of unsure feelings. It is a human being that finds itself in the danger of being destabilized.

It is a soul at the point of uncertainty and one that desperately needs our help to help calm the threat of a rocky sea ahead.

Recognize the signs.

Understand that the power is in your hands to lend a helping hand to such a soul.

Respond with what that soul needs.

And not with what our soul necessarily feels like saying.

That soul--whether it is a casual co-worker or a precious life companion-- needs love. It needs encouragement. It needs reassurance and affirmation.

It is not really asking for truth; otherwise it would not even be asking the answer to something that is often ridiculously obvious or even redundant.

Why ask if we love them when we have spent half our lives with them, had children with them, spend all our money and effort in pleasing them.

The tendency is to respond with irritation. Or to even answer in the glaringly opposite just to lighten up the mood.

But see that the soul in front of us isn't asking for anger or for jokes....

It is actually asking for strength at a vulnerable juncture in their day or even in their life.

It is baring their insecurity, their worry, their fear, their desperate need for approval which they had always hidden away so cleverly.

Perhaps that is why such questions often startle us and we respond impulsively, under duress, without really thinking about the potential ramifications of our words.

But a true, sensitive human being understands people.

Because it has understood itself.

It feels the vibes around itself. It looks beyond the seemingly benign question that is asked in a deceptively cool and casual tone.

It hears the cry of the vulnerable, frail human being.

In fact....

It doesn't even have to go that far and to await the possibility of such a question of ever even being asked.

The sensitive soul provides a steady flow of sincere affirmations of self-worth to those around it.

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It appreciates. It compliments. It preempts the vulnerable, rocky state that the souls of those around it may potentially be experiencing.

"wow you look awesome!!!"

"your presentation was so impressive!"

"I remembered you today when I passed by our favourite restaurant"

"Every time I see you, I am reminded of how blessed I am to be able to love an amazing person like you."

Making our loved ones, our colleagues, our classmates, our roommates, our siblings, our community acquaintances, our near and dear ones feel cherished and worthy and appreciated doesn't only mend the broken hearts of those around us.

It creates a positive vibe, a beautiful aura and a special energy that fills up the space around US, the very people who made others feel good about themselves.

It not only mends hearts but makes people crave our company and seek us for a rejuvenation of their unsure and vulnerable souls.

How wonderful to be the person that the strong and the confident come to when they too need strength and self-assurance...

"Live amongst people in such a manner that if you die they weep over you and if you are alive they crave for your company"

-Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s)

[Oct, 10, 2017; 64 likes]

5. 7 am in the morning here in Nairobi and the first thing my dear mother tearfully said to me as she emerged from her room after Fajr was

"I just did 2 rakat shukr to thank Allah swt for making my daughter a zakira of Imam Hussein a.s"

I kissed her and smiled affectionately at her childlike pride.

And then my phone lit up with a message from my husband. It was midnight in Toronto and he was at a packed event and Q/A session (for ladies and gents) on Social Hijab and our daughter Zaynab Dhalla was the Emcee!!!

Watching this small clip of her speaking and sharing the stage with Sheikh Mohamed Al-Hilli made me so emotional and proud! Just a few months ago, I was sharing the stage with Sheikh Hilli at the UMMA conference and a few years ago we had done an internet-based radio program on the same topic together.

And in those few seconds I too felt the same childlike pride that my mom had just expressed 🙏
• and am filled with a need to rush to my Musalla to do 2 rakat shukr Salaat for this gift of my child following in my footsteps.

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Subhanallah Allah swt truly repays us for every effort we make in his way in the best way possible.

And my phone just chimed with a new message: Zaynab texting me saying "Sheikh Hilli sends his salaam to you, mummy"

Thank you Sheikh for being so humble and generous!! And for letting me know that you are aware that's my daughter 😊😊

Ya Abbas a.s, on this day that we commemorate your supreme sacrifice and loyalty, we beg you to bless all our daughters across the world with the ability to hold up the flag of Islam after you--in the same way that Bibi Zaynab a.s did.

Ameen

[Oct, 9, 2016; 141 likes]

6. For most of us, our childhood memories are of our parents often carrying us (while we slept in their arms) to several majalis a day and into the late night.

It was exhausting and bewildering too.

It was hard to sit still. Hard to be quiet during hour long sermons. We were hungry, tired, restless and didn't understand what was being said from the mimbar (even though it was in our language)

And here we are grown ups and suddenly we are taking our children to these same majalis with the same fervour.

No matter how tiresome and ritualistic those childhood majalis felt, suddenly Majlis e Hussein runs deep in our blood.

We feel a great inner pull, an emotional attachment and yes, a great sense of compelling respect for these majalis.

This is the miraculous barakah of hearing the name of Hussein a.s and also the tarbiya (the upbringing of a child) of parents.

As the great poet Rehan Azmi has written, "Pilaya ma na dhood may bas ek naam ya Ali" (translation: My mother fed me just one name through her milk, the name of Ali)

This feeling we have in our hearts, it's a heat that never ends. Holy Prophet (saww) has referred to this heat.

"Surely, there exists in the hearts of the Mu' mineen, with respect to the martyrdom of Husain (A.S.), a heat that never subsides.

But this heat that is within us, it needs to be ignited. And the warmth and the glow has to be stoked and stoked, and fanned so that it can suffice for the upcoming years and years of tests and tribulations that life has to offer.

How do you fan it and stoke this growing inner light of noor of Hussein a.s in the heart?

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By being a parent who shows love of Hussein a.s and a great attachment to the majlis of Hussein a.s

By making physical attendance of majlis a non-debatable issue, whether LIVE broadcasting is offered or not.

Because it is through years of attendance and education and discipline that this azadari has remained for 1400 years.

And who knows? we may need to God Forbid, wait another 1400 years before our Mahdi (may Allah swt hasten his appearance) feels supported enough to come back to us from ghaibah.

We need to keep this institution alive....

How do we keep this heat alive? this fervent love, this enthusiasm, this compelling attendance despite sleepy eyes, exams, after-school activities, exhaustion, long-winded preachers etc?

By showing how much this act of attending majlis is beautiful.

Not by anger or force but by crying openly in front of our children as we describe the loving atmosphere of majlis e Hussain.

By explaining what is happening in our hearts when we think of Imam a.s

By telling them about our own childhood and how hard it was to attend but how this is the only thing that has made it possible to get through the lows and to achieve the highs of life.

"Whatever I have, my child, is a gift from my bibi a.s

This is how she repays a millionfold for doing the ehsaan of azadari."

Love of majlis e Hussain, my brothers and sisters will NOT develop in a child when their own parents criticize the preacher, complain about the length of the program, decide to stay home to listen online (due to fatigue), show anger towards the volunteers or the way things are run by the administrators, or even by expressing scepticism about some of the hadith that were presented.

Young, impressionable ears deserve better than that.

They are not fully developed to understand that these are not 'true' criticisms.

Remember these are the teenagers who will witness parents argue a little and will come to the conclusion that their parents are getting a divorce.

They don't understand that one can criticize and be irritated and still love something like crazy.....

Our criticisms don't mean we don't love the masjid or the majlis.

But our children don't know that!!

They don't know we still love Imam a.s, the masjid, the volunteers, the long nawha/latmiyya, the brotherhood of worshipping and eating with other. We love every single thing about it.

They don't understand, "hey, we said this only because we are human and feel fidgety, and hot and hungry and tired and anxious about getting to work next day".

They don't understand that no matter how suspicious you are of a certain fazail that was recited from the mimbar, that you still feel that Imams a.s could do huge miracles.

They don't know that.

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Understand that a young mind cannot make sense of such an apparent contradiction.

How can you love something and still hate it, dad?

Impressionable minds make impressions that we unwittingly conveyed because we didn't choose our words and didn't assess the mentality of the listener.

Never complain about the days of azadari. Not even one aspect of it.

Don't even complain behind closed doors to your spouse or significant other.

For you don't know whose enthusiasm and energy level is so weak that it may also just fizzle out due to a few careless words said (that you didn't even "truly" mean)

Respect the days, the rituals, the worship, the people, the sanctity, the process of these days of azadari.

Convey it to the children through your own boundless enthusiasm and joy and love. Let your tears and your smile and your faith make them see how fulfilling this majlis e Hussain is.

And as parents with power to make our children pick up their shoes off the floor, get an A on the next exam, say "salaam" to people they don't like or to do hours doing heavy chores, let us exercise our parental control also on this very essential aspect of Islam:

"Everyone make room in your schedules for Majlis every night and on weekends. If you have an exam or an essay get the studying and the work done 2 weeks prior to these upcoming special days. No ifs ands and buts"

Because even the best of deeds require someone to encourage us, bribe us, explain to us and also motivate us by authority and fear of disapproval in order to do them.

Hayya alas salaah

(Hasten towards prayers)

Hayya alal falaah

(Hasten towards success)

Hayya alaa khaeril a'mal

(Hasten towards best activity)

[Sep, 22, 2017; 132 likes]

7. It cannot get any more exhilarating than this!!!

When you love someone you want to shout out your love for them from the rooftops of the world--

And Allah swt granted me this once in a lifetime opportunity alhamdulillah!!!!

I invite you to take 15 minutes and watch my life's delightful heart-pounding moments when I was able to shout and proclaim my love for my Master, my maula Ali Ibn Abi Talib a.s at the front door of the White House in Washington, DC USA

It was awesome, it felt great and it felt so wonderful!!!

There were huge crowds of people (there were 4 large protests taking place in the same area, international tourists and wedding parties too!) and security was phenomenally tight (the Secret Service with dogs were out in full swing).

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But subhnallah, we were the only ones who had such strong loudspeakers!!

Our speeches and poetry could be heard almost a mile away--all the way to the edge of the huge park. (I know because I walked that far away)

And our voices were definitely audible inside the White House.

Ya Ali I thank you for these incredible minutes of my life where I could express my love for you so openly.

Please accept our allegiance, Oh Master.

And please pray for us that we witness the speedy reappearance of our Imam ajtfs in our lifetimes AMEEN

*note: my speech is 15 minutes long after I am introduced by world-renowned nawhakhwaan Shahid Hussain Baltistani and Emcee Jerrmein Abu Shahba

Alhamdulilah indeed! It was an amazing program outside the White House and truly a moment of a lifetime. Was truly humbled to have such great speakers and manaqabat reciters in the audience while I spoke. And each of them was so kind enough to give me effusive praise and encouragement for my speech.

May Allah swt accept these efforts brother Shahid Hussain Baltistani Mir Hasan Mir, Moulana Bilal Kazmi, BILAL KAZMI (Shairey ahlebait<a.s>) Amina Inloes Jannat Al-Baqee, maulana Imran Saki Hassan Mudasir and many others ameen

[Sep, 18, 2017; 30 likes]



7. I understood what it means to be in love by witnessing my parents' love story.

As children, we look at everything around us a like a movie. We get amused, entertained, horrified, educated about life and roles and even grief-stricken as we watch things unfold around us.

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We are riveted, often helpless spectators and the actors and actresses are our family members.

Watching my parents was like watching a very respectable, romantic bollywood movie (a notion that is unheard of, unfortunately, in this day and age).

There was never any public display of affection. Never did I see them embrace, kiss or even say anything flirtatious. I don't think I ever even heard them say, "I love you" out loud.

Yet, if there was anything we children knew, for a fact, it was this: dad was madly in love with mom.

She was the rich, brilliant, gorgeous girl in his class that he fell in love with from afar, and finally professed his love to, at the ripe old age of 14 years old. LOL

They were married at 15 years old and had their first baby at 16 yrs. And after 5 children, he passed away suddenly, just a few days after his 56th birthday.

On Thursday, on the day of Arafah was the day that my father was buried 25 years ago.

And Eid ul Adha would never ever be the same.

It was the most painful Eid of our lives. As new orphans.

I always get reflective on the day of Arafah, when I remember dad's life.

His legacy is rich with so much more than I can write about. But for me, the most salient thing about this man was, "wow, did he know how to love."

Dad was a very soft-spoken, extremely mild-mannered human being. I think I can count the number of times he ever raised his voice in our presence. I never heard him swear or even express anger or hatred at anyone. In fact, he was so decent that I never ever saw him in his undershirt or with just a towel on even if he came out of the shower. His threshold for pain was so low that on the one or two occasions that I gently tried to press his feet he exclaimed loudly in pain. If food had a bit of too much lemon he would shiver visibly at the dinner table and we children would giggle in amusement.

He was just a very, very gentle man.

His last signed will had the shocking and memorable words,

"I have no outstanding prayers or fasts to repay."

And the most bone-chilling words I had ever heard from him,

"Take care of your mother. Never hurt her when I am gone. Know that when you hurt her, you will be hurting me in the grave."

Those words have seared the fear of God and the fear of hurting my father, permanently into my heart, for ever and ever.

I will never forget that time, a year before he suddenly passed away, when we rushed him to Emergency because he was having severe chest pains.

When the doctors finally allowed me to come into the room dad was visibly struggling to stay alive. I was terrified but I held his hand and tried to soothe him. It was rare to touch him because he always made it a point never to touch any of us, his 4 daughters. He was extremely respectable like that and would blush and get flustered if we tried to kiss his cheek at airports.

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"Shyrose, I have had a good life," he smiled through his pain.

"Allah has given me more than I could have ever asked for. I am leaving this world so, so thankful for every single thing he has blessed me with."

He held up his hand to stop me from speaking. He clearly was in a very reflective mood and I respectfully remained quiet. I was really embarrassed that I, his youngest child, just 22 years old, was being given this huge honour of hearing his last thoughts, words and wishes.

"I have done everything to the best of my ability, Shyrose. I failed at business, I failed even though I tried really hard. But one thing I know I succeeded in. And I leave this world with a clear conscience because of that.

If there is one thing I did completely, fully and to the best of my ability and I am victorious at, Shyrose, is that I loved your mother. I loved her with all my heart, my body, my soul. And it gives me so much peace to know I did not leave one single thing in loving her. I never loved any other woman but her. And I am proud of that."

I looked at my father in awe. Here was a man from a generation that had barely seen the women's movement take place. A man who toiled his entire life to give us children the kind of affluent lifestyle that his wife had left forever, when she chose to be with him. A man who had had to live apart from his family for over 20 years in Dubai so that he could earn and send his family money to live and study in Canada.

Dad only spent pockets of time in the year with us.

And instead of lamenting over the lonely years, all he could say was that he was in peace because he had loved.

As the tears flowed from my eyes, I remained quiet and he and I just looked at each other silently.

I realized that he was the strength behind my mom's confidence. Mom had been physically and brutally child-abused and marriage was her escape. But this was the man who has saved her self-confidence and gave her a sense of self-worth.

How did we children know he loved mummy when he never even hugged her in front of us?

Because if we ever, ever raised our voices at mom, dad was sure to come and quietly stand in the doorway and quietly ask,

"who is raising their voice at my wife?"

And we would scurry and hide even though he had never ever laid a hand on us or even yelled at us in our lives. What were we afraid of? He could never even hurt a fly!

We were afraid of hurting him. Afraid of losing respect in his eyes.

Dad was the kind of person you wanted to like you. His love was so gentle that you felt like a delicate piece of glass under his loving gaze.

Never did I ever see a moment when my mom would emerge from the bedroom door dressed in her sarees and with her hair all done up like a bollywood actress and my dad wouldn't stop in his tracks and look up.

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He would smile. A smile of great affection and admiration. I swear to you there was only genuine joy. And he would say,

"Shirin, you look beautiful."

And we would all realize that not one of us could ever compete with mom.

She would always be the most precious human being to him. The most beautiful, the most worthy of his respect and his affection.

In every single picture that is left of our parents together, dad is staring at mom affectionately. He wouldn't even pose for a picture; he would just look at her and just admire her. That look spoke a million words.

We would always tease him and giggle at the fact that daddy had forgotten to look at the camera, once again. And he would good-naturedly shrug with a sheepish smile.

Being the youngest I would often squeeze myself between them in their bed. I was a real thorn in their side but they would reluctantly let me stay.

And in the darkness I would hear them chat about politics, religion, the psychology of human beings, the intricacies of relationships, business, their childhoods, their siblings, us children.

Like a fly on the wall I would quietly hear them chat like best friends. And I understood that spouses help each other think. They help each other plan. They guide each other. They comfort each other. And they compliment each other.

"Shirin," he would say. "There were so many women there at that event today. But I swear to you, there was no one who was as beautiful as you. You know how to dress, you know how to do your hair, you know how to pick just the right thing in a shop. The way you dress our children, the way you decorate the house, the way you speak. No one can be you, Shirin. You are you. That's it. You are simply you."

My father would compliment our mother by using her as an example in front of us children. He would say, "Go ask your mom to help you match your clothes, honey. She knows."

He would sometimes point out things mom did and say, "See how your mom paid attention to every detail here. Her touch is everywhere. See how she made this room shine."

He transmitted his respect for her into us children. And we learned to see her through his eyes.

He honoured her, cherished her and stood up for her so that we children could understand that mom and dad are ONE.

As a mother of teenagers myself now, I realized how dangerous it is to criticize our spouses in front of our children.

Children pick up our weaknesses and see the cracks in our relationship and boy do they know how to milk things to their advantage.

When they realize that you and your spouse do not see eye to eye on things, are not 2 hearts that beat as one, they inadvertently learn to "divide and conquer."

Because for them, at this early stage of life, it's all a game about how to get what they want from these 2 people who hold the keys to all the treasures.

Zakira Shyrose

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The day we show our children that our co-parent is exactly that, an equal partner, they will back down and not even try to pit one against the other in an effort to get what they want.

They will never dare to gossip about the other parent to us. Nor will they even try to spy on the parent and gain brownie points from us.

They will know, "These two talk. They love each other more than they love us. They are a team. They will always win because their forces are joined. They will always stand up for each other."

My father's legacy may have made it impossible for me to ever respect any man the way I respect him.

It may have made every romantic gesture from any man completely mediocre in comparison to the way my dad loved.

It may have made me disappointed in life to realize not many can love like he did.

But I am thankful anyway.

I am thankful to him for showing me that love does exist.

And that is why I can look up to the love stories of sacrifice and utter devotion in the story of the Prophet (saww) and Bibi Khadija a.s and I can look at the intense love between Imam Ali a.s and Bibi Fatema a.s and I can believe that these were true stories.

If a mere human being can love so deeply then imagine how deep those love stories must be.....

Yesterday I spoke to my mother on the phone and as we discussed dad's approaching death anniversary, I said to her something that made her sob openly.

I said, "Mummy, you are truly a loyal woman indeed. You were only 56 years old when dad passed away. My siblings are older than that now and I realize when I see how beautiful they are that you too were a gorgeous woman in her prime when dad left this world. Mummy how did you do it? How did you stay unmarried for 25 years? How did you spend those lonely days and lonely nights. How did you protect yourself from all those men who have wanted you and still look at you in awe even though you are 81 years old. Mom you are truly a chaste, pious woman."

And she sobbed and sobbed. And I heard her loneliness through the phone line. I heard her unspoken pain and I understood that someone had finally just acknowledged her empty life and her struggle to remain chaste.

And she said, "Your father gave me enough love to last me several lifetimes, Shyrose"

Dad, I salute you.

I send you my salaams to you in the grave, my dear father.

May your grave light up like you lit up our lives.

May you find peace and joy like the kind you gave to us.

May you too have enough love in the care of your Lord to last you several lifetimes.

I thank you for loving our mother so deeply. Because the biggest gift a man can give his children is to love their mother.

Mothers are and always will be the most precious thing to any child. A mother can be flawed, cruel, neglectful, forgetful, unloveable. But still. Every child will fiercely love their mother.

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No matter what colour, culture, age, or era a human being is from. His mother means the world to him.

And when your father loves your mother, he makes your world peaceful. When he looks at her like you look at her, it makes you express your joy in childish paintings of a house in the woods with a mom and dad and 5 children. And a sun shining in the sky. And a rainbow.

It makes you love your father more when you know he too loves the woman that you love.

Thank you daddy for a beautiful childhood.

We missed you a lot but we knew you were working away so that we could study and have a beautiful house and a life in Canada.

And that made you even more of an angel in our eyes.

But the times you were with us, your gentle smile, your joy in seeing us laugh, your happiness to see your wife walk around as a strong woman, endeared you to us for ever and ever.

Respect....Daddy. That's all I can feel for you from the bottom of my heart.

That in just 56 years you managed to show us how to be an awesome husband. And a gentle father....

رَبِّ اَرْحَمُهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَّانِي صَغِيرًا

Rabbir hamhuma kama Rabbayan Sagheera

My Lord! bestow on them Thy Mercy just as they cherished me in childhood
(17:24)

[Aug, 28, 2017; 104 likes]

8. It's peak summer but I suddenly got the chills. Shivering uncontrollably I ducked under the blankets and completely covered myself from head to foot. Soon I began coughing and my throat felt sore. And I could feel a fever taking over. I knew I was coming down with something bad.

I stayed like this for a good 20 minutes, unable to tell anyone how unwell I felt.

My hands and feet were cold as ice and I was shivering. I couldn't move even slightly as it would make cold pockets of air enter the blanket.

I heard a knock on my bedroom door and a small voice asked,

"Mummy are you okay?"

"No", I croaked. "I am not well. Please ask your big sister for whatever you need, Fatema."

I am the only one who calls my 11 year old Shireen Fatema simply with the name "Fatema".

It was my dream to have a daughter named 'Fatema' and my husband wanted the name "Shireen" (which happens to be his late grandma's name as well as my own mother's name). So we called her Shireen Fatema.

But I am the only one who sometimes, out of the blue, calls her "Fatema" and she responds readily.

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"Mummy..." I hear her baby girl's voice whisper, suddenly very near my ear, even though I am deeply cocooned inside the blanket.

"Shireen please don't touch me. I am very cold. I am freezing. My feet are frozen. I am sick. I can't afford to be sick," I babbled incoherently.

"Mummy where are your fluffy pink socks? They will keep you warm."

"I dunno.." I mumbled as I fell asleep. Those socks that I use in winter for very cold days were probably hidden deep in my drawer somewhere. And there was no way I was moving to find them.

My eyes fluttered open to the sensation of tiny little hands carefully taking my right foot out of the blanket.

Small hands gently rolled a fluffy sock easily onto my frozen foot.

Then my right foot was deposited under the blanket and my left foot was carefully exposed.

Teeny tiny fingers smoothly, easily put the sock on as if I was a delicate, little, helpless baby.

Shireen tucked my blanket cosily around my feet.

Soon her arms were around me and with the blanket still over my head.

"Mummy?" She whispered softly. "Shall I put some Vicks on you? Get you something to eat? Tell me...What do you want, mummy"

"I need..." I said immediately, honestly, helplessly. "My mommy".

She opened the blanket from the side of my face to expose a teeny, tiny inch of my cheek.

"I am your mommy," she whispered. She kissed my cheek softly, tenderly.

"Wow..."I murmured in awe, as if struck by an epiphany . "You ARE my mummy. You have my mommy's name"

And she kissed me all over my face gently, softly, lovingly and whispered,

"If you need anything just let me know mummy. I will take care of you don't worry."

My head was under the blanket once more as I heard her walk away. She stopped at the light switch and asked me if she should turn the light off. Then she quietly left the room, closing the door behind her.

And in literally seconds my feet were toasty warm and my hands were warm, warm, warm. I felt bathed in a glow of such warmth and euphoria that I felt like I was flying.

Was it the fever or the effect of those baby kisses? Suddenly I felt like the most powerful woman on earth.

What a magician! How did she cure my shivering with a pair of fluffy socks?!!!! How did her soft hands and lips and teeny voice mesmerize me into believing my own mummy was caressing my face?

As I marvelled at my sudden growing sense of well-being, I realized our children truly CAN replace our own parents. And that Allah swt has planned this entire thing knowing that our hearts would be shattered and vulnerable when our mothers would someday leave this world.

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Shireen's name and demeanour, and her woman's touch and maternal style had made me realize my mother is and CAN live through my own daughters!

And then as the euphoria took over and I felt well, so well that I soon got out of bed and my fever literally, miraculously, actually left me I was hit with another epiphany.

Umme Abiha!!!!

This is what he (saww) meant...it wasn't the food, the clothes, the tending of the wounds that Bibi Fatema a.s so lovingly did... for there were many to serve him. Many wives, loving companions and the angels themselves...

It was the feeling she gave him.

The feeling she gave to an orphaned child whose father passed away when he was still in the womb of his mother. And whose mother passed away a mere few years later when he was barely 6 years old.

Fatema a.s made him feel loved, nurtured, cared for, protected, healed, and never alone...

Whether it was a cuddly blanket in the event of the cloak, or removing garbage and pieces of animal flesh that were cruelly flung at him, or tending to his bleeding wound and broken tooth at Uhud.

Or simply knowingly, sympathetically smiling at him when he would come home after dealing with terrible people...

Fatema a.s made Prophet Mohamed (saww) feel the feelings only his own mother could have given him.

No wonder any hurt on her face shattered his heart...

And this is how loved Zaynab a.s made Ali a.s feel when he too was left alone in the world, without his mother, his beloved cousin (saww), his loving, caring wife (a.s).

And this is how Sakina a.s made Imam Hussein a.s feel as he lay peacefully on the burning sands of kerbala with her little tear-stained face on his chest, the enemy thundering and calling out for his blood in the distance.

"Hussein you are not alone. Your mother is here right beside you. Feeling your pain, your loneliness, your grief, your struggle, your every single emotion. Hussein feel peace. It is time to come home to me."

And he felt healed. He felt cured. He felt rejuvenated.

And he stood up, suddenly ready to leave every single thing that he loved, he cherished, he needed... for the love of his ultimate Love, Allah swt.

And he was able to conquer the battle, conquer the world and conquer billions and billions of hearts on this universe.

Subhanallah it is true, after all

Behind every one of these great men were great, great women.

Indeed...

[Aug, 26, 2017; 190 likes]

9. Ever been told that someone wonderful and much sought after is in love with you?
Suddenly in complete surprise you find yourself in front of the mirror asking why....
What did they see in you?
What is so special in you that has made someone like them love someone so inconsequential
such as you?
And you begin seeing yourself with their eyes....
And your sense of self-worth increases because you see how special you really are....really could
be...
You feel more beautiful, more powerful, more worthy...
You find yourself making a special effort to be more loveable to the one who loves you...
You want to be the best that you can be so that they can be assured and satisfied that they have
loved the right person.
Your life takes on more meaning. Because now you realize you are the answer to someone else's
prayers.
You realize this insignificant you can be someone's significant other...
you can be a helper and lover and one who completes their mission and their dreams and their
purpose and their goals.
Suddenly life feels so beautiful...
Everything you look at looks so so wonderful.
There is a bounce in your step.
A secret joy, a content smile.
Someone loves you. You!!
And your eyes search for that person who loves you.
You keep glancing at them. Wondering if they are staring at you.
You want to reassure yourself that it is really true...
That you really are the object of their affection.
And when you catch them looking at you a wonderful thing happens.
You feel at peace with the world.
You feel peace at your own existence.
You feel reassured and your heart feels so warm that someone has finally understood your worth
and your purpose and your uniqueness.
And knowing that they love you makes you want to love them even more.
Their love evokes your love.
Their attention evokes your attention
Their longing evokes your longing
Their glances evoke letters of love from you.
Their missing you makes you miss them more...

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😊.😊.😊.😊.😊

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11. Happy 150th Birthday Canada!!!

Love you with all my heart ❤️❤️

Feel so grateful to my parents for having had the courage to move here 35 years ago (back when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's father, Pierre Elliot Trudeau was our Prime Minister)

Thank you for the love, for the acceptance and for being one of the most cleanest, safest and kindest countries in the world.

Thank you for using our troops for peacemaking missions.

And thank you with all our hearts for Multiculturalism! It is truly an amazing feeling to be a part of a mosaic and to feel right at home with such a huge family of cultures, languages, customs and colours.

Thank you for being one of the most politest countries of the world.

Yes, it can get pretty cold here but our hearts stay warm because of all the goodness that we are surrounded with.

Canadians do apologize easily and it's the most endearing thing about us 🥰.

Canada, it's truly been an honour and a privilege to have grown up here.

Have a great year! And many, many, more successful years to come ameen!

[Jul, 1, 2017; 77 likes]

12. Jazakallah khair to the Institute of Knowledge of Dearborn, Michigan for their amazing hospitality and superb kindness (and willingness to allow me to recite at 4 Islamic centres and at countless private gatherings)

It's been an amazing, whirlwind tour of lectures and dinner and dessert invitations over the past 2 weeks. I was giving 2 and sometimes 3 lectures a day alhamdulillah.

Subhanallah I was able to speak at 4 different Islamic centres including daily in English at the Institute of Knowledge (Lebanese community), in Urdu at the Zainabiya Centre (Indo-Pakistani community) as well as at the Islamic Centre of America (at an interfaith event for the Alumni Girl Scouts of America) and the Ahlulbayt Centre in Toledo, Ohio (predominantly Iraqi, Lebanese).

Completely overwhelmed by all the outpouring of love I have received by the Lebanese, Indo-Paki and Iraqi community.

I was invited to share absolutely scrumptious iftaar meals and to taste authentic Lebanese food and desserts at countless homes.

I leave my heart in this Shia headquarters of North America and with a new and truly amazing circle of friends.

Dearborn!! You have made me feel like I was completely at home!

Eid Mubarak and may Allah swt reward you for your love and kindness ameen ❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️

[Jun, 25, 2017; 163 likes]

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13. I was wearing my favourite white outfit yesterday when I suddenly found myself splashed with red and yellow curry.

My immediate thought was that my dress was ruined. After all, turmeric stains like crazy. And yet, I dropped everything and immediately ran to the sink to wash myself.

I kept scrubbing, kept applying soap, drenched the dress (and my entire self) with water. Kept praying too as I really love this dress.

I didn't care how long it took or who was watching me. I was completely focused on saving my dress.

A few minutes later I stared in disbelief.

The dress was good as new again!!! The stains were gone!!!

What had gone right?!!

First, no matter how discouraged and hopeless I felt, I still ran RIGHT AWAY to work on removing the stains.

Second, no matter how futile my efforts felt, my love for my dress kept me scrubbing hard. I couldn't bear the thought of losing my beautiful white dress. And I knew even one stain on my white dress would ruin its beauty.

Third, I kept praying for Divine Assistance to make the impossible possible.

And I wasn't left disappointed.

Subhanallah, this has truly made me reflect....

If only I cared for my own soul this badly....

If only seeing just one stain of sin on my piety made me restless and eager to remove it with astagfaar.

If only I, too, loved my soul so much that I kept relentlessly scrubbing those sins off in the different ways that have been taught to me by Allah swt and the 14 Masumeen a.s

If only I would continue begging to be cleansed, asking for Divine Assistance in making the impossible possible and praying for my tainted soul to become white and pure again.

In this matter too, He would not ever leave me disappointed for He has promised complete forgiveness and His promises are always true.

The key is that I have to CARE for my own soul. It's my responsibility, no one else's. I have to CARE about its possible destruction. I have to work with URGENCY and with relentless efforts. And I have to have hope that Allah swt will take care of the rest by making the impossible possible.

Not only will He swt cleanse me, but because I am sincere and I follow Him and only Him--He will also protect me from the accursed one, the misguided one, the one who wishes me ill.

"O ye who believe! Guard your own souls: If ye follow (right) guidance, no hurt can come to you from those who stray. The goal of you all is to Allah: it is He that will show you the truth of all that ye do".

(Sura Al Ma'ida 5:105)

[Jun, 10, 2016; 256 likes]

14. My 80 yr old mother ended up spending the night at my place and had to borrow and wear my clothes.

She left and I found them neatly folded and as I picked them up a heavenly scent overwhelmed my senses.

I held them to my face and the scent of my mother filled me up and brought tears to my eyes. It was the perfume from those childhood hugs when she would hold me to her chest and I found peace from all the hurts of the world.

Ma, Meri jaan.

They say Jannah is under your feet but this heavenly scent tells me that you ARE jannah.

Ma please stay longer on this earth. I know you are tired and have lived an amazing and fulfilled life and you think your work is done...

But I need you. I will always need you.

I need your scent, the texture of your soft skin, your delicate hands on my face. Your smile of love and pride whenever you look at me.

Mother. I am lost without you.

Your scent lingers in the air. And on the clothes that I will never wash again. Or even wear again so that I can preserve your memory.

But I never want to live with just a memory.

I want you. I need you. And I beg Allah swt to loan you to me for longer and longer.

And I beg him to give me the tawfeeq to make the most of each moment that your scent is still on this earth.

Ameen

[May, 16, 2017; 381 likes]

15. Ever hurt your mother with harsh words and disobeyed her so that she looks at you with tears in her eyes and asks,

"You are treating your own mother this way, my child? You are turning away from me? your own mother??"

Have you forgotten how much I care for you?

Who held your hand and taught you how to walk, how to speak, my child?

Who loved you when the world turned away from you?

You have earned a bit of education and learned to stand tall and now you are rude and arrogant with the same mother who has made you this capable?! The one who paved the way for you!

My child what has happened to you?

How did you suddenly change?

Now the sound of my voice guiding you, my calling out to you to come be with me irritates you,

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my child?

Who has misled you to turn away from the only person in this world who truly cares for you? "

Allah swt in the Holy Quran speaks to us in the same loving and hurt tone that a mother uses when trying to revive the conscience of a misguided child.

If we allow the Holy Quran to truly touch us, these verses have the ability to literally reach right into our soul and shake it to its core.

And to open our eyes with a jolt, as if suddenly awakened from a deep and heedless slumber.

For these are the words of He who loves us more than the love of 72 mothers....

"O man what deceives you concerning your Lord and makes you impudently arrogant?

Who created you, proportioned you, and balanced you?"

(Holy Quran

Sura Infitar 82:6-7)

[May, 16, 2017; 117 likes]

16. Wiladat e Imam Hussein a.s Mubarak!! So overwhelmed to be surprised, after my speech today, with a beautiful glass trophy by the Iraqi community at Alrasool Aladham Islamic Centre.

So thankful to Imam Hussein a.s for granting this insignificant person the status of being his slave.

Maula, please accept our love and our small efforts. And grant us shafa'at 🙏.

Labayk Ya Hussein!

[Apr, 29, 2017; 252 likes]



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17. I have just spent the past 10 minutes sobbing in sajda. I couldn't say a word. All I could do was cry. But I know Allah swt understood my pain. He (swt) understood what I wanted to say, what I was trying to beg for, what was making me hurt so deeply.

I am crying because I just received a text from one of the young Iraqi boys who had walked with me from Najaf to Kerbala one year and a half ago (Dec 2013).

Saif Alsaady with his tall, strong, muscular frame and quick smile was a delightful, young man who is not easy to forget. The other Iraqi young boys in our group had teased him mercilessly for repeatedly failing his classes at school and he good-naturedly laughed the loudest at himself. He was the one who had carried tired 6 ft 3 Farhan (who passed away a few months ago in Vancouver, Canada) on his shoulders and had actually run like that for a few minutes.

"Aunty," he wrote. "I am in war."

And there were pictures of him defending his homeland from ISIS in Samarra, at the shrine of the 11th Imam Hassan Askary (a.s) one of the most dangerous places on earth at the moment.

Pictures of him dressed in military fatigues with bullets and guns strapped to his young chest began appearing on my phone screen. There was one of him pointing to a bomb. Some of him smiling and carrying a machine gun.

But the most heartbreaking one was of him standing beside stacks of empty coffins.

"This is for us when we die," he wrote.

Saif had told me this day would come.

We were walking from Najaf to Kerbala and he had pointed to a billboard which had lots of pictures of young men on it. He had said proudly,

"Some day, my picture will also be there."

I had looked at him and smiled at his dreams of being famous like those handsome young men in the pictures.

"Who are those men?" I asked innocently.

"They are shuhada. Died for Sayeda Zaynab. In Shaam."

As the shocking words began to register in my mind, Saif struggled in his limited English to explain.

"Every day I ask my father, my mother. Let me go. Let me defend shrine of Bibi Zaynab. But my mother cry. She say no. Please pray for me aunty. Pray I get permission."

The respect I felt for this young man at that moment is indescribable. Tears began to flow from my eyes.

How could such a beautiful, young person with a whole life ahead of him want to die so badly?

"Aunty," said Mustafa Alzuhaire, who had become our group's translator, "he says his family needs him to earn. He bakes bread in a bakery. He couldn't concentrate on his school work. And then he had to leave school so that he could support them. But it is his dream to die guarding the shrine of Bibi Zaynab (a.s)."

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At that time I had told Saif tearfully that my prayers for him were that he would live a very long life. He would finish school, get married, get lots of beautiful children, have a good job and make his parents proud.

He had laughed and shaken his head at my words. As if I was saying the most outlandish thing on earth.

Saif is not the only one who is in the war right now. Young 19 yr old Ameer Ali has also been texting me his own pictures from the battlefield.

Ameer is that young man who I have previously written about. The one who had playfully and dangerously climbed onto a moving truck and was dragged in front of our eyes.

"Ameer why did you do that?! I had asked him in shock. "You could have gotten killed! Why did you do that?!!!"

Amir had simply laughed and then he had turned to Zamaan and asked, "Zamaan do you love life?"

Zamaan half-laughed and said "yeah I love life! are you kidding me?"

Ameer said:

"I don't love life. I have no job, no money, no house, no education, no FUTURE. Everyday I want to kill myself but it is haraam so I live"

At that time Hussein Amuslimawi standing beside him had said "it is haraam. It is haraam. We all want to die but we cannot kill ourself"

Ameer continued, "I beg my father to let me go to bibi Zaynab and die defending her shrine but he wont let me go. So I have to live but i want to die everyday"

I had began to cry and cry when I had heard these words. Ameer looked at me in surprise and said "You are crying for me? why?"

I said, "Amir you all are such strong, beautiful, handsome, faithful lovers of Imam Hussein, You have a full life ahead of you. You are precious. Why should a person like you want to die? You don't know how precious your life is!!!"

And he had smiled and shook his head in disbelief.

As a mother of an 18 year old son myself, these pictures cut through my heart like a knife. There were so many moments during those 5 days of Arbaeen when we walked from Najaf to Kerbala that I had looked at each of the Iraqi young boys (all under 22 yrs) with me and had seen the face of my teenage son, Hassan, in them. Their innocence, their jokes, their adventuresome spirit, their childlike behaviour, their eagerness to please, their handsome faces all reminded me of my own child.

I had often looked at them with awe. Their faces had such noor on them. Despite poverty, everyday struggles, war, political turmoil and limited resources, these young men exuded strong energy, good looks, charm and an enthusiasm for life that made their smiles just lift your spirits. The way they served us zaireen is beyond description. There was nothing they wouldn't do for us. They would have carried us the entire way to Kerbala if we had asked them.

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"Sister Shyrose, just look at them," said Zamaan Zee Syed (from Edmonton, Canada). "Don't they look like they could all be GQ models or something? Mashallah what beautiful faces, what beautiful human beings".

And it was true. Their inner beauty and purity made them glow with radiance right in front of our eyes.

And yet any day now, we may hear that they have lost their lives....maybe no one will even be able to let us know.

Such young lives with so much promise being put in such peril, such danger. I cannot bear the thought....

Our little group of soldiers shared so much in those days of Chehlum when we walked side by side towards the shrine of Imam Hussein (a.s) We laughed together, we cried together, we shared stories and dreams and hopes and fears.

In just one year, we suddenly lost young 16 yr old Farhan who passed away after a medically induced coma in Vancouver after suffering uncontrollable seizures.

And now the lives of Saif and Ameer are in danger as they actively help their nation fight against ISIS.

Please pray for the youth and the children and the people of Iraq.

Please pray for the youth and the children and the people of Pakistan.

Please pray for the youth and the children and the people of Palestine.

Please pray for the youth and the children and the people of Bahrain.

Please pray for the youth and the children and the people of Afghanistan.

Please pray for the youth and the children and the people of Nepal.

of Syria,

of Nigeria,

of India,

of Burma,

of Malaysia

Please pray for the youth and the children and the people of ALL countries around the world that are facing danger, turmoil, poverty and hardship.

Please recite 5 times:

اَمَّنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاہُ وَيَكْثِفُ السُّوءَ

“amma yujeeb-ul muz-tarra iza da’ao wa yakshey fuuss soo’

Is He [not best] who responds to the desperate one when he calls upon Him and removes evil and makes you inheritors of the earth?

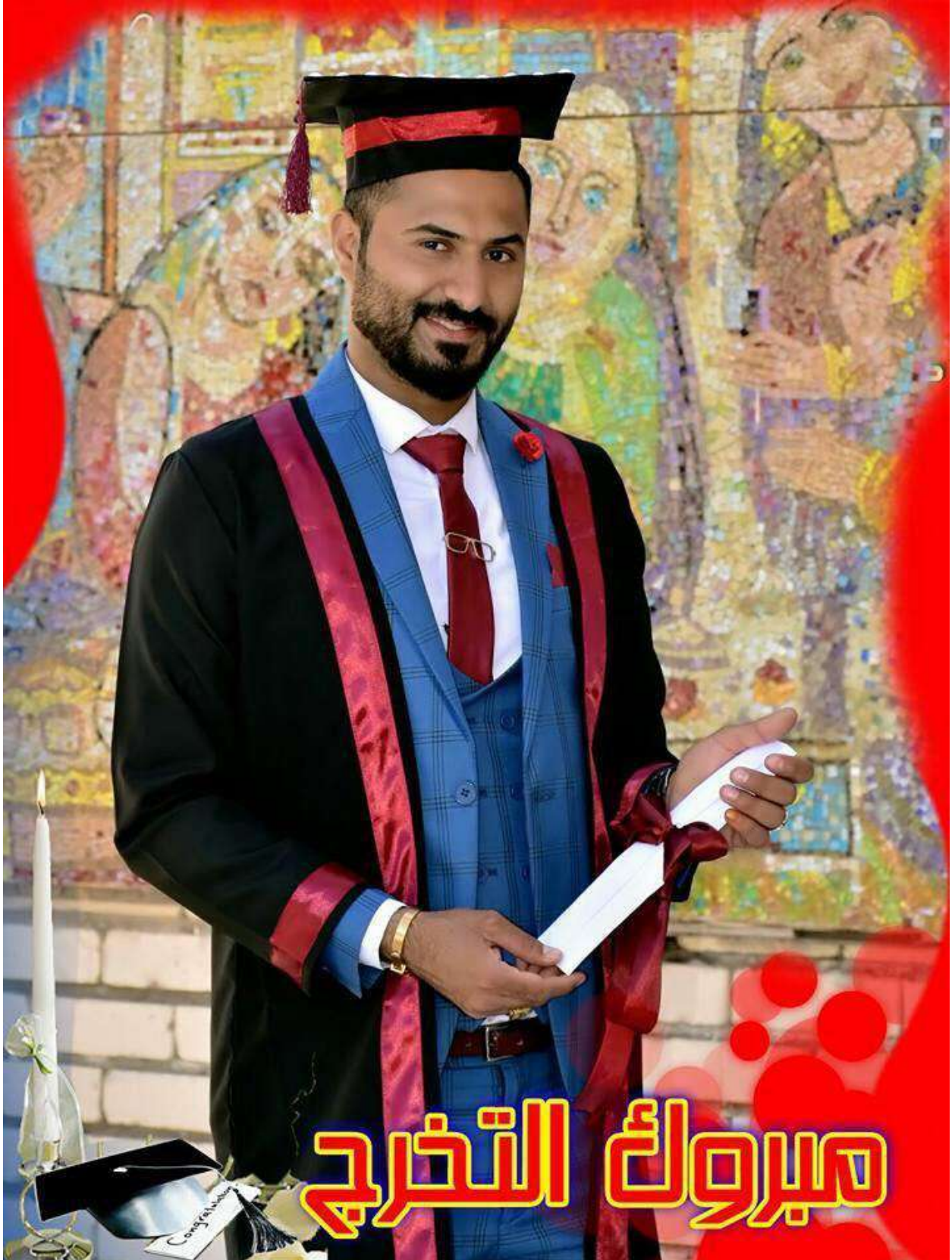
(Holy Quran 27:62)

[Apr, 17, 2017; 126 likes]



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18. It has been truly shocking and saddening to see Sweden, a country that has reportedly taken in 160,000 Syrian refugees, recently being a target for senseless violence.

The recent attack on the streets of Stockholm was exactly where over 6000 of us Muslims walked together in a huge peaceful Muharram procession (juloos) under the title of "In the Footsteps of Zaynab a.s" just two years ago in October 2015. We gathered in a massive area and people all over the downtown area (and from the windows and balconies of high glass buildings) watched us curiously.

It was an incredible moment indeed and I was blessed to have the opportunity to speak about Bibi Zaynab a.s and the legacy she has left for us all, Muslims and non-Muslims.

What I am most thankful for is that I spoke directly to the people of Sweden and told them not only how great their country is to care for the oppressed of this world but also how we, as Muslims, are eager to give back to society.

I also drew comparisons between what the compassionate nations of the world are doing and what the message of Bibi Zaynab a.s was.

Here are some key excerpts from my 13 min speech and some of the amazing pictures of that most memorable day of my life.

"Brothers and sisters of Sweden, this most beautiful land. Our greetings to you

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You make us proud!

Long Live Sweden! We are proud to live here.

We love this land you know why?

Because, you, my brothers and sisters of Sweden

You stand for justice

You stand against oppression

You stand for human rights

You have shown the world how to accept the people who are oppressed

People of Sweden you make us proud

You have taken in over 65,000 oppressed people into your shores

You have opened your hearts, your homes, your land and you continue to do so

My greetings and a salute to your Prime Minister Stefan Lofven, who has said in the meetings that "we want to set a standard, a Europe-wide solution for hosting refugees."

And your Foreign Minister has said that "it is important we signal being a community that rests on common values of democracy and defense of human rights."

Subhnallah! Praise be to God that Sweden is a land that stands for human rights for that is what we Muslims stand for us well

We love people who have shared values of morality, of democracy, of helping the oppressed. We respect you, we love you, we are with you, we will show you what the true name of Islam is, what the true essence of Islam is.

"Praise be to God that Sweden is a land that stands up for human rights for that is what we Muslims stand for as well. And this name that you see here today and the name that you hear, the name of Hussein. THIS is why we love Hussein, for Hussein too stood up for human rights, he stood up against oppression, he stood up for freedom. He stood for a dignified human being"

We speak for all the oppressed people of the world, we will give you our support, we will give you a hand so that you can stand beside us and give back to the society

Oh People of Sweden we invite you to learn more about this great personality and understand why 1,400 years later we shed tears for this great personality of Lady Zaynab

May Allah swt, May God the Glorified help this world to bring justice and may He swt help us all to walk in the footsteps of those who help the oppressed, who stand up for the oppressed."

[Apr, 13, 2017; 76 likes]

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18. Your duas and support have made this possible everyone. Jazakallah khair to you all. Feeling so blessed to have this happen in the blessed holy month of Rajab when we celebrate so many sacred dates, especially the birth of Imam Ali a.s

A special Thank You to The Islamic Circle of North America for honouring me with the "Woman of Wonder (WOW) 2017 Award"

Mashalah it was a beautiful event attended by over 300 women and I presented my keynote speech with the Education Minister Mitzi Hunter and many female Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) in the audience.

To hear about my experience and the key points from my motivational speech on how we can all be "women of wonder" click on this link from a recent TV show on [Toronto 360 TV](#) with hosts [The Mani & Fariha Show](#).

[Apr, 8, 2017; 226 likes]





19. I groggily become aware of my cellphone buzzing at 6.30 am...

"Mummy" flashes my iphone screen with a gorgeous picture of my smiling mom.

I immediately sit up with a jolt, completely alert.

I feel the familiar feeling of extreme anxiety and dread starting at the pit of my stomach and quickly rising up to my throat.

I always have this strange reaction whenever I see the word "mummy" flash on my cell phone screen, whatever time of the day I see it.

It's always a mixture of extreme joy mixed with a sharp jolt of extreme fear.

Extreme joy that my 81 year old mother, a cancer and mastectomy survivor of just two years ago, is alive and well and able to dial my number.

And extreme fear that this may not be mummy calling at all.

It may be the phone call that I have dreaded and braced myself for ever since I was a little girl.

It may be a family member from her home calling me to tell me the most terrible news in the world.

I pick up and say nothing. I am paralyzed with fear to be honest. And unable to compose myself this early in the morning.

"Shyrose!" says my mom cheerfully.

I breathe a sigh of relief.

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"I have made the most tastiest biryani you have ever eaten in your life!! Believe me, it's my best biryani ever," she says ecstatically as she chews loudly. "You must come and have some right away."

I check my phone screen again. It really is 6.30 am.

"Mummy you are eating biryani at 6.30 am..." I begin chuckling, in spite of myself.

"What, you think I am crazy?" she asks incredulously.

"Shyrose don't you remember? I have invited my friends over for lunch today. I told them to be ready at 11 am. You are supposed to pick one of them. Of course I have to have cooked by now. And I had to taste if there is enough salt, " she explained patiently, between her chewing.

I groan inwardly. Ah, man how could I have forgotten. And why is my memory worse than my 81 year old mother's?

Truth be told, mom doesn't have a memory problem at all. She even remembers everything that you wish she would just forget now, already.

I mentally calculate how early mom must have woken up today. She usually wakes up an hour or two before Fajr and recites lots of supplementary salaah and the Holy Quran. Then, after that she recites for an hour or two more. And usually she has cooked a family meal (for 5 people) by 8 am. And I know nothing interferes with that routine of early morning Quran...

So she must have been up really early...But I quickly give up trying to calculate. My brain cannot do the math this early in the morning.

Where does she get the energy? Why can't she take it easy? Why does she have to make life so busy for herself and for all of us?

I groan and crawl out of bed. And I write-off the rest of my day. Today, I would have to dedicate my day to mom and her friends. No use fighting it.

One lesson I have learned in life. Never fight mom. You will not win. She won't even try to convince you. She will simply continue doing whatever she had planned. And you will be a part of that plan, like it or not.

My 81 year old mother has 2 main passions in her life. Actually mom is over-passionate about pretty much everything but the two biggest passions are:

- 1) To spend on expensive clothes and jewellery (and to dress up like royalty)
- 2) To cook and to invite large groups of people over to eat (and to treat people like royalty)

Both these passions of hers are met with fierce opposition by each of us, her five children.

Each of us give her long lectures on how much money and time she spends on both of these passions and how much she goes out of her way to make them both happen.

We may not pay for these passions or even help her in any way to achieve them but we do always feel she is over-extending and over-exerting herself.

But these passions give her so much joy that we give in and let her do what she wants.

Besides, we won't win in dissuading her anyway...

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For no force in the world can stop mom from dressing like a Maharani or treating her guests as if they are eating at the home of a Maharani.

In fact, even our childhood home is decorated like a mini-palace complete with overflowing rose gardens and fountains, breezy white multi-layered lace curtains, an indoor mahogany swing with hand-embroidered cushions and museum-like artifacts from around the world placed on every side-table and inside every glass cupboard. Even the dishes and cutlery are fancy beyond description.

Mom actually has over 300 glass plates, cups and cutlery. And she uses those for every majlis she has at her home.

The dinner table is always set (24 hours a day) as if it's a 5-star restaurant complete with fanned napkins sprouting out of glasses and rose-print side plates placed within exact millimetre distance from the expensive china tea cups.

I always had this very eerie feeling when I was a little girl growing up in our family home, that my mom was a princess who had married my poor, struggling father by mistake. Or that she was a Bollywood actress who had given up her career to marry this simple man and be a mother to his mediocre children.

We were misfits. Mom was larger than life. Gorgeous, charming, full of energy and humour and graceful like a dove. My dad was enchanted by her and was insanely in love with her. It was impossible not to be in a trance when in her presence.

As a young mom, she used to wear gorgeous sarees, put flowers in her hair and full make up and make chapattis effortlessly in our little kitchen. She still dresses as if she is going to a dinner party when she cooks, even at this age.

Mom was a work of wonder and I would sit on the floor cross-legged and stare at her dreamily as she cooked up countless dishes in front of my awestruck eyes.

How could a princess/famous actress know how to cook so well?

Mom was a diva then. And is an even bigger diva now.

But she is also a magician. She always managed to make our home look and feel like a Maharaja's palace even though we had no money!! My dad was a young, struggling businessman. He never finished school because his father died very young. And my father himself became a father at age 16. And the kids were born one after the other and money was always an issue.

Yet, my enterprising mom knew the art of economizing and saving money and was so charming that she could buy the most expensive furniture, clothes, jewellery and shoes on loan from the best places in town. Vendors who would never even reduce the price for people would trust and allow mom to take things home right away without her even paying them a penny in advance. And they always knew she would pay every, single cent on time each month. Mom used to even have to buy groceries on loan and vendors never demanded their payment.

It definitely helped that mom was from the most famous and richest families in Tanga, Tanzania. Her late father owned entire streets and had paid for most of the local mosque to be built. Her family name was a respected and trusted one. And my father's late father was a local, extremely

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well-respected (albeit poor) Maulana who had taught most of the community's children and congregations.

So a famous and respected family name from both sides ensured that my struggling parents (a couple who married at age 15 yrs) were able to make their way in the world. But my mom also always was a very devout woman whose prayers always had immense power. My memories of her when I was a child are either of her cooking or of her praying.

Eventually dad became a successful businessman and we had a huge white palace-like mansion in Tanga, Tanzania but that was much later. In the early days there was much struggle. And after that we lost everything and had to start again when we moved to Pakistan and then again when we went on to Dubai and once again when we moved to Canada. It's been a long road, indeed.

But throughout it all, Mom ensured that each of us 4 daughters wore the most fancy princess dresses. My one and only brother would be dressed in suits and dressed like a little male fashion model. Our socks were always snow-white and with expensive lace trimming. And mom's hair was always perfectly set.

If there was one rule when you were near mom it was to never, ever touch her hair. Don't even brush past her and inadvertently mess up her perfectly styled bee-hive, updo or back-combed (teased) puffy hairstyle.

This rule still remains true even if she is headed to bed. Because mom always looks like a million bucks no matter what time it is.

I often cringe if it is a breezy day as I know it will upset mom's hair. And that will upset her mood. For Mom's other passion, even at 81 years old is to change her hairstyle or shades of hair-colour every few weeks. It is not unusual to go looking for hairspray in the different cities that her and I travel together to, or to find her with a full set of hair-rollers in her hair.

At 81 yrs, mom still has a heart of a 20 year old. In fact, she feels very surprised if you mention her age to her. Age is just a number to her. And completely meaningless. She is smart as a whip and more alert than all of us put together. And she will still climb up on a chair to get something high up and if you are carrying something extremely heavy she will take it out of your hands and attempt to carry it. The lady doesn't know what spending a day in bed means.

When she was recuperating at my home after her cancer surgery, she spent a total of one day in bed. The next day I was aghast to see that she was up at 4 am, showered and in her beautiful clothes (with make up and jewellery on) and had set the dinner table and begun cooking!!!

All visitors were treated to a full course meal, plus tea and dessert. For the first weekend after she come home from her surgery we had a total of over 180 people visit. Mom demanded we order catered food to feed each and every visitor. In fact, all visitors were first led to the dinner table and then were led to visit the ailing patient. And the patient was all dressed in jewels and in fancy Indian clothes, lol.

Mummy truly works harder than anyone I have ever known in my life.

Mom's touch is everywhere at her home which she shares with my brother, his wife and their 3 University-aged children . Every single rose bush and cutesy garden statue has been planted and placed by her. She mops the shiny white tiled floor, scrubs the washrooms, cooks every day,

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arranges the recycling cans in perfect piles AND comes to each and every majlis and Thursday night program at the mosque.

When mom misses even one shahadat or wiladat or Thursday night majlis, phone calls begin coming in to all of us siblings immediately to ask if she is alright. For the past 30 years she has managed the ladies Quran khaani for every Mahe Ramadhan and her attendance has been impeccable. Over her lifetime, mom must have finished over 100 recitations of the Holy Quran easily by now (definitely more).

I arrive at mom's place with her friends. The "small" lunch gathering has grown to a group of 12 and those who could not initially make it were suddenly able to come. Mom was unfazed. She had not only cooked for 20 people but had also laid out a table spread on the floor to accommodate 15 people.

Clearly mom had been praying for people to show up, so they did. And maybe phoning people that morning to please come.

I surveyed the table spread in awe. I wasn't shocked because nothing ever shocks us children about mom. Being mom's children, you learn to roll with 'whatever amazing thing she has done this time'.

All the best china, cutlery, and decorative bowls and dishes were out in full swing. Mom had overlooked nothing. Dessert, juices, fruit, chutneys, achars--it was a mind-boggling array and unexpected feast on a random Wednesday.

How in the world had she pulled this off? She had hand-made cutlets (mashed potatoes with minced meat inside), her signature moong and meat biryani, falooda and so much food that I still cannot remember the menu completely. I knew she had caramelized the biryani onions and pan-dried the potatoes and cut vegetables for salads and achars and basically done everything single-handedly and from scratch.

Since we kids don't allow her to have these huge gatherings, she has started having weekday "dawats" so that we don't notice lol.

And she cleans up everything before we can realize there had been a gathering.

How had she lugged all these heavy dishes and placed them on the floor and gone up and down the stairs a million times all by herself? I shook my head resignedly. No one can be like mummy. No one...

When all her guests were seated she asked me to make tea so that it would be ready as soon as they finished.

I eagerly ran up the stairs, relieved to be of use and thankful that mom had neglected to fill the thermos with tea like she usually does.

In her kitchen I felt like a complete wreck. And a sadness filled my heart.

I realized that I didn't even know where things were kept in my childhood home and kitchen anymore.

I realized I had left my childhood home so completely and that my mom was doing so much on her own And that I rarely am around to be of assistance.

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Now that I am efficient and able to cook and manage so much, I am no use to my own mother. My efforts are for my own children and my own home and mom never even asks me to be there for her. When she does ask me, it's always framed as a favour, a request and full of apology for "bothering" me.

To the world Mom is independent, efficient, full of life and zest and fiercely ambitious of whatever she wants accomplished. But I know how weak and frail she really is. I realize how exhausted and how ill she really is.

And I feel a deep sense of regret that I have let so many years go by and have only come to this maternal, childhood home for the past 24 years as a guest.

Once a girl is married she never feels at home at her parents' home. She always feels guilty and uneasy, always worrying that her husband and children will need her, that her housework will suffer if she spends a few moments with her mom. She can never relax and put her feet up on the couch. She feels her time belongs to other people now. But never to her maternal family.

How many times I have refused mom's invitations to come and eat at her place. She has never called me to do work for her. Never. And I know she could use me to sort out her closets, her paperwork, do her errands, take her where she needs to be.

But even an invitation to eat lunch with her, when she lives only a 15 minute drive away, seems like my day will be "wasted" or a "write-off".

How will I feel when my children don't have time to enjoy life with me anymore? No matter how independent and with-it I am, it doesn't mean I don't need their company, their help to clean up or cook once in a while...

So often we tell ourselves our parents are so busy and so independent that they don't need us. They are happy to be so busy. But the truth is, they keep themselves busy only because they don't want to disturb their children or to make them feel guilty or to overwork them.

After things are cleared up and washed, I notice a small plate on the dinner table with lots of colourful pills on it.

"Mummy, did you forget to have your medicines today?!!!" I ask in alarm.

"No my love. I have kept these ready to eat tonight. These are my night-time medications."

I look down in shame. My mother even has to take care of her own medicines and remembers when and how many to take. When have I ever brought her a glass of water with her pills in my hand and said, "mom, here, please have your medicine"....

Wouldn't it be so much sweeter for her to have these if I gave them to her in her own hand?

After the guests have left, mom and I sit down in front of the television. I am acutely aware of the clock ticking but i resist the urge to look at it. I am aware of each minute, each second being a gift of God right now. So very aware...

Mom asks if the food was tasty. I realize she ate at 6.30 am and hasn't eaten since then. I offer to make her a plate of food and to my surprise she agrees to eat.

I jump off the couch and make her a plate. I watch her eat.

She asks for more rice. I jump off and bring her more rice.

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She asks for tea. I literally leap off the couch and bring her some.

I ask her if the food has become cold. Shall I reheat it? She reluctantly nods. Apologetically looks at me with a sheepish smile.

I jump off the couch and eagerly take her plate to re-heat the food.

'Thank you Allah. Thank you for making me feel of some use. Mom never asks anything. Never demands anything. Thank you for making her need me right now'.

As I reheat the food I look around at the kitchen. And all those late nights when mom would make us french fries came to mind. All those late night snacks, samosas and bhajias that mom would make when we were watching TV. All the times mom would patiently make me something else to eat when I didn't want to eat what she made for the family.

All the times she fed me with her own hands when I was a little girl came to mind....I never learned how to eat with my own hands until I was at least 7 years old. Mom would feed me rice with her own hands. And I would be such a slow eater that her hand would be hovering in the air with the next morsel waiting, waiting, waiting. She would joke that her hand had painfully frozen in the shape of holding that morsel of rice.

I reverentially handed mom her reheated plate of biryani and she took it with a smile.

"Sorry I am bothering you so much Shyrose" she says.

I hide my tears in shame. Did I ever apologize when she would go back and forth to the kitchen to make my food just right for me? How many times I would turn away from the food....

How many times she would coax and cajole me to eat even when I was a grown-up and didn't have time after a full day at University.

I climb the stairs to my mom's bedroom. I have a gift for her that I want to surprise her with. It is a set of designer bedsheets and a duvet set. Hand-painted and extremely expensive.

I make the bed and transform it into a thing of beauty. It looks beautiful and I am so excited to show her. Mom's taste is very high-end so one ever knows if she will truly like a gift.

I tuck in the sheets and find something under them. I reach in and pull out a folded piece of clothing. Oh yes....I had forgotten about this hidden secret of mom's.

It was my dad's undershirt, carefully folded and still fragrant with his scent. Mum has kept this shirt hidden away for the past 25 years as a way of feeling close to him. I quietly put it back the way I found it. Mom had once explained it to me when I had come upon it by chance. She told me she holds it close to her heart when she misses him a lot. They were childhood sweethearts and theirs is a love story that has transcended even past his death. What a lucky man to have been loved by such a sentimental woman....

I call mom upstairs to see her new bedsheets. She is overjoyed and hugs me with so much delight that I wonder why I haven't done this before. It takes so little to make moms happy....

My eyes catch sight of something.

There hanging over her cupboard door is a brand new glittering saree. It is a saree fit for a new bride with enough shine and sparkle to dazzle the eyes. And beside it is a sparkly purse and a set of shiny shoes on the floor.

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Amazed, I run my fingers over the glamorous clothes, completely in awe at how beautiful they are.

"It's gorgeous isn't it?" my mom asks in delight.

"I know it's still a week away but this is what I am wearing for the Wiladat of my beloved Imam Ali a.s" she said and tears are already glistening in her eyes at the mention of his name.

"Wow!" I say, wondering how many 81 year old great-grandmothers have picked out their clothes for the mosque a week early.

"Is it too much?" she asks with a very naughty smile on her lips.

"No mummy. It's not. You deserve even more than this. Wear whatever you like meri jaan. You deserve it...you really do"

Now the tears spill freely from my mummy's eyes.

"I really love Imam Ali a.s I want the world to see how much he means to me" she says, choked with emotion.

And with those words I realize mom's passions are about making others happy.

She finds joy in making people feel like royalty and she finds joy in expressing her love for the Ahlulbayt a.s by dressing so beautifully. Her dressing is an expression of her love and where does she wear all these expensive clothes but to the mosque?

And it is this zeal, this enthusiasm for giving love that not only fuels her but also fulfills her so completely.

If only the rest of us could understand that....

By the time I kiss mom goodbye, she is asleep on the couch, completely exhausted and drained. It is increasingly what happens whenever we visit her. She often ends up asleep by the time we are leaving. And if she is awake, she comes out all the way into the driveway and waves until we drive away.

I watch mummy sleeping. The lines and wrinkles on her face are now relaxed and apparent. She looks frail and completely old. She looks 81 years old.

And I realize the energy she gets to do the things she does even at this age is completely Divine. It's not her at all, but by the Power and Grace of Allah swt. For He swt has promised in a famous hadith brought by Jibrail to the Holy Prophet (saww) that those who do good works in His name, and those who give sincerely in His name become His friend and then He works through their hands, their feet, their eyes, their mind.

And I know mom's life is lengthened, despite her advanced age and her multiple ongoing illnesses because she brings life to the celebrations at the mosque and brings life to those that love Him with her home-cooked meals and hospitality.

I realize suddenly that all mothers can do what they do because Allah swt makes them truly incredible and works through them...

Long live our mothers. Each one of them ameen

And may He swt grant the ones who have passed away with the gift of eternal life in the hereafter so that we may be reunited with them in jannah ameen

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I feel like working harder to get to jannah now....

If not for anything else than to be reunited with her when He swt calls her there someday...

[Apr, 6, 2017; 372 likes]

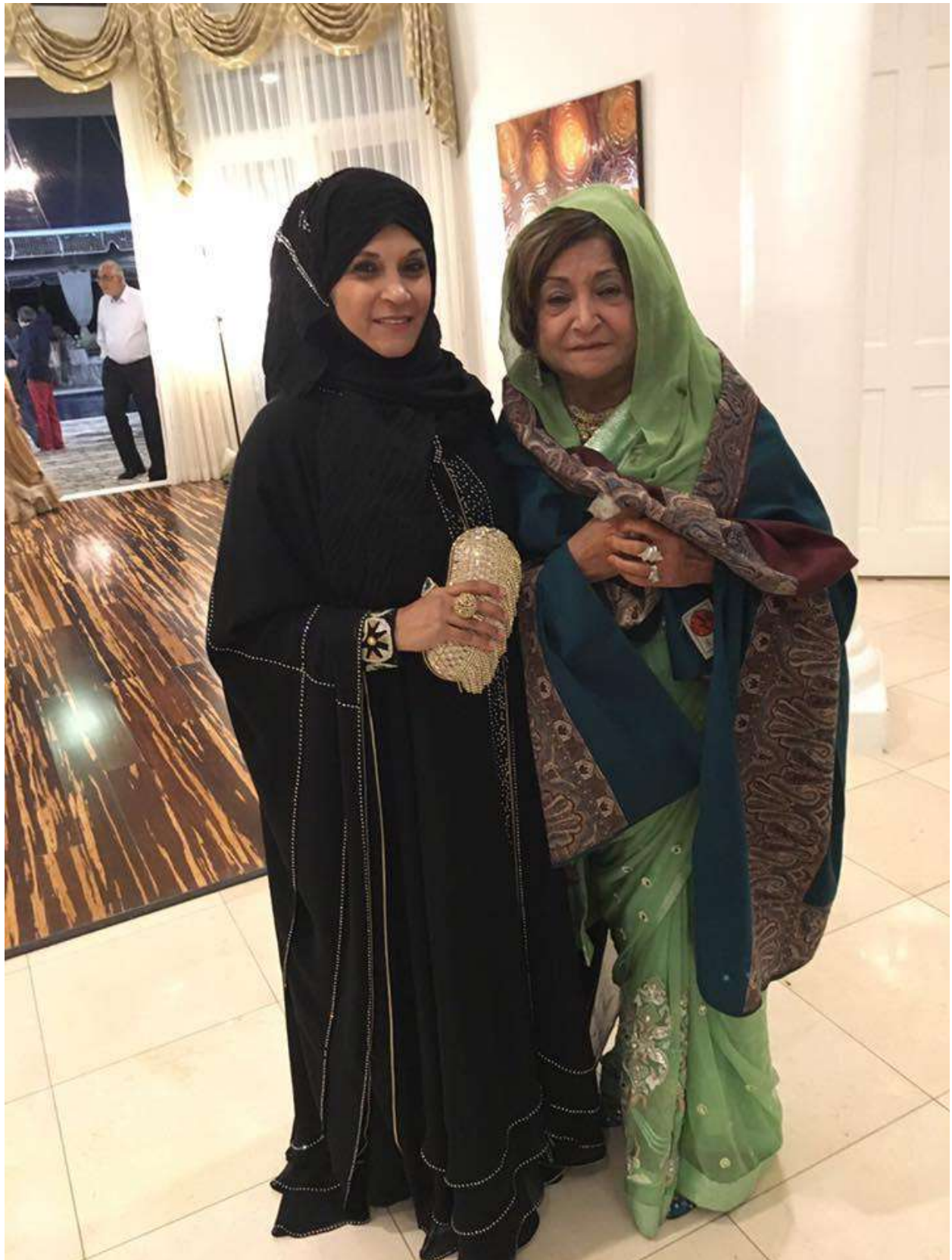
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20. It's been 20 minutes but my hands are still shaking and my legs feel like jello.

I can't think straight.

All I see repeatedly in my mind's eye is that jeep zooming right at me in the parking lot. And how all I could do was to helplessly scream the most blood-curling scream that I have ever screamed in my life.

I am pretty sure I saw the driver holding a phone to his ear. He was distracted for sure. His eyes must have noticed that empty parking spot and he instantly accelerated towards it just as I walked by.

He did not see me at all.

The sound of his jeep revving up and the gush of wind his speed had caused, made me look up in surprise and all I saw was this huge vehicle coming RIGHT at me.

It was when I screamed that he was jolted into consciousness. His eyes widened in shock and he braked really hard.

The screech of the brakes was so loud that passersby stopped and turned. People stopped their cars and even rolled down their windows and stuck their heads out, craning their necks to see what had happened.

The jeep stopped so close to me that I felt it against my winter coat. The hood was so high up that it was almost at my eye level.

It was like those scenes from the movies when a car almost hits a pedestrian and he grabs the hood of the car and then keeps running by, unscathed.

Except that almost never happens in real life.

In real life people die instantly.

But here I was walking away instantly.....And it was completely. surreal

I was dazed and shaken. I felt like I was staggering in a drunk stupor. And I heard the driver get out of his car behind me and call out to me, apologizing profusely.

What in the world had just happened to me?

It was probably THE most terrifying moment of my life.

And I still can't believe how I am still alive.

And I don't know WHY I am still alive.

That moment was a sure death.

How did that car manage to stop just inches from my body?

How is that even possible? Whose car brakes are THAT strong that they can stop a speeding car like that??

"Which of Your favors, O my God, can I count in numbers?

Or which of Your gifts can I thank properly?

They are, O my Lord, too numerous to be counted by counters

Moreover, that which You have warded off and repelled,

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O Allah,

is more than that which came to me from wellbeing and joy."

Those words of Imam Hussein a.s from Dua Arafah kept ringing in my mind.

That which Allah swt had repelled from me just a few moments ago was even greater than any joy that He had ever bestowed.

And how many other such calamities that I had never even noticed had He already diverted without my ever even realizing???

And how many such diversions of calamities remain unacknowledged and unappreciated because I can never ever realize my Lord even did them....

Like a mother who removes

obstacles in front of a child, sometimes even colourful attractions that make him cry out for in anger, my Lord always looks out for me and I am either unaware or unappreciative. Sometimes, like the innocent baby, I am often downright angry at His Wisdom and wonder why He takes away that which I really wanted to go near....

Over the past few minutes I have been repeatedly thinking of those promising young ladies in our communities in England who have died tragically in pedestrian accidents and in horrifying car crashes over the past 3 years.

I shudder at their last moments. How utterly terrified they must have been. How very aware that death was imminent. How helpless and powerless.

For in such moments everything suddenly becomes as if in slow motion. The eyes lock with the driver, the colour of the car approaching at top speed registers and every millisecond becomes amplified. The gush of wind, the screech of brakes, the shouting people in the periphery and even the sound of one's own thoughts become loud and distinct.

And afterwards one is left in an emotional heap and in a jumble of thoughts and questions. Elation and guilt. Fear and worry. Relief and anxiety

Are my affairs in order? Have I made peace with my Lord? Have I asked for forgiveness? Repaid my debts and prayers? Have I started new sins rather than new virtues?

How would I have faced God if today had been the day....

How will I know and recognize what earth-shattering calling, or unfinished business God still wants me to complete?

Why was I still here when other more deserving and younger people had been called back?

Did I deserve a second chance?

Will I be able to do justice to the extra time God has suddenly given me?

And my heart begins to pound again, this time with new anxiety.

Terrified more at the prospect of disappointing my Lord with the new life He has given me than at

the thought of losing the life that I had almost just lost...

"And Guide us on the Straight Path. The Path towards your Pleasure and not onto the path of those who have earned your wrath"

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[Mar, 8, 2016; 151 likes]

21. Life is so very short. And the actual time we spend with other people is even shorter. Think about it--we have only a few minutes (or barely an hour) while visiting a friend, bumping into someone at the grocery store, sharing a family meal or meeting someone at the mosque.

And for those few minutes it is important to "behave our selves" and to be alert with the words we speak and the sentiments we express.

Why?

Because words are so very powerful.

They are easy to say, but their consequences can be monumental.

The unfortunate thing is that it is not possible to visually see a heart shatter when we say something cruel. We take someone's facial expression or tears as a gauge of whether we have offended or not.

But faces can hide pain. And tears can be held back.

But what is most terrible is that long after we have left or moved on with our day, even years afterwards, someone is still pondering over the words we so carelessly, thoughtlessly said.

We must remember that hearts are like soft clay and they get imprinted so easily. So let us be careful that we tread carefully and not leave harsh, crushing footsteps in our wake.

With a few words, how easy it is to break a heart....

And with a few words, how easy it is to give someone a new reason to live.

We have no idea over how our words can actually melt a heart or give someone new confidence. Because unfortunately we cannot visually see a heart mending.

But ever so often a student will remind us how a mere sentence we said to them as a teacher gave them the confidence to become a doctor. An acquaintance will tell us how the advice we gave them gave them the confidence to do something new.

Give a compliment, "wow you look like you have lost weight!!" and see how that person's eyes light up. What you don't realize is that the same person was feeling so "fat" all week and now your words have made them feel like the result they need is not so unreachable after all!!

Criticize them, "you really need to do something about this hair of yours" and watch their eyes become despondent even though they may laugh at themselves in front of you. What you don't realize is that the same person was feeling "ugly" all week and now you have just made them feel like everyone was thinking the same thing too.

Words can be weapons. But they can be soothing balm too.

So the next time we remark how messy someone's house usually looks, or how unruly and hyper their children are, or how negligent they are about getting their life in order or how they are always late or how you just knew they would forget their purse or...

PAUSE

And remind yourself that you only have a few minutes with this person.

And you have the power to make their day. Or ruin it.

And you can break their heart, or help make it whole again!

And then do the right thing and choose to be a beacon of light and joy in someone's life.

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

"Do not worship except Allah; and to parents do good and to relatives, orphans, and the needy. And speak to people good [words] and establish prayer and give zakah."

(Quran, Al-Baqarah 2:83).

[Feb, 27, 2014; 126 likes]

22. I saw the cop car a split-second too late.

Sadly, it was right after I had made the bad decision to not stop properly at the 'STOP' sign in a quiet, residential street...

In the left of my peripheral vision, I saw the cop car immediately come to life. The blinking lights went on, the engine revved up and the sirens went on. He was coming after me.

I immediately pulled over to the right-hand side.

'Ya Allah', I prayed quietly. 'Please make this quick. I can't afford to be delayed'.

I needed to be on the mimbar in the next 15 minutes. And the masjid was just a minute away.

This is a familiar story of my life. I am always driving in a state of controlled inner panic, always aware that a whole congregation could be held up and delayed if I arrive late. Always fearing that being stopped by traffic police would delay me even more. So I am usually careful. But not always.

Driving to most of my majalises and lectures, I am usually praying fervently, asking Allah swt to move all the cars out of my way. If He swt could split open the sea for Nabi Moosa He surely could help us common people who are also working for His Pleasure.

I cannot describe the number of times I have had near-accidents and avoided cop cars that were hidden and lurking on the darkened edges of the highways that I have zoomed past.

Well, I was clearly not going to be able to avoid it this time.

I prepared myself for the inevitable.

The young police man came up to my window and greeted me politely.

"Ma'am do you know why I have stopped you today?" he asked without really looking into my eyes, as if he was bored or something.

"Yes," I said with a small grimace. "I didn't stop completely at the stop sign."

"Okay. At this point I would like to inform you that you are on camera and all that you say and do is being continuously video recorded as part of our policy."

"Sure," I answered trying hard not to search with my eyes for where this teeny tiny camera might be hidden.

"Ma'am, I will need your driver's licence, your car registration and car insurance details" he said matter-of-factly.

I gave him the licence and as he looked at it, I set about searching for the rest of the documents in the glove compartment.

"Sorry," I said. "I am having trouble finding it in all of these envelopes. I don't really get pulled over a lot so I'm not really prepared for this."

It took me a few minutes and he waited patiently as I looked through the mess of papers. Without looking up from the papers that I was madly shuffling through, I said calmly,

Zakira Shyrose

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"I'm sure everyone you stop tells you that they are in a huge hurry for a very important reason. I too have a reason but I know it doesn't excuse my mistake. But if it counts for anything, I am on my way to give a lecture."

He continued not to meet my eyes. I didn't say I was an Islamic lecturer but my black hijab and abaya must have surely given that information away.

I found the registration and handed it over to him as I said quietly,

"Is it possible to forgive me for this time?"

He didn't say a word for what seemed like forever. Then he said,

"Please look for your insurance information and I will wait in my car. Just raise your hand when you want me to return."

As soon as he turned around, I began frantically and repeatedly dialling my husband who was at some conference. Finally he answered my call and told me to tell the cop which company our car was insured with and that we may have forgotten to print out the new card when we renewed it.

I raised my hand, the cop returned. I explained to him that I didn't have my car insurance information but the car was definitely insured.

He still looked at the floor as if distracted by something.

"Please wait," he said. And returned to his car.

I watched him through the rear view mirror and knew he was now busy writing my ticket. But I wasn't really upset at all. My husband had taken the news quite well so there was nothing more to worry about at all now.

But I could still feel that my soul was tense. I felt so foolish for my dumb mistake. So I spoke to Bibi Fatema a.s

"Ya Bibi," I said. "My topic for my majlis today is about your intercession. The intercession that you have promised will come when we will be led towards the flames of Hell. At that time, it is said, you will stop us and ask Allah swt to forgive us. You will say it is your wish that we be allowed to be in heaven. And because your wish is so precious to Allah swt and you are so beloved to Him, He will release us at that last, tense-filled moment. Only because He wants to see you happy.

Bibi, I don't want to test your love. I have no courage to ever be that impudent, my Lady. But I am curious. Is it possible for you to do the impossible even on this earth for us sinners? Is it possible for you to have us released when all seems lost? How do I tell others you are true if I don't experience this release from punishment myself?"

I was interrupted from my reverie with the sound of knocking on my car window. The cop was back holding a ticket in his hand.

I rolled down the window, acutely aware that a tiny camera was rolling somewhere taping my reaction. I better take this painful moment without a flinch. Wouldn't want to be on the next episode of "Cops".

"Ma'am," he said quietly.

"I have decided not to give you a ticket for not stopping completely at the stop sign.

You are right, your record is clean. There are no other tickets.

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If I ticket you, you will be given 3 Demerit points which will effect your record as well as your insurance rate.

And the fine would be \$110. Plus it would stay for 3 years on your record.

So I am giving you a caution. Which means next time a cop stops you for an incomplete stop they will have to ticket you as you have already been cautioned."

I looked at him, cool as a cucumber. I realized immediately that I could not dare show I was too thrilled. Now, I realized, the rolling camera could cost this young man a reprimand from his seniors.

"This," he waved the ticket in his hand, "is a ticket for not having your insurance information available. It is for \$60"

He looked right into my eyes for the first time. And told me pointedly, as if he was saying more than he was saying.

"You can pay for it at this number. And If you take your insurance information as proof and show it at this address here, your ticket may be cancelled. It's a huge possibility, but I can't say for sure."

He looked at me and there was a question in his eyes that asked me quietly if I truly understood that I was really being left off the hook completely.

But neither of us could say this out loud.

My not finding the insurance information had been the biggest blessing in disguise for me. It had allowed him to ticket me for it knowing such a ticket can be easily cancelled once I show proof of insurance to the court office.

I looked at him calmly.

"Thank you officer. That's very kind of you."

My eyes strayed to his name tag.

It was a Muslim name.

I looked back at his eyes without a word. But he was already looking down once again.

I realized he had been averting his gaze out of respect all of this time.

What are the chances that out of all the thousands of cops in the city, a Muslim one had pulled me over....

"Ma'am, please be careful on these roads. It is not safe to not stop completely. See how fast that car just went by. People on this street don't feel safe and they have been calling us to help make it safer for everyone here. And you do know that your insurance information needs to be in the car at all times..."

"You are absolutely right officer," I bowed my head and nodded. "I will do my utmost to make sure I never do that again."

And with that he did a small cordial nod, wished me a good day and went back to his car.

I drove away and felt unbidden tears rolling down my cheeks. I may have been cool as a cucumber but my soul felt rocked with epiphany.

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

It wasn't just that I was humbled at my incredible fortune and with the relief of it all. It was much more than that.

"Thank you oh Lady of Light. Thank you with all my heart," I whispered.

"I understand now. I really do. Forgive me for ever having the audacity of testing your love and your power. You surely can make the impossible, possible. Not only on the Day of Judgement, but on every single day that we remain your loyal servants."

And I understood then that her title "Marziya" doesn't only mean "the one that Allah swt is pleased with."

It actually means, the one whose pleasure Allah swt Himself Seeks.

And when I climbed on that mimbar a few minutes later I never told the ladies what had just happened to me.

But every word I said came straight from my humbled heart.

Because I had just witnessed the brilliant power of my Incredible Lady, Bibi Fatematuz Zahra Salamulaha Alaiha

[Feb, 24, 2017; 267 likes]

23. Many times difficulty comes upon us not only to make us thankful or to test us-- but to teach us an important LESSON about how to treat others kindly.

It is ONLY when one is the underdog, when one is at the mercy of someone else or when one is the recipient of cruel behaviour that one can truly appreciate how terrible it feels to be treated badly.

These are precious albeit painful lessons.

For no theory can bring home a lesson more clearly than practically experiencing it.

It is when one is treated shabbily by a host that one can truly understand how helpless and how insulted a guest can feel.

It is when someone insults our precious mother that we realize how terrible and utterly enraging that can be.

It is when someone doesn't thank us properly for an expensive gift (that we so lovingly selected) that we truly understand how much it hurts when a gift is not acknowledged properly.

It is when someone utters rude words and embarrasses us publicly that we fully experience what humiliation feels like.

It is when one is betrayed by the very person who says "I love you" that one can understand how shattering unfaithfulness can be.

It is when someone doesn't say "salaam" or greet us with respect that we truly understand how painful it is to be ignored.

It is when someone doesn't offer us a ride when we are stranded on the side of a road in the rain that we realize how helpless and distraught one feels to be alone--and how important it is for strangers to offer a hand to a fellow human being.

It is when someone eats something in front of us when we are secretly starving that we realize what hunger feels like--and how important it is to share with others.

Zakira Shyrose

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These moments have been sent to us for us to taste the bitterness of hurt. And it is a blessing to experience that and to gain the lesson in it--no matter how awful it feels to go through it at that moment.

Nothing brings home the lesson better than to feel those hot tears escaping from one's eyes. Nothing brings home that lesson than to truly experience the shock, the pain and the hours and hours of reflecting upon that painful moment when it all happened.

No theory of psychology, no admonitions from the pulpit or from a parent or tear-jerking soap opera can take the place of the lessons of true life.

It is only in the experience of true pain that we can learn an unforgettable lesson.

No matter what the experience, no matter how badly it hurt, the universal lesson we should take from these is to understand how important it is to be a good person.

And to ensure that we too, NEVER, treat another in the hurtful way that we were treated.

The pain we experience is NOT for us to forever be victims and to shed tears over how cruel others have been to us.

It is to ensure WE never make someone else ever cry the way we have cried. To beg God:

"Oh Allah give me the hidayat, the Guidance to never ever hurt a human being the way I have been hurt today."

Let us remember, Allah swt puts us on the other side of the fence NOT so that we lose faith in human beings.

He (swt) gives us an insight and opens the door for us to see, if only for a moment, how it feels to be degraded, humiliated, neglected, abandoned, forgotten and insulted so that we can be BETTER human beings.

Not bitter human beings.

[Feb, 18, 2017; 85 likes]

24. I arrived home exhausted from filming a LIVE show on Bibi Fatema a.s for Ahlulbayt TV channel and realized I had left my driveway full of snow.

How in the world had I even managed to drive out of this mess, I wondered.

And sure enough, as I attempted to enter the driveway, my car got stuck.

Couldn't go forward couldn't go backward (and was halfway blocking the road). The wheels were spinning and I was stuck for 20 minutes trying to get myself out.

Finally I managed to pull out and park haphazardly on the road. I got out, went inside the house to get the shovel and began shovelling the car out (dressed in my flowing black abaya).

Suddenly I look up from shovelling to see a man standing next to me with a snowblower!! I don't know where he came from! He was probably a neighbour who had seen me struggling.

The loud noise of the snowblower made it impossible for us to speak.

He simply gestured to me to move aside and proceeded to remove the snow and in just barely a minute made a beautiful smooth pathway for me.

And then, with the motor still loudly running on his snowblower, he waved a goodbye and left.

Subhanallah. 🤲

I realized I had just experienced a direct gift from Bibi Fatema a.s.

She knew I had gone out to serve her and Islam and she couldn't bear to see me struggling in the snow.

Ya Bibi a.s your sinful servants do not deserve anything and yet you continue to show your benevolence and kindness. You continue to repay our little efforts with such great ehsaan. And to love us when we are so unloveable.

Bibi a.s your gesture today reinforces my faith and makes me so hopeful that surely if you intercede for us in these matters on earth when we are confronted with obstacles then you surely will intercede for us near the Pooley Sirat (bridge over Hell) and pave a smooth way for us to enter jannah.

Ameen ya rabbil alameen 🙏.

May Allah swt make us worthy of your intercession O Beloved Lady of Light

[Feb, 13, 2017; 221 likes]

25. It was one of the most beautiful experiences of my life.

And yet one of the most potentially dangerous and reckless things I have ever done.

Looking back I can't believe I allowed myself to be so vulnerable and yes, so very foolish.

But all I can say is that my life is so full of amazing adventures and with such wonderful strangers who always become my most closest friends that I often don't think before I do something....I just let Allah swt take me wherever He swt wants to and I always feel safe.

And it always turns out to be a beautiful experience.

You may remember the taxi driver that I met two years ago outside the haram of Bibi Masume Qum a.s?

Out of the hundreds of taxi drivers who were trying to get our attention, this one was the one who just wouldn't leave us alone or take no for an answer. He made us cancel our ride and insisted we come with him. And when we finally were inside his cab he asked my mother in law in Farsi,

"Does this lady come on TV Tehran?"

And when he found out I was indeed the lady he and his wife have watched many times (English lecture with Farsi subtitles) he laughed and laughed with joy and dialed his wife on the cell phone to tell her. And when she came on the line all she did was laugh and laugh too (and say "oh my God! Oh my God!"). It was so sweet and so endearing.

Throughout the rest of our time in Qum (at the hawza Jamiyat uz Zahra) I would call him to pick us up to take us anywhere. He would take us to Masjid Jamkaran, push my mom-in-law's wheelchair and wait patiently and then take us back to the hawza late at night. He would escort me to fast food places to buy food for Shireen and was like a brother to me in many ways.

So when I one day mentioned that I really wanted to see Isfahan he was overjoyed. His father and entire family lived there and he could show me the city easily. I asked him if his wife and baby could join us and he was delighted.

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

We set out early in the morning for the 4 hour drive with my little Shireen (8 yrs old at the time) fast asleep beside me. Ali drove us through the mountainous back roads (to avoid traffic) and his wife Zaynab sat in the front with their one year old baby on her lap!!

That actually was the most terrifying part of the trip—to see a baby sitting on the lap of his mom in the front seat. With no seatbelts!!

It got even more terrifying when Zaynab pulled out a hot thermos of saffron tea and poured us hot cups as the car bounced on the road. She skillfully cut cheese (with a knife!!!), added parsley and herbs and rolled it all up in pita bread. And turned in her seat and passed it all to me in the backseat.

All this with a rambunctious baby on her lap.

I think I prayed more in that car than even inside the haram!!!

The mountains were absolutely glorious!! And we had the time of our lives chatting in broken English and Farsi. The sweet couple told me all about their lives, their dreams, their families.

Seems Ali had started driving a taxi only 3 months ago!! He was actually an accountant but had lost his job. The cab driving had to happen as a matter of necessity.

No wonder his manners were so impeccable.

The three of us animatedly chatted about politics, religion, relationships and marriage.

At one point Zaynab played Irani music on the radio to acquaint me with the culture and even sang some songs for me.

The most amazing thing was when she sang me a bollywood song in perfect pitch and with proper hindi pronunciation!!

I nearly fell out of my seat in amazement.

After she sang she asked me to translate the words of the song for her.

This made Shireen and me laugh so hard. Zaynab had absolutely no idea what she had been singing all this time.

I told Shireen it wasn't as ridiculous as it sounded. We too recite the Holy Quran perfectly and have absolutely no idea what we recite. This sobered us up and we both looked at each other sheepishly.

We stopped just before the city of Isfahan and entered a huge graveyard. I quickly realized we had come to visit the grave of his mother. Ali parked the car and went to the grave. And he did a sajda on it and he lay on it and embraced it. He cried. He taught his baby son to mimic his actions. Then he went to get some water and poured it all over the grave. He tended to the flowers and bushes around the grave. He recited fateha but also sat beside the grave and spoke for a while to her.

It was as if he was sitting at her feet and he was telling her his life's troubles.

It was such a heartbreaking scene. And yet such a beautiful one too. I silently envied this mother who had a son who loved her so much. I could feel her calm presence. I knew her duas were surely with this young man.

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

Ali's family home was huge! There was a state of the art new flat screen tv and laptops on the coffee table. There was a shining air conditioner and everyone was dressed in very nice clothes. His sisters embraced us like we were old family friends and his father beamed in joy to have guests. One of his sisters was heavily pregnant and visiting her maternal home because the doctor had ordered bed rest.

One of Ali's sisters was a Phd student at the local university. Yet they were all so humble, so down to earth, so kind.

I was given a tour of the gardens and taught names of all the fruits and vegetables growing on the trees.

Ali googled my name for them on the computer and they watched some of the programs (especially the puppet shows) in delight. We prayed salaah and had a nap in one of the 2 bedrooms of the house. The bed was very firm and kind of hard. And yet it was the sweetest nap I have ever had.

There was a purity in that home. A simplicity and sheer love. There was goodness. It made me feel so safe and relaxed.

It seems the entire family usually slept on the floor in the living room. Only one or two of the ladies slept inside the rooms.

We woke up and were served tea and sweets. I looked through the book shelves and came across some old school books of Ali's brother. There were lines and lines of his handwriting, painstakingly answering English grammar questions,

"He hadn't forgotten his homework.

I haven't forgotten my homework.

She could've remembered her homework.

Why weren't you at the party"

I was amazed at how difficult some of the questions were. And yet his brother was never able to speak a word to me in English.

Not very different from all of us who spend years learning Arabic and Farsi and yet cannot speak a word when we are on our Ziyarat trips.

I felt new respect for all those who have the courage to risk mispronouncing something when they actually speak and have the ability to conjure up all this forgotten vocabulary when they speak to us in English.

Wow. It truly takes brains, memory and bravery to try to speak a different language.

The floor was laid with a huge table cloth and a dizzying array of dishes was laid out. Fruits, vegetables, soups, salads, rice and all sorts of delicacies were served and a tasty, salty buttermilk drink cooled our insides.

When they noticed Shireen was kind of picking at her food, one of the sisters immediately stood up and began making French fries for her!! Ali had remembered that Shireen loves fries so that is what they made for her. Within minutes, potatoes were peeled, sliced and fried. And hot fries were magically placed in front of Shireen.

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

We went sightseeing and saw the amazing shops, the Sultan's palace, Mosques, churches and incredible Iranian architecture. Horse carriages were clippity clopping around the Sultan's courtyard. Families had come out to picnic and it was such a festive atmosphere. There were beautiful, colourful, fragrant flowers in the gardens. The shops were full of Irani handicrafts, embroidery, handmade metal plates, paintings, foods.

Subhnallah!! So much talent!!!

For maghrib we went to pray at one of the oldest mosques. The sounds of the muezzin reverberated inside the old walls and the acoustics were just awesome. Flashlights on the walls showed amazing calligraphy and carvings. It was just so, so beautiful.

I really missed my husband. And I realized that the true sign that you love someone is when you can't enjoy something because it is never truly wonderful until you share that experience with them. It felt wonderful to know that there was someone out there in my life who would appreciate this just as much as I do.

I felt so grateful. So happy. And I thanked Allah swt s as we walked through that festive atmosphere and I knew that Allah swt places these moments in our lives, and these epiphanies so that we can ultimately connect with Him and acknowledge His many mercies upon us.

We stayed in the ancient masjid to listen to Dua Komail for a while. The sounds of the people crying out loud was actually one of the most beautiful memories I still carry with me.

How can crying sound beautiful? When you know those tears are of a human regretting his wayward ways and are him calling out to God to take him back—that is truly beautiful.

If we find those tears beautiful, imagine how much Allah swt must love to hear them?

We had to reluctantly leave as it was getting late. I dreaded the idea of driving in the dark through the mountains but there was no choice. Somehow the day had gone by so fast.

My flight was the next day at 2 pm!!! And at 10 am I was to be interviewed by a tv crew in my hotel lobby. I felt the panic rising within me.

Ali insisted we see the famous bridge of Isfahan. And boy was it worth staying. It was completely lit up and was so huge! There were endless arches of light as the bridge loomed in the distance. There was no longer any water under it which made it even more precarious to stand on.

We ate fast food at a Kentucky Fried Chicken lookalike place. I was amazed at how Iran is so modern and westernized and yet has so much history and old structures and culture too. People wear chadors and yet are so fashionably dressed. And subhanallah how much Islam is still adhered to and yet how broad thinking and technologically advanced the people are. So many years of sanctions and yet nothing was missing here. I remembered the shining subway in Tehran and the 5 star train-ride we took from Tehran to Mashad (complete with wifi, flatscreen tvs and a 5 course meal served by impeccably uniformed and white-gloved hostesses)

I saw Ali yawning and I got really worried. He told me he would be okay to drive. But it was 10 pm already. I was getting really panicky inside because I was aware how dark the roads would be and how fast people drive too.

Ali asked if I would agree to sleep at his father's home and he promised we could leave at Fajr time for Qum.

Zakira Shyrose

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I knew it was our only option. But I was literally panicking inside. Sleeping at my taxi driver's home? An international flight to catch the next day! What was I thinking? Why hadn't I thought this through?

We went back to Ali's home and his sisters greeted us with delight. They had prepared the bedroom for us. Shireen and I slept on the bed while Ali's wife slept on the floor (she would not agree to sleep beside us). And she kept waking up if I stirred even a little and would ask if I needed anything.

The lifesaver that night was my tv reporter whom I managed to message and asked to call my mother in law at our hotel to inform her that I was okay and would be returning the next morning. Mom was not picking up her cell phone and I didn't even know what the name of our hotel was. Or its phone number.

And then my phone battery died.

At 4 am Zaynab woke me up and said we should leave. We dressed in the dark and tiptoed over the sleeping male family members in the living room.

The sisters had prepared a take away breakfast and lunch for us. And then gave us a beautiful farewell.

They made us walk under the Holy Quran, and prayed over us and did a curious ritual of pouring water from a bowl onto the ground. There was also a bowl of uncooked rice on the tray they carried. And other things which I couldn't take proper note of in the semi-darkness.

As we drove off, I could see them in their flowing chadors in the distance still waving and blowing kisses.

We arrived in Qum at our hotel room in record time. I was able to finish packing, get dressed and even go shopping before the reporters came with their tv cameras.

The hospitality of the Iranian people had completely amazed me over the last 24 hours. I felt like I had gone to heaven and returned to earth.

To make my faith in the Iranian people even more stronger I had one more beautiful experience. One of the shop keepers that morning had sold me some precious gems and had agreed for me to pay him later (I had more American dollars in my hotel room). I think I had to pay him at least a \$100 USD. In fact, I am pretty sure it was \$200 USD.

So while the camera crew was packing up and our suitcases were being loaded onto the car I had to run through the bazaar with Shireen to pay the shopkeeper.

We even had trouble figuring out where exactly the shop was. Finally, I recognized the shopkeeper. He was busy dealing with another customer.

When I handed him the cash he barely glanced at it or at me. He just took it, nodded and went back to talking to his customer.

We began running through the crowds to our awaiting taxi. We were in great danger of missing our flight at this point.

Shireen held on to my hand tightly but still couldn't resist shouting out a question as we weaved through the masses of people.

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

“Mummy, what would have happened if we hadn’t come back to pay him?!!! This man would have lost his money!! How could he have trusted us”

I looked down at her and spoke even though we were running so hard.

“I guess the Iranian people have taught us a huge lesson Shireen. That a human being’s word means something. That a promise is a promise. And this man trusted us because he himself understands what trust is. And he himself is a trustworthy person.

And knowing how much he trusted me, I couldn’t let him down. Even if it meant missing our flight...

And look at whose shrine is over there. That is Bibi Masume Qum a.s She is a reminder to all of us here that goodness prevails. And that we have her to answer to if we are her followers and we cheat her fellow followers.”

As our taxi zoomed off with us towards the airport, the beautiful faces of Ali and his beautiful family came into my mind.

And I understood what is love, and what is hospitality, and what is kindness and what is goodness.

I understood that when we trust others and then, when they UPHOLD that trust that we put in them, a beautiful thing happens.

We make the world a better place for both of us.

We reinstate faith in each others’ hearts that there are good people out there.

And it is this knowledge that makes us able to make it through the ups and downs of life.

This knowledge that not everyone is bad.

That not everyone is a thief and a cheat and wants to use us.

Just one, single, good episode has the power to make us feel that.

We realize there are people who do good just for the sake of being good.

And we feel awesome just remembering them. Because we realize our lives are so much more richer now.

And we thank Allah swt for bringing us face to face with such people on this journey once in a while.

Note: Ali and his wife still write to me occasionally--especially when they go for Ziyarah in Kerbala and for Umrah. They always tell me they are praying for me and my family. They always say they will never forget the wonderful times we have spent together. And I always tell them that the fact is that the pleasure and the honour was all mine to have met such amazing people.

The pleasure was all mine, indeed.

[Feb, 7, 2017; 110 likes]

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences





Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences



26. Something made me notice the flashing screen and answer my silent cell phone. And as soon as I swiped my finger on the screen to accept, I was already inwardly groaning and regretting the impulsive gesture.

If there is anything those closest to me reluctantly tolerate about me it is my infuriating habit of never answering phone calls. My cell phone is perpetually on silent. I haven't even answered our landline at home in years. Even my voicemail message requests people to text or email me for a quicker response. A lot of offended people wonder why I just don't pick up when they call. It's not like I don't have my cell phone in my hand all day.

I just can't answer it when it rings.

It is not about being just too busy or trying to be even selective or just plain rude. I have just found that the more public my life has become, the more quiet I have become. Even though I am one of the most talkative people that most people have ever come across, I just crave being alone and absolutely quiet.

I hate being interrupted when I am thinking. I love being in an empty house. People who love me understand this and always apologize for intruding. They also know to let me be when I am in the middle of creating something.

I am an extrovert who still finds time to think a lot. I reflect a lot. Something makes me just want to retreat from the world and to listen to a different sound.

Often, I take days to emotionally deal with a crisis happening in world news; I grieve alone for people, sometimes strangers, who have passed away. Sometimes I spend days just being deliriously happy and savouring the joys of very small things. I also spend a lot of time privately hurting and dealing with disappointment when I witness people behaving badly towards each other.

Call me a hopeless idealist or someone who takes things just too hard. But I do grieve a great deal over the actions of human beings. At such times I retreat and take solace from the words of the Holy Quran and from the wisdom of my beloved Imam Ali a.s from Nahjul Balagha. The spiritual musings of the 4th imam a.s in Sahifa e Sajjadiyya soothe my soul.

I rarely speak to anyone else to help bring clarity to my feelings. I prefer to think alone. And I avoid my mom especially during those times because she can instinctively hear what my heart is going through and I want to protect her from my often heart-wrenching reflections and ramblings.

My thoughts are a work in process and mostly never ready for public consumption just yet.

Let me be clear. This is not about being depressed. Not at all. It's about my making sense of the world. And using what I know about Islam, Psychology and the way the world works to come to some conclusions.

One of the things that my alone time has given me is the ability to talk myself out of being offended or outraged at something someone may have said or done to me.

I used to be a very vocal, impulsive and feisty person. Well I still am, actually. That part of me is still right there, right under the surface. But over the years I have learned to rein myself in. Becoming more spiritual and closer to Allah swt has definitely been the main cause. And just getting older and experiencing life more has helped too.

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

So now, I have become a person who dreads confrontation. I am no longer that person who feels I have to refute every lie, every judgemental utterance, every slight, every accusation. I don't need to hold up placards or yell at people anymore. When I see others being proud of their ability to tell people off and to not have to mince their words I feel so sad. I inwardly cringe when I see opinionated people who don't even realize how inappropriate and rude they sound. Even if it is "just" on social media.

Me, I simply emotionally retreat as soon I see injustice and I work on my own feelings.

I have learned that one cannot control what others do or say. But one can surely control one's own thoughts, one's own feelings, one's own reactions.

It's not been easy. It's downright frustrating and yes, depressing. And it's always a work in progress. It is seriously what I beg for when I am doing tawaf and at the holy shrines:

"Oh Allah, help me keep my anger in check. Control my tongue. Hold my hand back from retaliation. Make me love my enemies."

It is truly one of my struggles and my proudest achievements for I know what I am capable of when it comes to rebuttals and counter-accusations. I feel so liberated when the exhilaration of standing up for my rights, giving cathartic release to my outraged emotions and smugly putting someone back in their place just doesn't hold any sense of victory anymore.

I have taken to heart and made it a motto for myself, the words of my beloved Prophet (saww) "Do not harbour a grudge against one another, nor jealousy nor enmity..."

In fact, when I do relapse and go back to my old me, and I hit back even a little bit, it makes me feel sick and worse almost immediately. And I spend many days grieving rather than counting the spoils of war. Perhaps this is why I go out of my way to avoid the people who have wronged me. I am terrified that my nafs will betray me and I will say or do something that I will inevitably regret.

Now, being able to keep a poker face, to remain civil, to not hit back and then later, after a lot of reflection, not even keep a tiny little hidden grudge feels more exhilarating than climbing a steep and rocky mountain.

It not only frees my soul but makes me feel like I have moved up a notch in my journey of self-development. It's like being able to run an extra mile in my daily jog. It's beating myself at my own game.

And it feels awesome.

What I have found is that the rewards are even greater than that.

For Allah swt rewards us for this effort. And He swt gives us our day of vindication simply because we did not make it our cause for internal peace. He gives us retribution especially because that was not what we were fighting for in the first place.

So what becomes an internal victory with my own nafs also becomes blessed with a more external victory. That's God's justice. That's how He swt rights the wrongs. And that's why it's so beautiful every single time.

"Hello? Shyrose is that you," said an unfamiliar voice. The number of the caller was from an area code I did not recognize.

"I have been trying to find your number for years."

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

And soon the conversation became one that I have now become familiar with. And Allah swt is my witness how often this happens to me.

The caller had called to apologize for something that had happened 20 years ago. It was something I had never confronted them about. But it had nagged this person for years. Their conscience had made them search for me. And subhanallah, something had made me pick up that phone (which was on silent, not even on vibrate) in spite of my tendency to never, ever pick up my phone.

As I listened in disbelief, I stopped really hearing the words.

So many people over the years have called me like this. So many people have emailed me. Texted me. Cornered me somewhere to beg forgiveness.

Even though I have never even shown them or spoken to them about what had offended me about their behaviour. I had let it go. And yet it had not let them go.

It is almost surreal.

I have had people even call me to confess about something that they had said about me in a private conversation. There would be no way for me to ever find out what they said. And yet they felt compelled to ask for forgiveness.

What's even more interesting is that by the time they have reached out to me, I have already been at a place of complete internal peace.

Often I may have, just moments before, heard a poem, or read an article or a Quranic ayat or hadith that had made me really feel like forgiving, for letting go of this dunya and it's entanglements.

The field of my heart had already been softened and moistened for the seeds to be sown. For the stalk to emerge and for the flowers to blossom forth.

How is this even possible?

I have spoken about this amazing phenomenon in one of my interviews with Zahra Al Alawi on Ahlulbayt TV (a 3 part series entitled "Repelling Evil with Goodness").

What I have found is whenever I have let someone go, I mean literally go, from even the inner darkest places of my ego, I have had them suddenly contact me even years later to ask for forgiveness.

Many of them have confessed that it was like a lingering sense of guilt. That it felt like they were carrying a burden. That they needed to be free of this feeling that their difficulties may be due to the fact that I may have not forgiven them.

And here we were thinking that people only ask for forgiveness when we sit them down and we cry and rant and tell them exactly what they did wrong to us....

So truly Allah swt is at work in His own mysterious ways when we are doing our own internal struggle and hard labour.

But there is another amazing twist to the story.

The caller was 81 years old.

Zakira Shyrose

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They told me they were dealing with severe memory loss. Names of people were now impossible to recognize. Faces even more so....

81 years old?! How in the world did they remember a small incident that happened 20 years ago?

Because Allah swt was at work.

Because Allah swt doesn't forget.

And as the person spoke, my mind was somewhere very far away. I was thinking,

"Subhnallah! How much Allah swt must love this person!!!"

For I realized in that moment that forgiving someone is not the only incredible thing in life:

Being granted the inspiration and the LIFE, and the memory, and the opportunity, and the phone number, and for that person to hear us out and to be in the right frame of mind.... All of that is even more beautiful.

When Allah swt gives us one more day on this earth. And one more moment of feeling that soft-hearted feeling that makes us want to make amends with someone....

That, my friends, is divine inspiration.

That, is the Mercy of Allah swt occurring right there in our hearts, in our brains, in that blessed moment.

It is the rope of Allah swt for us drowning, sinful human beings.

It is a chance to complete our unfinished business.

It is one more moment to be able to live, and to die, in peace.

It is being able to forgive, and to ask for forgiveness.

There is beauty in the entire thing. On both sides.

And no matter how difficult it seems, and how impossible it feels for someone to ever forgive a terrible thing we may have done, know that Allah swt is also at work.

And He makes it infused with brilliance and beauty and ease.

You take that one step towards reconciliation, and He swt will bring that person a million steps closer. And He swt will soften the heart, and pave the way, and make the moment unbelievably magical for hearts to be united once again.

Sorry is not called a "magic word" for nothing.

[Jan, 26, 2017; 154 likes]

27. "Who is Hussein?" the cashier called out loudly at the very busy pizza place in Miami, Florida where we had just placed our order with our names (for pick-up).

Everyone stopped talking. And it became silent.

For a moment I couldn't believe my ears. Why was this famous catch-phrase from our Muharram campaigns being said in a busy restaurant in America?

"Over here," said my son Hassan holding up his hand helpfully. "My name is Hassan...."

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The lady looked at him and asked loudly for all to hear,

"Your name is Muslim... so I was wondering if you would like me to wash the pizza cutter so that no meat gets on your pizza by mistake?"

My son and I nodded in relief. In the confusion of the fast paced order-taking and high traffic of customers we had almost forgotten to ask for our usual request of a fresh cutter!

The lady washed the pizza cutter carefully, put on fresh gloves and nonchalantly began to cut our pizza.

I stood watching her in complete surprise.

And I marvelled in amazement at how blessed and well-known is the name of my Master Hussein a.s that us, his followers, are instantly recognized all over the world by people of all faiths and cultures!!

Subhanallah Maula!! 1,400 years have passed since your martyrdom and you still have so much power and influence even in this day and age, thousands of miles from where you once lived!!!

Incredible!!

Never have I felt as thankful to Allah swt as I did then for inspiring my husband and myself to name our children (Hassan, Zaynab and Shireen Fatema) for the blessed personalities of Imam Hassan a.s, Bibi Zaynab a.s and Bibi Fatema a.s .

Those names are badges of honour and piety. And proudly proclaim to the world who our role models are.

And the Mercy and Barakah and warding off of difficulties that is invoked by the mere mention of these names is a continual gift from the heavens indeed.

May the flag and banner of Islam remain high and mighty forever and ever ameen ya Rabil Alameen

[Jan, 5, 2017 ;271 likes]

28. Shaitan stealthily slithered into our car without warning last Saturday night.

It was 9 pm on Christmas Eve and we were driving home after a completely fantastic day in Orlando, Florida. A day full of amusement rides, tasty food, loving family pictures, awesome sunshine and the colours and sounds of being at a theme park all day.

Our family of 5 had all held hands, hugged and kissed each other in pictures, laughed a lot, had ice cream with whipped cream and eaten sweet cotton candy and delicious funnel cakes.

It was one of those euphoric family days that makes you truly grateful to have a family.

Maybe it was the subsequent physical and mental exhaustion, or the heat and over mental stimulation or the fact that we were all very hungry...

But suddenly an argument started somewhere with 2 of the 3 kids in the backseat. I can't even remember what it was about. But soon all 3 were fighting. Next, us parents got involved trying to calm them down and suddenly the argument transferred to between us two.

And next thing you know all 5 of us were ALL arguing!!!! 🤯.

Zakira Shyrose

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Voices were raised, name calling, bringing up the past, gross over-generalizations and new arguments began occurring about completely random and unrelated things. Accusations were being flung around and tossed like missiles, flung like grenades, stabbed like knives.

Everyone was also alternatively shouting to try to calm each other down but instead it was only getting louder and worse!!

It was almost comical if it wasn't so very tragic. And completely senseless and useless.

Families often get into such completely silly and weird conflict zones but here it seemed as if no one really wanted to leave. No one actually wanted to stop shouting anymore! It was getting unbearably conflicted and too long.

Shaitan, in a conversation once with our Holy Prophet (saww) gleefully explained that when two people are in a united state he puts a spark of misunderstanding between them.

And once they begin arguing, he stokes the spark until it becomes a flame.

And then as their fighting becomes more intense he plays a melodious bell so that the conflicting individuals enjoy the background music and they simply can't tear themselves away from the argument.

It is as if they are lost and hypnotized. In a trance. Unable to detach and to see how ridiculous they sound and are behaving.

Sometimes you see such people at blows and others actually trying to hold them back from a fist fight. And they still break free and lunge at each other as if the fight is the only thing that can satisfy the blood-thirsty monster within, the dreaded nafs ul Ammara.

Things were so loud inside the car that we almost didn't hear the screeching of tires and the loud, multiple banging sounds that sounded almost like bomb explosions.

Everything became absolutely quiet for a split second.

We all froze mid-sentence.

And then the blood curling scream of a woman began.

Our car came to a screeching halt and it was like we had come upon a horrific scene from an action movie.

From the front seat I saw the entire chaos unfold in front of me.

Banged and smashed up cars were littered all over the road in different directions. Some car doors were wide open. Entire fenders had detached from the front of some of the cars. Smoke was trailing from some car engines.

A few people were already seated on the curb, holding their head, their face, their arms.

Two confused and injured African American women were wandering in a daze right in the middle of the road.

And that blood curling screaming kept going on and on throughout this bloody scene.

I have never heard such a terrible screaming in my life. It still makes my hair stand up when I recall that sound.

It was the most loudest helpless wailing I have ever heard.

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

It was definitely the sound of someone crying over a dead person. It reminded me of how I had overheard my mother wail in the background on the phone line 24 years ago when my sister had called to tell me that my dad had passed away.

It was a completely helpless, deeply anguished, almost guttural primal scream from deep within. My husband pulled over to the side of the road and turned to me calmly, "Hold on to the kids. I have to look after the injured."

As the wife of a family physician I am used to my husband going into doctor mode whenever a medical crisis happens. I have often stood by patiently as he has helped heart attack victims in airplanes, responded for help when people have fainted at the mosque and tended to injured people who have slipped and fallen on ice.

But watching him run into this scene of utter chaos and mass destruction was truly terrifying.

The kids and I spilled out of the car and instinctively ran out to one of the cars. We were suddenly all holding each others' hands protectively.

A white car closest to us had its door flung wide open, the driver nowhere in sight.

In the backseat were two little terrified African American girls crying and howling at the top of their voices. Their faces were contorted with fear.

The car radio was blasting such loud rap music that it echoed across the road and provided a macabre background music in juxtaposition to the utterly horrifying scene around us.

I reached inside the car to turn off the deafening music and the two little girls recoiled in terror and horror to see me, a complete stranger attempting to enter the car instead of their own mom. They began to howl louder.

"It's okay! It's okay!" I held up both my hands to reassure them. "Your mom's coming back. It's going to be alright. Are you hurt?!"

The little girls had no seat-belts on and were not even in car seats. They were truly lucky their car had missed the accident by an inch. But their car was still dangerously in the middle of the intersection.

From the corner of my eye I saw a new car stop and a concerned and panicky woman emerge. Our eyes met and I ducked my head out of the car and yelled "Call 911 we need an ambulance right away!"

I could see the lady's hands trembling violently as she struggled to dial. She misdialled the mere 3 digits a few times.

In the field of psychology a phenomenon called "diffusion of responsibility" has been observed in how bystanders react in massive emergency situations. Studies have found that when a large number of people come upon a crisis scene they simply assume that someone else must have already called the police or is already tending to the victims. The sense of responsibility becomes diffused amongst the many people and there have been historic, documented cases of people watching an actual crime occurring on the street from their apartment windows with not one person calling the police. In one case a woman was brutally murdered in front of hundreds of onlookers and not one person had called the police. It wasn't because no one had cared. It was simply because everyone had simply assumed someone else must have already done so.

Zakira Shyrose

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Experts recommend that to prevent such an occurrence one should immediately take on a leadership role, make eye contact with others and authoritatively assign distinct tasks to each person around them.

Even a victim can do this by telling each person hovering around them exactly what they need such as if they feel they are trapped inside the vehicle, if any body parts feel broken, what phone number to dial to call a relative and to request that someone stay close to them.

The screaming woman had stopped but now it seemed that a huge fight had erupted somewhere on the curb.

People were shouting at each other and another woman had begun sobbing and loudly crying, "My car!!!! My car!! You have completely destroyed my car!!"

The reassuring sounds of police car sirens could be heard in the distance. Within minutes an ambulance, a police car and a fire engine had converged upon the scene.

Loud sirens in the distance indicated more were on the way. Flashing red, yellow and blue lights almost blinded us and we all instinctively moved away from the speeding vehicles coming our way.

It truly was a surreal experience and we realized we had all been standing in the middle of a road, a place we would never ever stand on in real life.

The two little girls in the car were still howling and crying their eyes out. Their mother finally came running back, visibly shaken, her eyes wide with shock and fear.

I asked her if she was okay. She patted her own chest as if trying to calm her pounding heart. She kept saying, "Oh my God! Oh my God!" Her hands were shaking violently. She had witnessed the whole crash and was completely distraught.

I looked up to see my husband running towards us.

"Let's go! The paramedics say they can take care of things now," he said. "There's a lot of broken arms and legs and some people have broken their teeth too. People are at fist fights now. We better go before it becomes more violent."

We drove out of the crash scene and each of us sat in complete silence.

An eerie silence permeated our car for a few minutes.

"Guys, that could have been us, you know" I said, quietly uttering the obvious. "Just 40 seconds earlier and it would have been us in that accident."

No one said a word.

And yet so many unsaid words hung heavily in the air.

Each of us was deep in thought and reflection.

All arguments, all perceived affronts, all grievances and past injustices suddenly seemed completely meaningless in comparison to what losses those unfortunate accident victims were now facing.

"And here we were fighting about such dumb things that don't even matter," muttered my 10 year old Shireen, her voice dripping with regret.

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

"I can't believe that woman was upset about her car when someone else had maybe lost the use of their body part. Or lost their father's life," said my husband shaking his head in fascination.

We were all truly shaken and the sense of remorse in the car was almost palpable.

For those awful moments during our argument we had all completely forgotten to stay grounded. We had become heedless and cruel and ungrateful for the gift of life and family.

And now we were experiencing a moment of complete clarity, suddenly able to be outside of ourselves and to see how ridiculous we had all been. How we had made a mountain out of the molehills of life. And invested so much emotion into things that truly weren't such a big deal at all really.

Seeing other people obsess about the meaningless and inconsequential, such as the loss of a car, made us realize how easy it is to become blinded to the true blessings of life even when everything is right there in front of us.

Any type of loss can someday be recovered or healed from. But the loss of life is the most final, the most devastating and the most irreparable.

But we always take life so for granted and consider it so trivial. We often say, out loud, how burdensome it is, how much we hate it, how nice it would be to die. We even casually wish it upon our loved ones when they make us angry.

But when death comes so close and taunts us for even a moment we realize how much we truly value life no matter how much we had ranted against it.

In that moment of shared epiphany, we all became a bit more closer even though we sat apart from each other.

A moment of crisis had made us drop our weapons and to protectively link our hands in unity. We realized that being in a family is about always looking out for each other in the face of life's dangerous assaults.

Not locking out each other from the safety of the family fortress.

How precious is this companionship. How comforting is this canopy of kinship. How cherished are these people who we spend every breathing moment of our lives with.

How can we forget all this and hurt those that mean the most to us?

Why do we crush the self-esteem of the very people who we should be helping to become their strongest...someday it may even be US who will need their very strength to hold us up during our weakest moments.

And as we drove away heartbroken at what we had allowed to happen for a few terrible minutes to our peaceful, happy lives, our thoughts strayed back to those whose evening of sparkling, blinking Christmas Eve lights had become forever changed in one fateful moment with the flashing lights of emergency vehicles, police cars and ambulances.

[Dec, 29, 2016; 150 likes]

29. In the middle of enjoying amusement rides (and suffering long line ups) at Universal Studios we stopped to do our Dohar salaah.

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

It's a very busy time of the year for vacationing in Orlando, Florida and people from all over the world are here.

I laid out my prayer mat in a small, discreet corner of the park and quietly did my salaah. When I finished, I looked up to a lady standing in front of me.

"I am so sorry for staring at you from over there but I have been watching you for the last few minutes. And I just wanted to tell you..."

She paused and put her hand on her own chest.

"I just wanted to say.... that was just so beautiful. So very beautiful"

I smiled at her in delight and said,

"Thank you so much! It really was beautiful! It's just so wonderful to reconnect with God after a busy day of doing so much. Sometimes we get so caught up in having fun or even just with daily life. And having to pray like this truly helps to reorient oneself. To check in with God. To just reset, you know?"

She kept her hand on her own chest and I could tell by her face that she had been really moved.

"You know," she said, "I really loved how you bowed on the ground."

"Yes," I replied. "Bowing really helps to get that feeling of true submission. To feel humbled in front of God. To symbolically say 'here I am at your service my Lord'."

She nodded in awe.

She asked me how many times one must bow. How many times a day should one pray. Which direction does one face and how does one find it on the compass.

"I just want to thank you for this. Thank you for letting me watch. For letting me know all this," she said almost in tears. "It was so beautiful. Just so beautiful."

And as Katy from North Carolina, USA walked away with her husband and 7 yr old son I realized that we truly can inspire people just by our actions.

As our 6th Imam Jaffer Sadiq a.s, has said, "Tell people about your faith without the use of your tongue."

And I realized that just as people misunderstand and stereotype Muslims, many of us Muslims ourselves tend to misunderstand non-Muslims.

Not all non-Muslims are quick to judge negatively or are close minded. Not all will mock us.

In fact, in this day and age many more people are willing to try new things and to listen to new ideas of doing anything. I wouldn't be surprised if some inspired ones would actually do the actions of salaah and recite a prayer in their own language.

But even that first step cannot happen for others if we do not ourselves treasure our own religion and do not feel confident in submitting to it or are apologetic about its principles and laws.

Subhanallah. We often feel that people will stare and mock or even laugh at us if we begin praying in a busy place. But this blessed connecting with Allah swt has the potential to do the opposite! It can, in fact, melt hearts and open the path towards true spirituality.

And that, truly, is the incredible power of prayer!!!

[Dec, 21, 2016; 334 likes]

30. How did you find the courage, Ya Bibi Masuma Qum (a.s)???!!!

How did you find the strength and the incredible bravery so many centuries ago when women were considered helpless and needed protection?

How did you find the determination to leave your home and to undertake a very, very long and dangerous journey, from Medina towards Iran?

Your fortitude, your motivation and your strong resolve always fills me with so much admiration whenever I travel around the world and feel lost and scared.

No matter how much money, how much education, how much independence a person has--to leave one's comfort zone and to

travel into the unknown is no small feat.

And you did this in an environment where there was great danger not only in being a woman but in also being a lover of the Ahlulbayt (a.s).

You did this when the entire land and the entire journey was filled with open enemies as well as with highway robbers.

I salute your courage, oh great lady from the esteemed household of the Holy Prophet (saww)

I bow in reverence at your great and very loving heart. I marvel at the love you had for your brother and your Imam, the King of Khorasan Imam Raza (a.s)

And as I send you my salaams of reverence and awe at your immense courage, I feel as if I can hear your voice across the centuries.

My heart tells me that you are saying to all of us:

"I gained this courage through the example of the supreme of role models, Bibi Zaynab a.s.

If you feel I was brave and my love for my brother was great then look at the bravery and love of Zaynab for her oppressed brother Hussein (a.s).

Without doubt I was strong but Zaynab was a woman who had not only witnessed great bloodshed but she had also been taken as a prisoner and tortured greatly.

My journey was difficult and the difficulties took my life. I breathed my last breathe so close and yet so far away from my dear brother.

But my lady Zaynab, she suffered and her journey was not to visit her alive brother, but to reunite his severed head with his martyred body and to commemorate his Arbaeen.

You marvel at my strength, I marvel at the strength of my great aunt Zaynab.

I salute her fortitude and I salute her love.

You shed tears for me and I shed my tears for centuries and centuries over my dear Umul Masayeb, the mother of tragedies and difficulties, the greatest of all women, Bibi Zaynab (a.s)"
Oh Allah swt make our daughters and our mothers and our sisters like these most incredible of role models of Islam whose example forever shines bright in history and time AMEEN

[Dec, 2, 2016; 93 likes]

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

31. As I leave for the airport to recite majlis e hussain in yet another city, I wonder what I am leaving behind that I will worry about the most...And I realize that the most valuable thing is not my house, my jewels, my car, etc etc. My most precious wealth is my family. Each and every member, on loan to me from God, for a short time on this earth. As I think of each precious, loving member with love and pray that He keeps them safe, my thoughts turn to the precious family of Bibi Fatema a.s that was mercilessly slaughtered on the plains of kerbala.

Those were the pure, pious blood members of the Holy Prophet s.a.w himself. Each was unique, loved and precious not only to the family but to Allah s.w.t Himself. I understand now, why the beautiful young Ali Akbar left the tents amid so much crying from the family members that it appeared as if a bride was leaving her home. I understand why handsome shah Qasim was so precious that each piece of his flesh was gathered by his mourning uncle. I understand why the tears of little Sakina tore at the hearts of each aunty. I understand why the women surrounded the riderless horse of Imam Hussein a.s and held on to it, asking Zuljanah where was his master. I understand, my Lord, I understand now. Oh bibi Fatema, how do I give you condolences for so many? my tears are inadequate, my sympathy is inadequate. The sound of your lamentation rings in my ears as if your family was slaughtered TODAY.

Kaysa ye bhara ghar huwa, barbad ilaahi. Kya ye tabahi

Ab isko na abaad, kabhi, payegi zaynab

Ghabrayegi zaynab

May Allah s.w.t preserve our families with the sadka of the 14 Masumeen a.s and accept our tears for the family of the Ahlul Bayt a.s AMEEN

[Nov, 24, 2011; 148 likes]

32. Babul Hawaij: the gateway to the fulfillment of desires

How I was Cured by the Wasila of Abbas (a.s)

written by Zakira Shyrose Jaffer Dhalla

****Writing this true story (of Canadian resident Ruksana Dhirani) has personally inspired me so much. Please print it and read it--and savour each word. You will not regret it.**

This story is the reason I ran a 5km Marathon to raise money for Tait Mackenzie Hospital for research and healthcare to cure Stroke Victims.

(the article is scheduled to be published in an upcoming issue of the Federation Samachar Magazine inshallah)

****PLEASE DO SHARE THIS POST so that more can be inspired by the healing that Allah swt can grant us through the wasila of aaley Mohamed (saw)**

Babul Hawaij: the gateway to the fulfillment of desires

How I was Cured by the Wasila of Abbas (a.s)

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

written by Zakira Shyrose Jaffer Dhalla

(as narrated to her by stroke survivor Ruksana Akbarali Dhirani)

It was rush hour in Toronto and the roads were absolutely filled with cars zooming by in all directions.

And suddenly, as I was driving, I felt the strangest sensation of this weird light-headedness. It was like my head had filled up with fog and I was completely confused.

My body felt so numb that I felt like I was sitting on a sponge. Like I was sitting on a cloud.

My body felt paralyzed, my mind felt frozen.

I felt completely lost and confused.

My instinct to survive took over and I gripped the steering wheel tightly but I swear to you, it felt like all the cars were coming right at me!

It was the most terrifying moment of my life and I suddenly had no idea how to even stop the car.

Where was the brake? Which was the accelerator?

What was I even doing there in the middle of this busy intersection?

I began to recite salawat again and again and again. That's all my brain knew how to do.

And I drove forward almost blindly.

I don't know how I did it but suddenly, right there and there, right in front of me, was my doctor's clinic!

I staggered in and caught the eye of my doctor who had incidentally stepped out of the examining room to get a file at that particular moment.

"What's going on? Are you okay?" she exclaimed as she helped me into a chair.

I told her I had been feeling heart palpitations all night and was feeling very strange and confused, very dizzy and numb and that my body felt like a sponge.

The doctor checked my vitals, took my pulse.

"Call 911 right away!" she shouted to the nurse.

Somewhere in the confusion I felt a great wave of nausea.

"I have to call my husband," I said. My speech sounded slurred. And I felt a strange sense of urgency. I staggered out of the clinic before anyone could stop me.

And then I vomited in the parking lot.

Completely confused and out of my senses, I opened my car and got into it! And I put the key into the ignition. I was about to put the car into reverse.

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And then I lost consciousness...

The next time I opened my eyes, I was in the Emergency Room of the hospital surrounded by my family members, doctors and nurses.

“Mrs Rukhsana Dhirani?” asked the Emergency doctor. “Do you know where you are? You were brought here to the hospital by the paramedics in an ambulance. They found you passed out in your car, with your head on the steering wheel.

We suspect you have had a stroke...we are awaiting the ECG results”

In shock, I tried to sit up using my left arm, because I am left-handed, but my hand would not move. My entire left side was completely dead. My arm, my leg, my shoulder, even my face!!! Everything was completely still!!!

“What’s happened to me?” I slurred. The left side of my lip was frozen like how you feel when you are given an injection at the dentist’s office. In fact, it had frozen in a droopy state. My left eye was half-closed and, try as I might, I just couldn’t open it.

“Mrs Dhirani,” the doctor leaned forward with a sympathetic expression. “You must be very brave,” he said quietly.

“Your left side has become paralyzed.”

And with those words, my world came crashing down around me.

And as the words sank in, the reality of my new life came to me swiftly in the next, most painful moment:

The nurse held up a pen and stood holding a clipboard with the consent form to admit me into the hospital. And I automatically tried to lift my left hand to sign it. And then I looked down and saw my left hand just laying there on the bed beside me, completely motionless. Completely useless.

For the next 2 and a half weeks, my life was a nightmare of MRIs, CAT SCANS, EKG’s, repeated injections of blood thinners and tests and tests.

And the results were grim: I would not walk again.

My life had suddenly become a complete nightmare. I was fed like a baby. And the food would dribble out of my weak lips. I had to be lifted into a wheelchair and taken to the washroom. My clothes had to be changed for me, my hair had to be combed for me, I couldn’t even turn over or shift myself in my bed without assistance.

I cried most of those 2 and a half weeks in the hospital. The doctors tried to give me hope. They told me if I worked hard in Physiotherapy, I may be able to lift my arm in a year. Maybe take a step or two in a year. After a year of hard work.

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I tried to push my body to work. I tried to lift my finger and used all my strength and every drop of positivity and will within me to just make it move. But nothing happened. I would ask my husband to poke me, to pinch me hard.

I felt nothing.

Laying there in that hospital bed, I had a lot of time to think. I was 60 years old and I realized my life would never be the same again. I wouldn't be able to climb the stairs to my own bedroom in our beautiful home. I wouldn't ever be able to play with my grandson or to carry my new grandchild in my arms.

For the past 25 years, my husband, son and I have managed a successful business of many shoe stores across Toronto. I handle a very busy store where I supervise 4 employees, manage inventory, organize stock, arrange for shipments, compute the bookkeeping and do sales too.

Anyone who knows me will tell you what an active and independent a person I am. I can't sit still. And now my body had become completely still.

An independent person, and now I had become completely dependent on others.

I had become a mohtaj.

My cherished sense of self-reliance, my fierce sense of privacy, everything was shattered. Now people had to dress me and to wash me.

I couldn't even do my wudhu anymore. I had to pray with my one working eye and do takbir with my one moving arm.

I couldn't read anymore. The letters were all jumbled together and gave me a headache if I concentrated too hard. I couldn't write anymore. People's voices drained me and sounded too loud. Everything was too overwhelming for my brain.

It was as if my brain had shut down.

I sobbed and sobbed. I fell into a deep depression. But one thing is true. I was not angry, I was not bitter. Never once did I say, "why me?" I was just heartbroken. I felt so sad for my husband with whom I had been married to for 41 years. I was once his constant companion, his dependable partner in our business operations.

And now I had become a burden to him.

Being released from the hospital brought new challenges. Even the few steps to our front door were impossible for me to climb and I had to be carried into my home. A bed had been placed for me on the lower level of the house and a new depression set in. I felt so ashamed. I was not old, not even of ill health. And yet I had to be treated like an elderly person.

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Did this mean that I would I never be able to leave my house again? Or to even walk inside my own house again? The few steps to the washroom felt like a mile away.

The month of Muharram was to begin in a week. Would I never be able to attend a majlis ever again?

That thought was the most suffocating for me to swallow. For the past 25 years I had served on the ghusl kafan team and had helped wash and shroud the mayyat and had always worked on helping to arrange the alam of Hazrat Abbas and the taboot for every majlis.

I remembered how I would go early on such nights and sometimes stay till 2 am to prepare the shabih for the next day. I remembered how I would help decorate the cradle of Ali Asgar, and put the flowers and the cloth and the attar and the oud on the Alam.

In a desperate moment, one day, I phoned Laila Bai Kara, the head of the Alam Taboot team of Toronto Jamaat. I cried and told her that even though I would no longer be able to help in any way, would she allow me to at least sprinkle some attar and arrange some flowers on the 8th night of Muharram when the alam of my beloved Hazrat Abbass (a.s) would be brought out?

Laila Bai promised me she would set that task aside just for me.

Over the next few days the physiotherapist, a Shia lady of Iranian descent, came home to teach me how to use a walker to get to the washroom. I learned how to place my dead left hand on the walker and then to lean my whole weight entirely onto the right side of my body and to basically drag my left side to walk an inch or two.

The night of the 8th of Muharram approached and I convinced my daughter-in-law, Zahira, to do whatever it took to take me to the mosque. It took the entire family to help me out of the house. I moved from the walker to the wheelchair and then back to the walker just to get into the car. At the mosque, I needed to be put into a wheelchair and then back onto a walker again.

It felt as if the eyes of the entire congregation were upon me. People came to me with concern and questions about what had happened to me. I couldn't answer anyone. Their questions had brought a rush of emotions about what had happened to me and I was so embarrassed to be in this pitiable position in front of all who had known me for so many years. By the time I reached the room where the alam was being prepared, my eyes had filled with tears and my heart was choked with deep and utter sadness. The pain was so deep I couldn't even swallow.

As soon as I saw the alam, I reached out and clung to it and I sobbed and sobbed. All that sadness that had been in my heart for all those weeks came gushing out.

"Ya Hazrat Abbas", I cried. "Look what has happened to me. How can you bear to see your Kaneez like this?!"

Ya Hazrat Abbas I come every year to prepare your Alam so that your loved ones can remember you. Ya imam I have been your faithful kaneez for years. Today I need YOUR help, maula!!! On this day, all who come to you have their duas accepted, then why should I, your faithful

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servant, not get what I need?

Ya Babul Hawaij, give me shifa so that I can resume my work for you and come every year to serve you and to be your kaneez.

Make it so that I never be mohtaj of anyone.

Help me walk Ya Abbas, Help me walk!!!

I know you will help me walk and I WILL walk!!

I know you will help me walk and I WILL walk!!

I know you will help me walk and I WILL walk!!

I kept repeating those words and sobbing and applying the attar and the flowers on the alam. All the ladies on the alam taboot team were in the room and were also sobbing and praying for me. They were watching my pain and they too were feeling my misery and desperateness. Suddenly I looked at my hands and they were completely red. I showed them to Zahira and she too was shocked. We wondered if it was the red dye we use on the cloth to depict blood but I knew I had not touched any of that.

At this point I had become too emotional and I was led back into the main hall. I sat down, I heard the majlis and throughout that time I felt completely heartbroken and ashamed that I was not able to walk on my own feet and stand beside the alam.

At the end of the majlis, Husna Teja from the alam taboot team, who is also a nurse, offered to tie me to the alam. I agreed but begged her not to make me use the walker. I couldn't bear for everyone to see my state. Husna, experienced with helping patients, promised me she knew how to support me with her body. She took me to the alam.

I was tied to the alam for probably 10-15 minutes.

I kept sobbing and begging Hazrat Abbas to make me walk, make me walk! I know you can make me walk!

And suddenly I felt an extremely hot sensation on my left arm. It was a red hot feeling that began to go up my arm.

I wondered if I was feeling hot because I had been crying so much.

Then I felt heat coming over my left leg.

I suddenly began to feel extreme tingling, the kind you feel when your foot has fallen asleep and you try to move it.

The tingles were now spreading along my entire left side.

Husna untied me from the Alam and I was standing without support.

She took my hand in hers and I said, "Husna!!! I can feel your hand holding mine!!!"

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I told Husna, “I don’t need any more support. Let go! I can walk by myself!”

The ladies around me let go hesitatingly but I was adamant I could walk.

“I am healed!!!” I cried. “Look I can walk now!!”

Ladies were hugging me and crying. There were so many who had witnessed the whole thing and yet couldn’t believe what they had just seen.

Zahira brought the walker and insisted I use it. She was afraid I would fall and injure myself. I looked around and felt that many were still in a state of disbelief. They looked at me sympathetically, thinking I had fooled myself into believing that I could walk. But I knew what I was feeling.

Marhoom Nazma bai Moloo saw me and I cried out, “Look Nazma!! I can walk!! I can feel my fingers!!!”

She laughed in joy and said, “Then let us go prepare the taboot of Ali Akbar for tomorrow”

I assured her I would return. But first I had to go home and show my husband I was healed!

We reached home and I came out of the car myself.

I walked up those 2 steps leading up to the front door myself.

I entered the house and walked in by myself.

I had no stick, no walker, no one holding my hand.

The woman who had to be carried out of her home had returned walking on her own two feet.

Hazrat Abbas had given me shifa!!!

My husband, my son, my mother-in-law, my daughter-in-law and her mother, Meenaz Assir, all stood in the hallway and watched me walk into the house.

Their faces were in complete shock and then the shock turned into tears.

The entire family began to sob loudly as they watched me walk and I too began to cry.

And this time our tears were of utter joy, not sadness.

They were not because I was heartbroken but because Hazrat Abbas had healed my broken heart!!

I could walk!!! I could smile!!! I could lift my hand!!!

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And for the first time in 3 and a half weeks since my stroke, I climbed the stairs to my own bedroom and slept in my own room!!

The next day the physiotherapist came home and was completely shocked to find me walking down the stairs.

I told her, “Hazrat Abbas gave me shifa” and I knew she believed me. Because nothing else was possible!!! She had been trying to help me for days and days and there had been no progress.

Some people, and especially our new generation these days, feel that it is not necessary to have the alam or the taboot. That there is nothing special or powerful about these symbolic acts. I agree that these are replicas, they are shabih and the alam simply represents the flag of Islam. But let us not forget that our Imams (a.s) truly come to our imambargha when we commemorate the days of Azadari. And when they see our imaan, and they see our pain and they hear our pleas and requests, they surely respond.

If you have true, unwavering faith in your heart, imam surely will not disappoint you. He will definitely help.

I had great faith and that is why imam granted me shifa. But now my faith feels even stronger. I have experienced the truth. That there IS some power greater than ourselves, greater than Science, greater than human beings. And we must attach ourselves to these greater powers, to our imams, to God.

We have to have this closeness. We need to change ourselves in many things and be real, be fair, be conscious of God, be afraid of what we think are small sins. Let us be alert about what we say, what we do.

It has been just over a month now since that life-changing day when I began to walk again. We just commemorated the Chehlum of Imam Hussein a.s and I have attended every majlis. Hazrat Abbas granted me my request that I should never be mehroom from Majlis e Hussain.

That I should not be mohtaj.

That I should be able to serve him again.

And I had made another promise to him that day at the mosque when I held his Alam and I when was unable to even stand.

“Ya Hazrat Abbas, if you let me walk even one step and take away this mohtaji, I promise you next Arbaeen, I will walk 90 km to you from Najaf to Kerbala”.

And I have complete faith that even that will be possible with him holding my hand throughout the way...

[May, 26, 2016; 584 likes]

Zakira Shyrose

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33. I can't believe it....Farhan is in a coma, fighting for his life as we speak. Today was his 17th birthday and he is in the Intensive Care Unit.....

This time last year, young Farhan, myself and 7 other youth had walked 90 km from Najaf to Kerbala. And then we went to Qum and Mashad together.

For the past year, this 6 foot 2" tall teenager with an extremely innocent and childlike personality has never stopped sending me whatsapp messages of funny jokes, pictures of cute and cuddly animals, requests for prayers to help him pass crucial tests at school and repeated invitations to come visit his family in Vancouver, Canada.

I have never ever met such a sweet, trusting and gentle child hidden within the body of a man. He carried children on his back, pushed wheelchairs, carried people's heavy suitcases and was always the one we adults called for help.

Throughout the walk to Kerbala, Farhan never left my side. He had latched on to me as if I was his mother and whenever he was hungry or had to visit the bathroom, he would tell me and I would stop the whole group for him. If any of the youth teased him he would come to me for help. If he was tired and couldn't walk, he would beg me, like a child, to please ask everyone to stop so he could rest.

And yet, he was like a strong bodyguard for me. He would carry my heavy coat through the hot day and never let me do anything for myself. Always eager to please he would buy me bracelets that said "Labayk Ya Hussein" and little gifts to make me smile.

All of us had a lot of fun teasing Farhan throughout the entire trip.

He loved animals and would insist that we stop to take pictures with each and every animal, goat and cow we saw on the 90 km walk.

All the youth would groan in exasperation but Farhan would not notice. He would be too busy stroking the animals, whispering to them and saying "goodbye" to them before they were taken for slaughter.

It would make us smile and also make us angry. Farhan made us stop so many times that we had to cover his eyes and drag him away.

He wore this furry hat with ear flaps meant for -30 degrees Celsius temperatures throughout the walk. No matter how hot it got in the day and how much we all were sweating, that hat never left his head.

It made him look like the camels that he so much loved.

And this, including his tall height, earned him the nickname "Jamal" or camel by our Iraqi friends Mustafa Alzuhaire Hussein Amuslimawi Saif AlSaadawi Ameer Ali and Rehan (older brother of Farhan) and Zaman from Edmonton.

Farhan was so babied by the group that despite his tall height, Saif carried him on his shoulders when he got tired.

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When people offered massages on the road, Farhan would be the first to get the royal treatment. The old man kissed his feet and massaged him as we all watched in awe.

Girls would trust him and treat him like a baby brother. For sisters MarYam Mir and Zainab Yalda of Australia, Farhan was like a gentle baby giant that had stolen their hearts. I remember them openly crying as they parted from him. He made hearts melt, that boy.

He was like an angel and none of us had seen anyone like him. So we loved him a lot and teased him a lot too. And he would good-naturedly laugh along with us. If anyone was being mean to Farhan it was as if he just didn't notice.

It was like he failed to see that people could be cruel.

Throughout the trip, Farhan stayed beside me. I think he took 70% of the pictures from my Kerbala album. He was my personal photographer, my assistant, my son, my bodyguard and my baby too.

Farhan laughed easily if you told him anything funny and we were in the baynal haramain when a man suddenly began scolding him in Arabic for laughing in such a solemn place. Since Farhan couldn't understand him, the man just glared at Farhan for a full minute.

And would you believe? Farhan began to cry tears because he was so intimidated. He was so scared that I was afraid he would start sobbing.

I had to comfort and to distract him and we quickly pushed into the crowd and away from the angry man.

Farhan was genuinely this innocent. He truly was the kind of person that couldn't hurt a fly.

When we said goodbye in Montreal airport, Farhan had tears in his eyes and asked me if I would keep in touch.

I readily promised.

Who wouldn't want to be friends forever with such a sweet, gentle and harmless person?

That goodbye was exactly a year ago because it was Farhan's birthday in a few hours and today, on his 17th birthday, there I was, sitting in the mosque when his name flashed on the screen with the words "IN ICU" in brackets.

I phoned his brother Ray Ray in Vancouver and he told me that the terrible news was true. The entire family was in the hospital waiting in suspense.

Farhan had been fighting for his life for the last 10 days!!! He was in a coma and the doctors did not know what was wrong with him.

Ten days ago, he had strangely slept all day. They woke him once to say goodbye to an uncle who was leaving for Toronto. Then Farhan went back to sleep. At 1:30 am his terrified mom saw him going into strong seizures in HIS SLEEP!!!

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He was rushed to hospital in an ambulance. He kept going into repeated seizures and at one point it took 4 doctors and many people to hold him down.

The seizures have been going on for days. The doctors couldn't understand it and had to induce a coma so that they could brainstorm for solutions. Blood transfusions are being done but nothing seems to work. Countless MRI's and tests and phone calls from the Vancouver team of doctors are being made to other doctors around the world. But there is still no diagnosis.

When they attempt to take him off the ventilator he goes into violent, unstoppable seizures again.

There is a high risk of brain damage at this point--from the seizures and the coma.

Farhan needs our prayers. Too much time has passed and his situation remains a huge mystery as he has never been ill or had a seizure in the past, ever.

It is almost 3 am and I am obsessively going through my Kerbala pictures. Every single memory of my ziyarat trip is connected to Farhan. If he is not in the picture, then he is the one photographing me and my daughter or others for me.

Every morning he and his brother would be outside my hotel room waiting so that we could visit Imam Hussein (a.s) or Imam Raza (a.s) together.

I never imagined in a million years that this would happen to Farhan.

Farhan please hold on. It's your birthday today!! You are 17 years old today!!

Farhan you have your entire life ahead of you. The world needs an innocent, gentle soul like you.

Farhan wake up and I promise you we will go to Imam Hussein (a.s) and to Imam Raza (a.s) again. We will make new memories and plan new dreams.

My dear, sweet child. I wish I had given you more love. Wish I had listened to your long stories more attentively. I wish I had understood how fleeting life is.

I wish I had known that people like you should not be taken for granted.

Farhan wake up my child. And wake up completely healed and with no trace of brain damage or any disability.

We are all praying for you. Each of us will pray and beg God to let you be with us longer because WE need people like you in our midst.

I know you are pure and your sins have been cleansed and Allah swt wants to take you away before you commit any more sins and before you lose the jannah that you have earned.

But your mother needs you Farhan.

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And the rest of us, we need to learn goodness by having giving, trusting people like you amidst us. We will beg Allah swt to let you live so that we can learn from your example.

Don't let go Farhan. It is not only your birthday today but also the birthday of the Holy Prophet (saww) and the 6th Imam Jaffer Sadiq (a.s)

It's truly a very blessed, auspicious day in the heavens today, Farhan.

Allah swt will not let us go empty-handed.

My facebook friends are going to pray for you from each corner of the world.

We will pray for our little soldier who is needed in the army of Imam Zamana (ajtf)

Ya Allah have mercy on that mother who is spending every day and night in the hospital beside her teenage son's bed. Give strength to his father and his 2 brothers.

Give shifa to Farhan Vakil behaqe Mohamed Wa aley Mohamed

[Jan, 8, 2015; 585 likes]



34. One of the most beautiful highlights of my trip to Nairobi. Meeting Shia students in a small Shia school in one of the most poverty-stricken areas called Reroota.

The students recited nawha, suras and hadith in Arabic (about the status of the Ahlulbayt a.s)

The hardwork of the two teachers was so inspiring. The school was started by a lady who was working as a cleaning lady for a family from our community. She was then trained by our Jamaat and community in Nairobi and when she returned to her village she started the school.

Today, Subhanallah, there are almost a hundred students learning about the Shia faith and the main teacher works from 6.30 am to 5 pm to train the students in the sweltering heat.

It was just so incredible to see how beautifully they recited and the faith and love for the Ahlulbayt a.s that was so evident in them. The students hugged me and smiled so happily to meet us. I really didn't want to leave them...

Such endeavours truly deserve our monetary contributions and our Duas.

May Allah swt give these teachers a long and healthy life and bless the donors who help to prepare the army of Imam Zamana ajtfs ameen

[Oct, 23, 2016; 294 likes]

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35. Subhanallah! The incredible people I meet in my life!!

When I first looked at

Haaji Juma, the hardworking and solemn-faced driver who drives me through the heavy and legendary traffic of Nairobi to my second (afternoon) majlis each day, I immediately thought of Jon, alamdaar, the faithful guard of Imam Hussein a.s.

His serious and very obedient style, the way he never disrespects us ladies by looking at us and his aura of being very,

very dignified and intellectual brought visions of how Jon Alamdaar stood stoically to guard imam Hussein a.s and never wavered from his position.

I realized Haaji must be a special human being, indeed, if Imam Hussein a.s has selected him for the very important work of getting a Zakiraney Hussein a.s to the mimbar on time.

So each day, I quietly give him the generous fateha and tabaruk that I get at the end of the majlis and he bows his head and accepts it from me with great reverence.

No words are spoken but he does flash me a quick, thankful smile and then his face returns to his usual solemn, serious expression.

Haaji's quiet and strong presence beside me as he drives makes me feel secure and I often think of Bilal, the faithful companion of Prophet Mohamed (saww), and marvel at how his tribe, his people have faithfully never left the Ahlulbayt a.s over the centuries.

Subhanallah.....

And then my respect for Haaji became even more elevated when Sabira aunty (his employer and a very pious lady and zakira herself) told me Haaji's awesome story.

It seems that Sabira aunty used to provide transportation and escort (to a Madressa in the villages) for the very well-known and inspirational alim e deen (and current resident Alim of Nairobi jamaat) Sh Nuru Mohammed.

Their lively and spirited conversations (in English) during the drive were always about Islam and the Ahlulbayt a.s.

Little did they realize that Haaji used to listen quietly to these exchanges and one day he told Sabira aunty that he had been greatly touched and had decided that he now wanted to become a Shianay Ali a.s !!!

Sabira aunty happily informed Sheikh Nuru and he immediately met with Haaji and helped him to clear any remaining doubts or concerns.

And Haaji very soon became a full-fledged Shia and follower of the Ahlulbayt a.s

The path has not been easy and he has had to build up courage to use the turbah during salaah and pray with his hands open in public.

Subhanallah, how Great God is that He swt selects the best of the best for this path. And never leaves anyone without the opportunity to be guided.

Suddenly it all made sense...it explains why I would give my precious fateha without a second thought to a driver who sat quietly in the dusty heat outside.

Zakira Shyrose

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Bibi Fatema a.s was touched and honoured by his faith and his steady presence and she ensured that he received her salaam, her gift and her love for being of those who sheds tears for her beloved Hussein a.s

For he too, even 1400 years later, was the result of her fervent dua to her Lord, that a nation who would mourn the King of Martyrs, Hussein a.s would grace the earth.

Subhanallah Bibi, what a powerful dua you made that today every nation, every colour, every language, every age, every country and every tribe calls out across the earth:

LABAYK YA HUSSEIN!!!

Labayk Ya Hussein!

[Oct, 29, 2016; 245 likes



36. Something amazing and truly beautiful just happened to me...

And it has made me go into a sajda of shukr from an overwhelming feeling of intense gratitude.

I cannot express how truly blessed I feel.

To be in this life, to be alive, to be given this gift of spreading the word of Allah swt

I wasn't going to reveal on fb where I am right now as it is a part of my personal life but now I must in order to describe what just happened.

I am in beautiful Mexico at the Mayan Riviera.

Alhamdulillah, my husband surprised me with this trip for my upcoming birthday which is on Friday.

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Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

I didn't even know where we were truly going until we landed lol. It has been simply wonderful and we are also celebrating our 23 years of marriage 😊:)

But what happened just now was even more amazing than this beautiful birthday gift (if that is even possible!)

I didn't want to be travelling right now but Mohsin had solemnly promised me that I could continue to work on my lectures for Mahe Muharram

*(am blessed to be serving my Imam (a.s) in Nairobi this year for mahe Muharram inshallah)

So between walks on the beach, I have also been spending some time in our room alone, working on my laptop. And I have been ordering room service so that I can continue to work uninterrupted.

And that is when the most amazing thing happened.

I recognized the Mexican waiter who brought my order because he was the same immensely polite young man who had come the day before.

He had this very respectful habit of humbly looking down and always asking reverentially, "May I enter the room Ma'am?" every time he brought a plate in.

I watched as Erick expertly set up my food on the table.

But this time, instead of leaving, as usual, without an extra word, he hesitated for a moment and lingered.

And then he spoke.

"Ma'am... may I ask you a question if you don't mind, please?"

"Of course," I said with a smile.

"This mat you always have on the floor. It is for prayer, yes?"

I looked over at my musalla with the folded namaz chador, sajdagah and tasbeeh and was amazed he had even noticed it.

"Yes. I am a Muslim and we pray to God, Allah, 5 times a day."

He said with awe, "That is very beautiful. That is so beautiful"

And our conversation began.

He asked many insightful questions about the timings, the direction to face. the movements of sajda etc

But it was when I answered him about why we do salaah, that his eyes lit up with such joy that it was as if he had found something special.

I told him how these regular prayers 5 times a day remind us to not sin and to always do good deeds because we know we will be facing God for the next prayer. Thus, for example, in the few hours that pass between the morning prayer and the afternoon one, we are careful of our actions because, truly, how can we ask Him for blessings when we couldn't even make it for a few hours without disobeying Him? How to ask Him for forgiveness when we keep sinning between each prayer time...

I told him about being God conscious and checking in with God no matter what we are doing in the day, about how He (swt) waits for us, is closer to us than our jugular vein, is always inside us

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but we need to evoke Him; that He is Merciful and Forgiving no matter what we have done, how He (swt) loves us 72 times more than our mothers, about how no matter how late we take in responding to His call, He still accepts us.

As I spoke, Erick's eyes became wet with tears. And then they trickled down his handsome face. He said, "Today I have really learned something. In my 28 years on this earth I didn't know any of this. I really, really needed to hear this. I think it was meant for me to meet you today. You don't know how much I needed to hear this"

And then he shivered visibly, his body actually shaking, and he said,

'Look, look! the hair on my body is standing. I feel like my heart has been touched"

And as I looked at him, I saw that he was being completely sincere! He truly looked like a lost child who had found his home.

I told him, "If you hold on to God, nothing will make you sad. Things will come and go in your life, but you will not be effected. Because you will be holding on to the most constant thing in the world. The Most Everlasting One. God...Allah"

His face softened and it was as if I could see his heart melting.

I told him, "Always talk to God. Reach out to Him. You know Prophet Moses? He had asked God are you far away that I have to call out to you loudly, my Lord, or are you nearby? And God answered, "Moosa, I am so close to you that you can simply whisper and I will hear you"

I saw Erick's face now change into the most serene expression I have ever seen.

"Thank you for telling me this. Thank you. My life is changed now. It is forever changed. Because of you."

I said, "God be with you Erick. You will never be alone, when He is with you. Just remember that."

After he left, I immediately called room service and asked them to send him back to me again as I wanted to tip him.

I waited impatiently until he returned almost an hour later. By this time my husband was in the room too.

"Erick I want to give you a gift, " I said placing some money into his hands.

And then I took my beautiful tasbeeh from kerbala (which had been in my prayer mat) and I placed it into his hands.

I explained that this was how he could start the remembrance of God if he wanted to start praying 5 times a day. And I explained how to do the tasbeeh of bibi Fatema (Allahu Akbar, Alhamdulillah and Subhanallah) and I explained the English meaning of this dhikr. I wrote it all down for him.

Again, Erick's eyes filled with tears. He was still watching me intently and kept staring at me as if completely lost in my words.

"This is the best gift anyone has ever given me in my life, " he said. "I will never forget you."

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Then I gave him a copy of the book I was using to prepare for my Muharram lectures (topic Marifatul Nafs). It was a copy of "Self-Knowledge" by Dr Agha Mohamed Shomali. For some unknown reason I had brought 2 copies with me on the trip!!!

I signed the book ("with best prayers, Shyrose") and wrote my email address inside.

I told him to flip through the pages of the book and at least read some of the inspiring quoted passages from the Holy Quran. He immediately said,

"This is Arabic right? This is from the Quran?"

I was very surprised. I asked "You know about the Quran, Erick?"

He shrugged and said, "No, but I always like seeing Arabic. I have learned how to write my daughter Tamara's name in Arabic. I always feel a strange connection to Arabic."

Then, I said,

"And now Erick, I am going to give you the biggest gift of all. This rock is made of a special sand. You know how the ancient Mayyan people believe in the power of certain rocks for healing and miracles? Well this is that kind of special sand. But it is made from a land named Kerbala. The grandson of the Prophet of Islam (saww) gave his life for God and his pure blood was spilled on that land and now all the clay there has a miraculous power. And if you feel like prostrating on the ground facing Kaaba like I do on that prayer mat there, you can do it on this special rock".

I kissed the sajdah and placed it in Erick's hands.

"This is a very, very valuable rock, Erick. To us it is gold. You can place it on your heart and it will become cleansed of sadness and evil. You can place it on a diseased part of your body and it will become healed. You can place your forehead on it and you will become connected to God in a way that you can never even think is possible.

This rock doesn't cost anything. But to us it is gold. And I have been praying on this rock and been praying on this rosary (tasbeeh). So, inshallah, God willing, there will be more power as my prayers will be mixed with yours now."

Erick cried and said again,

"No one has ever given me a gift like this. It is the most, most precious thing anyone has ever given me.

And I will definitely pray. And I will remember God and YOU when I pray.

Thank you, thank you from the bottom of my heart. God sent you to Mexico so I could meet you and learn about God."

And with that, he left us, with tears still shining on his face.

And I realized Erick's newfound love for God was the best gift that he could have given ME.

Subhanallah, what an incredible gift!!

Happy birthday to me, indeed!!!

Shukrlillah!!!

[Sep, 22, 2016; 632 likes]

37. This experience with Erick is proof that Allah swt reaches out to each of us. Calls us to Him. And sends us messengers--in the form of everyday people and everyday life experiences.

A person like Erick who provides room service at a 5 star resort sees a lot of opulence and immoral lifestyles.

He sees people drinking, dancing with abandon, doing immoral acts with strangers and wearing indecent or no clothing, hearing music, doing drugs, gambling and living often glittering lifestyles that attract but are in reality the worst of the worst states of being.

But what attracted him instead? A simple prayer mat.

What inspired him and filled him with awe?

A woman dressed modestly when no one is there to even check if she covers in front of a man.

A woman praying alone in her room and remembering God 5 times a day. And not to show anyone but because she finds peace in it.

A woman wearing so many clothes that 90% of her skin is covered and so is her body shape and all of her hair too.

Yet he sees her with awe.

These are things we often feel apologetic about. Shy or embarrassed about sometimes. This Allah Allah behaviour. This God consciousness and wearing our faith on our sleeve and proclaiming it in our dress, our talk our actions.

But to an outsider who could compare both the lifestyles in front of him what was more attractive?

Subhanallah...piety.

Because in our core in our essence, Allah has put a magnetic force that makes us like goodness and purity. We recognize it. We admire it. We are drawn to it.

Why do some feel disgusted at it and scorn too? Because they have diluted their souls with such evil that it becomes more dominant. They have eventually removed themselves from God's Mercy so that He has distanced Himself from them and His call is so faint now that they become deaf. And blind to all the signs.

A person like Erick had a window open for a moment in his dead soul. It let sunlight in and he chose to let it shine on him. And God chose Him for this blessing...

Why? Because God of course God calls out to all. But for the lost ones, He selects carefully.

He wants to recruit them because they are worthy.

I always feel great respect for people who seek God. It means God loves them enough to keep calling them. Wow...they must be special indeed...

I left Erick another gift. My phone number wrapped in a cloth "gift wrapper":
That prayer mat that had attracted him so much.

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A "lifeless" object worth pennies but it put life and meaning and immense wealth into his life in seconds. Subhanallah

Shows us that many such resources and objects are in our lives. They have potential but we never use them. Prayer mats, Quran, tasbeeh, Dua books, youtube lectures, pious people to learn from. Masjids, acts of charity, a sick person to visit...

It's all there. But we remain motionless...

Erick has made me cherish my Salaat more now. I realize how so many people are devoid of this mercy. Are craving a connection with God. Are dying for one true sajda in their lives.

And we take it for granted....5 times a day we do nothing with its life-giving potential and pray with no true spirituality.

Or we don't even pray at all....

And with that act of disobedience, with that unwillingness to bow we evoke a huge evil within us.

We invite and join company with that accursed Satan who refused that first sajda in the history of Time.

And we unleash hell upon our here and our hereafte

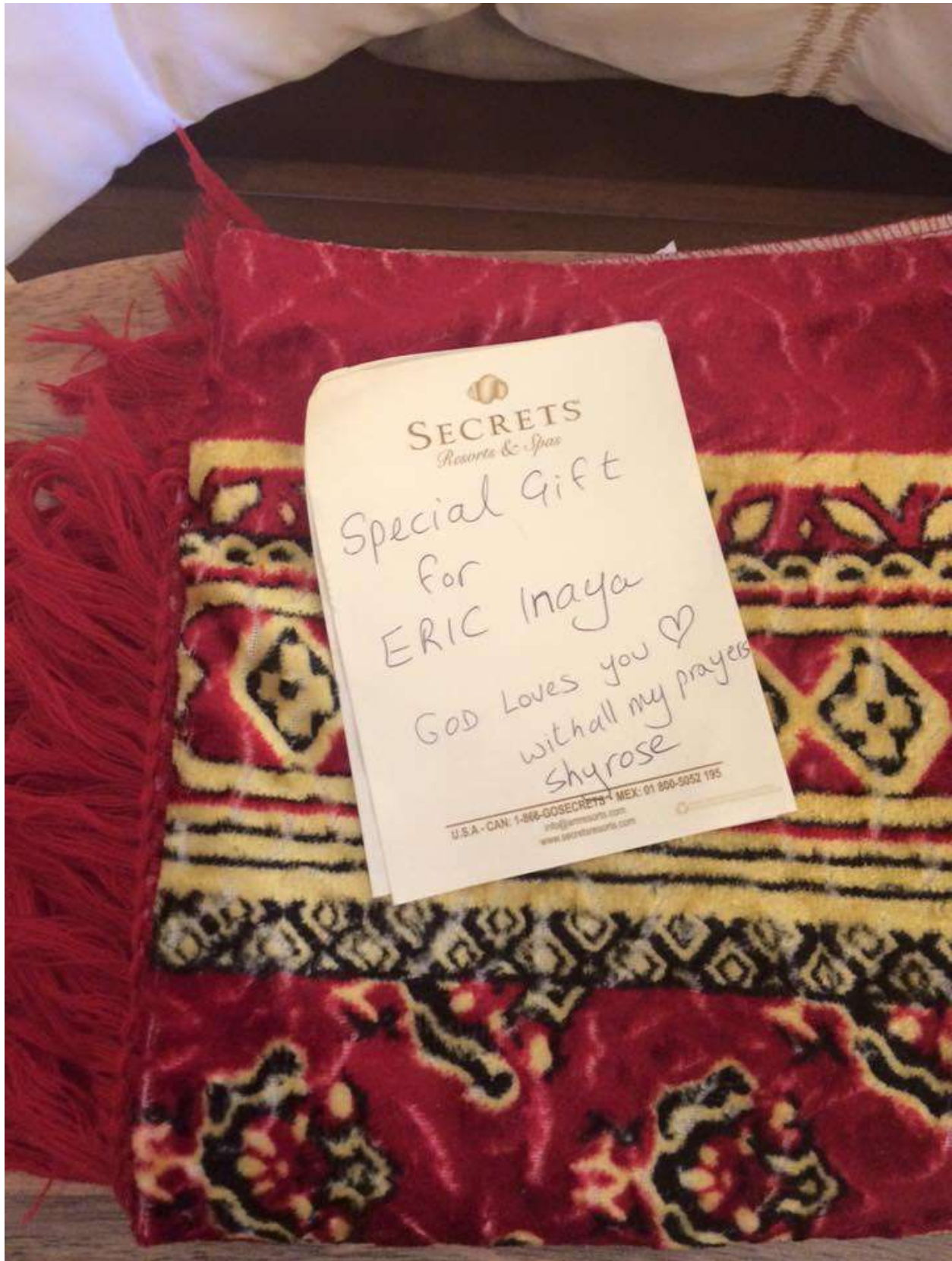
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[Sep, 24, 2016; 73 likes]

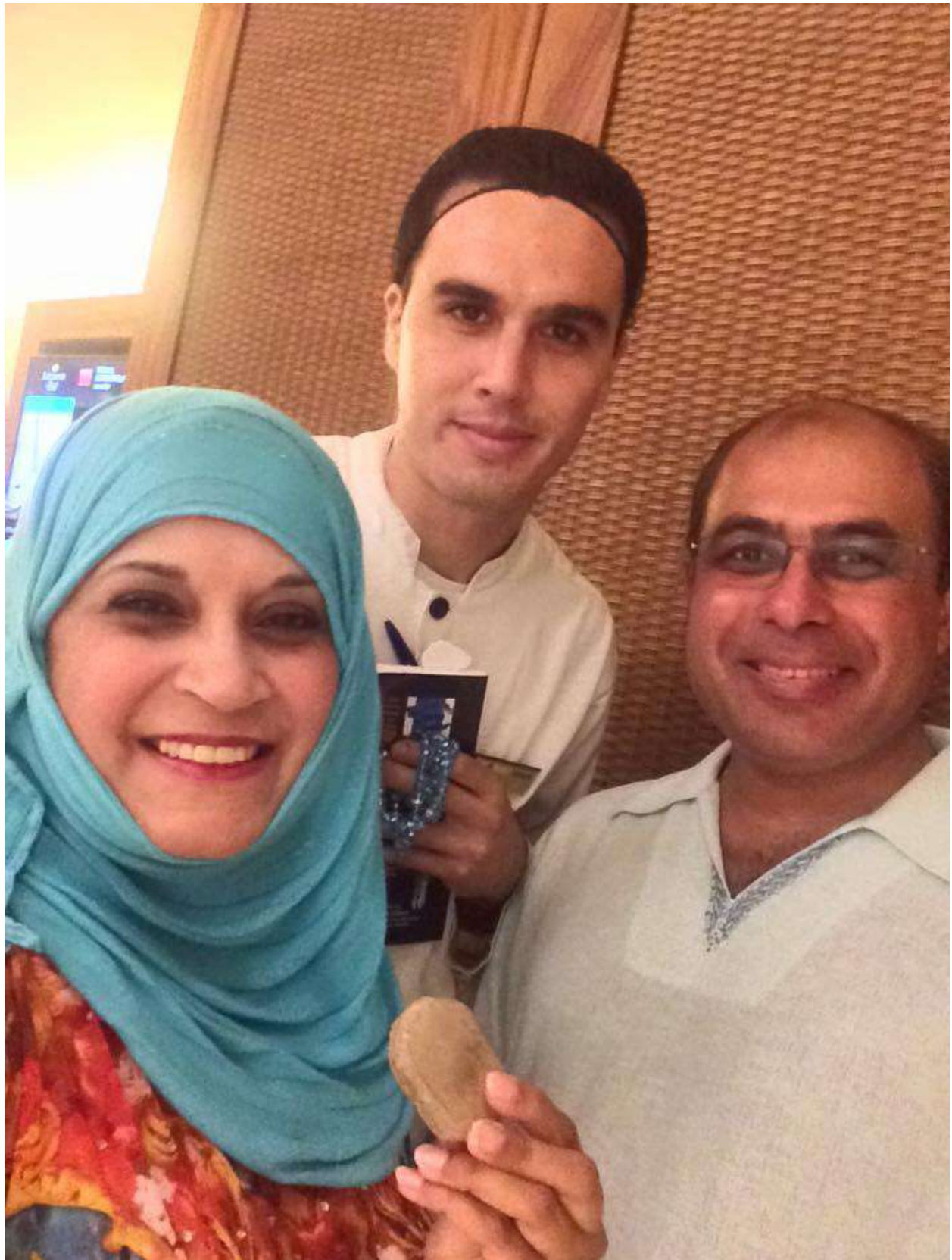
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38. OMG! Just when I thought nothing could ever make that SAME night after seeing the gift of faith in Erick's eyes any more incredible, things became even more surreal!!!!

We had just finished our dinner when we came face to face with an Australian couple we had met just the day before, Joanna Sullivan and her husband Mark.

As soon as Joanna saw me, she immediately hugged me with so much enthusiasm and love that it felt as if I was her long lost friend. And she positively gushed,

"You, my friend, have absolutely rocked my world!! Ever since I have met you yesterday, I have become completely, completely inspired! I have never met a person like you in my entire life!! You have changed my whole thinking, my whole world view. You are an amazing, amazing human being!! Just amazing!!"

I laughed in shock and asked seriously,

"Joanna are you just saying this because you are really, really drunk?!"

She said seriously, "No!! absolutely not!! You have no idea how many friends I have emailed and texted since yesterday to tell them about YOU!! "

I looked at her in complete amazement. Our first (and one and only) meeting had been completely random. The waiter had seated us on the same table as Joanna and Mark's because there was a better view of the pool there. Mind you, we had an amazing conversation and had discussed everything under the sun (including Syrian refugees and yes, the racist rant of Australian politician Paulin Hanson during her senate speech).

"You told everyone about ME?" I asked incredulously. "What about me?"

Joanna answered,

"You have shown me what a Muslim woman is really about!! Honestly I had never met anyone in hijab before and I always thought that it was something that these women wore because it was a male-dominated oppressive thing they had to endure.

But after meeting you I said to my husband, "there is NO WAY ON EARTH anyone could tell THAT woman what to do. Wow! She truly wears it because it liberates her!!! She is a feminist!! She really feels empowered by the way she dresses!!

Your whole life is such an example!! You jog 5 km a day, you preach, you are an Anti-Racist Education counsellor, a lecturer. I never knew a Muslim woman could be all that!!! You and your husband have such a lovely, loving relationship. It's all so wonderful to see!

I can't thank you enough for educating me! You have inspired me so so much!! You are so gorgeous without your hijab--omg those pictures you showed me were completely mind-blowing! And yet, you cover yourself because seriously, you don't need any man to validate you, do you?!!

Shyrose, I feel so, so delighted to have met you! So happy that you have shown me the real truth about the hijab. I really want to meet you again!! Please come to Australia and visit us and stay with us. I want to learn so much more from you!"

And she kept hugging me and hugging and saying,

"You have rocked my world!!! You have absolutely rocked my world!!!"

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It was hard to say goodbye to Joanna. Her love and sincerity was so overflowing that I felt I had met my soul sister.

We reluctantly hugged and said farewell as she was to leave the next morning.

And then I looked up at the heavens and thanked Bibi Fatema a.s for helping me to be an ambassador of the hijab and for blessing such chance encounters in my life with so much barakah that it even shocks me.

Truly, Allah swt is the best of Planners. And I thank Him (swt) for sending me to Mexico so that I could meet amazing, loving and open-hearted people like Joanna and Mark--people who are willing to learn more about others. People who give Australia a good name!!

Joanna! I can't wait to meet you again and to hug you again!!! Ameen

[Sep, 22, 2016; 227 likes]

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39. Shukrlillah!! You all make my birthday happy indeed! My dear brothers and sisters I truly look forward to this day each year because it means I get to read your loving messages ❤️❤️❤️
❤️.

I savour each and every one of your heartfelt wishes and honestly--many of you make my eyes well up with tears of joy with the loving words you write.

It is a sign of true love when a friend is willing to say out loud, in front of thousands of others, that they care about you!!

It truly feels as if you are not just my facebook friends but my true brothers and sisters.

Thank you to each of you for being with me on this journey of life. For being there to share my thoughts and reflections with. To be such a part of my joys and sorrows.

Thank you for your likes, your loving comments and for sharing my posts so enthusiastically each time.

I love you all my brothers and sisters and I seriously pray for you in my amaals and daily Duas.

And want to know a confession? I actually look through each list of likes and often know exactly which one of you has taken the time to show their appreciation! 😂👤.

Again, forgive me for not being able to add you on my personal timeline --but please do like my "public figure" page and it will allow you to like, comment and share my every post.

Looking forward, with childish glee, to an avalanche of messages and love!!!

We are flying back home tomorrow (my birthday) so if you don't get an immediate response from me it's because I don't have wifi for a while.

God bless you all abundantly and may He swt make you as happy as you always make me AMEEN

[Sep, 22, 2016; 498 likes]

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[Sep, 20, 2012; 254 likes]



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40. I was standing in a crowded doctor's office, responding to an important email on my cellphone when a lady paused beside me to use the anti-bacterial lotion on the counter next to me. I looked up distractedly; a million 'things-to-dos' urgently flashing in my brain (I am travelling overseas in 2 days). She was a very old lady and was leaning heavily on her walker. I smiled at her and said "hi" (a habit I have of talking to 'strangers' that my kids absolutely get irritated by)

The old lady's face wrinkled into a sad smile. And she said, "I can't believe I have been so stupid. I rushed to get here only to find out my appointment is not today!! My memory just fails me nowadays because of my medication."

I stopped texting and paid attention. She berated herself for being so dumb. She lamented about all the rushing around she did to get dressed, how she had to rush to get on the right bus and then, the disappointment she suffered when the driver let her off at the wrong stop.

"I had to walk all the way from the last intersection. It took me 15 minutes," she said almost to herself as she became totally lost in her day's difficulties.

I put my phone into my purse--the urgent email cast aside.

"Where do you have to go?" I asked. "I could drop you"

The words had NOT escaped from my lips without thinking. From the moment she started talking I knew what I wanted to do, and my mind had been reeling with all those stories of scams by old ladies who steal purses, who hold you up with handguns and who have a group of men waiting to rob you etc etc. And yet, I chose my words carefully and said them with resolve. In my mind, I had already decided that I would drop her wherever she had to go. Period.

She ignored my question and went on talking about how foolish she had been not to check the calendar etc etc. I asked again.

This time she paused. She didn't look at me. She took out her tissue--and I noticed how crumpled and wet it was--and she cried into it with both her eyes pressed to it.

She still did not answer me.

"Just tell me where I can drop you" I begged. She would simply not tell me. (another scam? was she a good actress? I ignored my mind's suspicions and kept asking her to answer where she lived)

I braced myself for her answer--maybe it would be a downtown location. How would I juggle my schedule, arrange to pick up the kids, finish my errands, cancel appointments? And again, a firm voice inside me said I would do anything. Period.

She told me she didn't want to bother me, that her walker was too huge for my car, that she would be ok, that she knew I must be busy etc etc. I took matters into my hands and ushered her out into the parking lot.

When she told me where she had to go, I realized it would not even take me 5 minutes to drive there!!! And would you believe, it was directly in the direction I had to go to!! But I knew by bus it would take at least 45 minutes before she would be at her place. (walking to the stop, waiting at the stop, sitting through all the stops etc etc)

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Soon, I had folded her walker, put it into my car, settled her into the car, bucked her seatbelt for her myself as if she was my baby, put her purse on her lap and closed the door. She kept crying into her tissue. All she kept saying is:

"God has sent you. God has sent you. God has sent you"

I drove down the street as she talked throughout the drive. She explained that her daughters didn't live closer, how she had to prepare a meal as her grandchildren would be visiting in the evening, what medical issues she had etc. It was as if she hadn't had someone to talk to in a long time.

I told her she was like my mother and to please not feel guilty for the help I was giving her. I told her it is normal to forget, the best of us make mistakes. I told her to be nice to herself, not to overexert herself and "no more tears". At least it was not snowing, at least she was able to manage her own appointments, at least we have such great medical facilities here, etc etc. She listened intently and then asked,

"Are you an Indian? A Muslim? I am so happy I met you. You are good people. I will never forget you. I will always remember your name even with this bad memory of mine. I promise." She kept talking as I parked at her seniors' building. I unfolded her walker, helped her out of the car and guided her to hold on to the walker carefully. She invited me to tea but I politely declined. I told her I knew where she lived so I would visit if I ever could. She said,

"If you had not come, I would still be crying, you know. I would still not be here at my home. I would still be angry with myself. God sent you. God sent you"

That's when I answered,

"Actually, God sent YOU. He knew I needed to be blessed today. He knew I needed to meet such a lovely human being. He knew I needed to be reminded that everyone is like my mother. And He knew how badly I need good deeds."

As I walked away I realized that the only reason God had made me pause to send an email in the hallway (and not in my car which was just a few feet away) was because a dear old lady was pleading to Him to make her day better. She was begging Him to help, wondering how she would make it, asking for strength to walk to the bus stop and beyond.

And He paged me. He Pointed to me. And I had no choice. Suddenly, all my excuses, my errands, my fears felt totally meaningless. Because HE had muted them. He was overriding them!! I wanted to help, I was going to help and no one would stop me. Not even the fear of getting robbed or killed or the fear of being scolded by my family at home for trusting people without thinking!!

And I realized that it felt AWESOME to be the answer to someone's prayer. And not only had I made her day but I had made Islam, Muslim, Indians, Pakistanis, women in hijab and busy people with cellphones and SUVs look good in one quick instant!!!!!!! ha ha!!

Most of all, I had restored faith for someone that God DOES listen to prayers. I had made a woman feel that she was not alone. That the world is not selfish, that people are not cruel, that life is not one awful drudgery. In one instant, I had made someone's tears dry and made them

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able to face the day.

And that is why it is so important to keep doing good things. It is not only for reward from God but because it has multiple effect-s-on the soul, on someone's ease, on someone's outlook, on someone's faith etc etc And it feels GREAT too!!

I shared this story (again written in the parking lot as I make myself late for another appointment) not to show what a wonderful angel I am. I could easily be criticized for showing off--and believe me I hesitated to share this story for that very reason. But I shared this story to show how important it is that we keep being good, trusting and helpful no matter how appreciative someone is, no matter how futile it looks, no matter how sincere the seeker looks. To reconcile a believer with their Lord, to make them feel that He is listening (and He IS--he paged me to help!!!) is not only an incredible feeling but an important, urgent work that we must all do. There are hundreds of lost souls waiting for a positive moment such as this to happen to them. Wouldn't it be great to be the one to guide them back to happiness? towards Allah swt? Next time we get paged, let us respond to it for it comes DIRECTLY from God. He selects us to respond. And then watches us. Let us answer with a loud,

"LABAIK ALA HUMMA LABAIK." like we do when going towards Him during Hajj. "Here I am, my Lord, here I am!" I hear, I obey, I submit.

And in a mundane, busy day, far far away from the Holy Kaba, let us earn the rewards of Hajj and earn His Pleasure from right HERE. AMEEN!!

May He accept His efforts. May He cleanse our soul. May He choose us as worthy servant to serve Him AMEEN

41. September 8 is a special day for me indeed. It was on this fateful day, 23 years ago, that I wore hijab.

It is the day that I feel I was truly born and opened my eyes.

Last night, I did a long, tearful sajda and I thanked Allah swt with all my heart for guiding me, for never giving up on me, for selecting someone like me to come towards Him.

For if He had not guided me, I surely would not have been guided.

"Al Hamdo Lillahil ladhi Hadana le Hadha wa Ma Kunna le Nahtadi ya lau la An Hadanal'ah Praise be to Allah, Who has guided us to this. We could not truly have been led aright if Allah had not guided us"

I thank Allah swt for saving me from the brink of whatever it was that I was about to descend into.

My life was at a crossroads and I felt it in my bones that something amazing was going to happen to me.

I was young, beautiful and about to graduate from University. I had the world in my palm.

I had my wings and I was about to fly.

It was as if I was standing at the edge of a high peak and was about to soar, soar, soar into the clouds and beyond.

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The entire world was my oyster and I could have chosen anything, anyone, any path, any life, any addiction, any career path, any thing my heart desired.

And something clicked then, at that very precious moment, and I decided to put on this little piece of cloth on my head.

Such a small action. And subhanallah, such a life changing moment.

I remember the hurt and accusation in my best friend's eyes.

"You share every breathing moment, every little thought in your head with me. And you wore HIJAB and you didn't tell me before you did it?!!!"

And with a strong conviction in my voice that even surprised ME, I said,

"Because this was between me and God. And I didn't want to take a chance and have anyone talk me out of it"

And on that fateful day, I decided my beauty and my voice would forever be dedicated to God. My hijab was not only for my physical beauty but also for my voice. I would no longer sing songs (only nasheeds and latmiyya) and no man would hear me again.

My wearing hijab in this complete way was something that shook others more than it shocked me.

It left my friends and my family reeling. No one in my immediate family wore it. No one in my close circle of friends wore it. Many tried to talk me out of it. Some even cried and wondered if I had lost my mind.

But the deed was done and I was not going to remove it.

I had never felt so sure of anything in my life. Something had fallen into place and all the parts of my life began to click.

And no one was going to derail me.

Last night in my sajda I thanked God for never letting go of my hand. For making me feel so complete that I have never missed anything. For never letting me feel even a slight twinge of regret over these past 23 years. I didn't even need to call out for strength. He just made me strong and I didn't realize I was doing anything difficult.

Never once have I felt like going back.

Every time I put it on, I feel this great, great joy. This total exhilaration and yet a complete sense of peace. A calmness within me for knowing that I am doing something right.

I feel as if my spirit has been allowed to be FREE. I do not feel caged and hidden. I strangely feel liberated!!!

These feelings surely must be a blessing that the Almighty swt bestows in the heart of the one who tries to please Him. Everything suddenly seems easy. Pain feels like pleasure!!

Embarrassment turns mysteriously into pride and confidence. Sadness becomes inexplicable joy!!!

I was that popular young lady who loved to dress up (it was still always quite modest though, no doubt about that) and I had a new hairstyle every day. I loved to wear matching jewellery and had hundreds of shoes and purses.

I was once offered a modelling contract by a recruiter who stopped me as I walked in the mall.

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Still, when chatting with a crowd of friends I once impulsively said, "I would like to wear hijab someday" and everyone erupted into uncontrollable laughter.

"YOU?!! YOU are going to wear hijab?" they laughed and laughed. And I smiled sheepishly and then laughed with them.

But I spent that night talking to myself and wondering was this really how outlandish the idea seemed to others about me? Was my deep love for God not evident to others?

I realized then that I was just talking the talk. I was not walking the walk.

To be truly on the siratul mustaqeem, I would have to show in my love, in my actions and in my deeds that I was a follower of God's commands. That I loved Him and cared more about what He wanted, than what I wanted.

And that I would make myself so that what He wanted truly, sincerely became what I also wanted.

But these were secret thoughts within me that I didn't share with anyone. And when an uncle of mine in his early 50's suddenly passed away, it was the push that I needed to ask myself what I was waiting for.

What if I died before I could prove my love for God?

I reflected on how this uncle had drastically changed his life and had become a pious human being. And I realized that he had made true amends. And it was those last few years of his new, improved self that would prove to be his salvation. I too wanted that for myself. And I was not going to wait anymore.

And on his funeral, without saying a word to anyone, I wore hijab.

My changing my life and leaving the old me behind is something that many people still have difficulty coming to terms with. I have since become an Islamic preacher and travel the world to give lectures. But many are still in disbelief and see me as if 23 yrs have not passed at all.

We human beings distrust the intentions of others so easily. If something is too good to be true, it definitely must be lies. No one can truly change. Some people are just good at pretending. And so on.

How wonderful it is that my Lord does not have the distrusting heart that a human can have.

I often thank Allah swt for having faith in my sincerity. When it feels that the world doubts me, or when people still view me with what they once knew about me, I feel so relieved that He can look inside my heart and know how truly far I have come. It is a wonderful feeling, indeed.

Thank you Allah swt for accepting, without question, when a lost child comes home and for believing him when he promises that he will never run again.

The young lady that I once was is no different from all the many young people I meet at my lectures.

It never ceases to amaze me that it is always the most "modern" looking young lady, the most "wild" looking young man and the people who look most like "lost cases" who wait and wait patiently to speak to me after I give a lecture. Those who look most disinterested are often the ones who come and cry that their hearts have been touched.

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Something clicks inside them and that is when I see that God has not abandoned His lost ones at all. He never, ever does! Everyone is so precious to Him. He keeps reaching out to them, triggering something in their hearts, in their minds, in their souls.

They ask questions, they have tears in their eyes, they struggle with what is the right thing to do. And in all that doubt and confusion, and past their tight and revealing clothes, I see their deep, deep faith stirring and struggling to shine through.

I see a spirit that wants to be connected to a truth.

I see a heart that wants so desperately to be guided.

I see a longing to be loved so completely--with the kind of love that I know only love of God can give.

And I see myself in those young people. I say to myself "Subhanallah! Praise the Lord that can live in the darkest of hearts and create a stirring within it that is almost unbelievable to imagine in such a heart"

So many times the women who tell me they want to wear hijab are the ones I never, ever thought I would hear those words from. In fact, the tendency is to discredit such a thought. To resign oneself to the idea that this person could never accomplish such a goal. I mean look at how they dress!

And then I remember the Shyrose I once was. And how no one imagined that from those weeds, a rose could ever blossom.

And I answer, "Inshallah you will. Believe in God, and believe in your strength"

So many people who have come far in their path to piety have had to start from somewhere. After all, many success stories are about those who went from "rags to riches".

Thus the impossible can truly become the possible.

The apparently "faithless" one can one day become the most "faithful"

The trick is to make that journey of a thousand miles with that first step.

Start walking and God will Himself cut across those seemingly endless miles and miles to meet you as soon as you begin walking.

Many times it is our fear of failure, of not being "ready", of not being completely convinced, of appearing like a hypocrite, and especially the fear of the unknown that makes us unable to take that plunge.

In my experience, these will only truly be dissipated once you take that first step.

No matter how much one has thought about something, doubts will always linger (especially if shaitan has anything to lose in our decision).

One DOES have to take a big plunge at some point.

One DOES have to experience a fearful, heart pounding moment.

Such life altering decisions do require some inner resolve and a final committed, bold move that does feel too huge to take.

The plane door opens and a huge gust of wind hits even the most ready skydiver. But he recovers and then determinedly hurls himself out into the huge, vast open sky. He knows he has a parachute tied to himself.

When we take the plunge we too have a parachute and a safety net.

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Allah swt takes over and He doesn't allow us to fall. An incredible peace fills the heart.

When it is time to make a change and to do something for the Pleasure of Allah swt there really is no time to lose.

And that time is always NOW.

Not later.....

"Has the time not come for those who have believed that their hearts should become humbly submissive at the remembrance of Allah and what has come down of the truth?

And let them not be like those who were given the Scripture before, and a long period passed over them, so their hearts hardened; and many of them are defiantly disobedient."

(Holy Quran 57:16)

[Sep, 8, 2014; 183 likes]

42. There are some deep, deep hurts in life that can make the soul suddenly, automatically crave and rush for that refuge of all wounded hearts: the mother's lap.

No matter how old one is, no matter how wise and mature and well-worn one is with life's struggles, there are some deep aches that the soul recognizes as a true crisis and leads us to, by emergency default.

The soul reserves those moments not for just any, everyday hurt. In fact, it doesn't even use this last reserve for major hurts, for it knows that we are now grown up enough to self-soothe and to blow on our own painful wounds.

No, the soul evokes this need for our mother only in those moments when the heart breaks into a million shards of sharp glass; when the pain is so intense that it is hard to tell where it is anymore. When it just aches like crazy in some deep, deep place that only our mothers will somehow know where to find and to touch.

And when we rush into her lap and we cry and cry, it doesn't even matter anymore if she can't find that aching place and fix it.

Her hand on our head speaks a million words. Her eyes say what we need. Her warmth gives us the comfort we need. Her presence conveys volumes.

And we realize that we only come here to be uplifted when the world has let us down.

And we only come for this love because we had looked for love in the wrong places.

And that we only come home when we realize everything else was an illusion and not really home.

And that we only come back to this trusted place because, wow, no other place should have ever been trusted.

And eventually our racking sobs become soft whimpers and then there is peace.

For the soul has been reunited with the womb. With the one who has nurtured us by giving us a part of her own flesh, her own blood, her own bones, her own milk, her own heart and her own soul.

It is peaceful here now.

Because this is where true love is. True, and loyal, and giving, and merciful and forgiving.

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And we look up at her knowing eyes and we want to thank her.

We want to thank her for letting us go so that we could experience the bitterness of this terrible taste of heartbreak.

We want to thank her for being strong enough to look away so that we could stumble and find ourselves falling, falling, falling.

We want to thank her for being patient so that the betrayers would eventually reveal themselves.

That was the ultimate mercy, dear mother.

That you allowed people to hurt me and didn't intervene when you could have stopped it all.

You waited until it was too late when you knew, all along, who are the liars and the cheaters and the illusionists and the seducers but you stayed quiet after warning me just a few times.

Your patience allowed them to show their ugliness. Their heartlessness. Their selfishness. Their self-absorbedness. Their mercilessness.

And now I come back to you defeated.

But oh so much more wiser, Ma.

And understanding this makes me understand an even deeper peace that I could truly find in God, the truest source of my origin.

If only I could train my soul to make Him my emergency default.

And understanding this makes me understand His Plan and why He doesn't intervene and crush those who plot and plan and wish me evil.

If only I could understand that He had a plan all along.

And that in His holding back and waiting for me to learn from my own mistakes and to recognize how evil the ones I truly loved were was really, the ultimate, ultimate Mercy.

[Sep, 4, 2016; 64 likes]

43. Perhaps one of the THE most heartbreaking feelings to experience when one is hopelessly in love with someone is to be ignored and neglected by the beloved.

To make them our priority, our everything and then to be forced to watch them act like everything in their lives is more important, more significant, more meaningful than being with us.

Sometimes all we need is one glance. One affirmation of an "I love you too"

One quick embrace, one assurance that "I miss you too".

One word of apology for ignoring us.

Just one word of recognition for how utterly precious our love is.

One word of gratitude and appreciation for how much we do for them.

It's a terrible place to be in.

To give so much.

To have so much overflowing within us.

To wait impatiently to shower all that love on the object of our affection.

To gift-wrap that love and to hold it out in front of us, ready to offer it like a beautiful, priceless gift of sparkling diamonds and glowing rubies.

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To nurture that love day and night and await that joyful moment when one can finally express it to the beloved.

Only to have that person time and again mercilessly ignore us.

Not a word of apology. Not even an effort to make amends.

In fact, more often than not, just one more request or demand to do some work for us.

It can absolutely crush the soul and shatter the heart into a million pieces.

This crushing reaction to unrequited, unreciprocated, uncherished love has been the fodder of countless mournful love songs, poems, movies and tearful laments since the beginning of time. And continues to be THE feeling that most jilted lovers complain about.

Nothing hurts more than to love someone with your heart and soul, to think of them night and day, to put oneself on hold just to do their work, to obsess over their pleasure before any action, to wait and wait for them-- only to be treated so heartlessly and to only be taken for granted once again.

Waiting can be such an excruciating, frustrating exercise when the one we wait for is the most precious thing to us in the entire world. For the one who waits, waiting can mean making oneself completely vulnerable and open to being rejected, hurt and disappointed

Why does God allow people to hurt us like this?

Why does He swt let sincere people like us, who love so deeply, so passionately, so selflessly be taken for granted so mercilessly?

Because perhaps He swt wants us to understand what not to EVER do to the one who sincerely loves us.

He (swt) wants us to understand how cruel it is when we hurt the one who sincerely loves us.

He (swt) wants us to experience these feelings of being rejected, hurt, neglected and taken for granted and how terrible we look when we do that to someone and still expect them to keep giving and giving and forgiving to us.

He (swt) wants us to see first-hand how sincere, deep, overflowing love, when it is ignored and scorned enough, can turn into utter, overpowering hatred and rage at that same person that we just recently wanted to give our everything for.

He (swt) wants us to understand how loving, grateful and appreciative a true, sincere lover should really be.

And He (swt) wants us to understand how much we too behave like this with the One who Loves us more than any human being. The One who loves us 72 times more than even our own mother can love us.

“O Lord! You call out to me but I turn it down,
You become familiar with me but I do not care for You,
and You show affection to me but I do not correspond to You,
as if You are overreaching me or are being too familiar with me!”
(Dua Iftitah)

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Oh Allah, forgive us for loving anyone more than we should have loved you. Forgive us for making you wait for us and for hurting you each time. Please take us back into your Loving Mercy.

Accept us like you always do.

And never let us forget how much You do for us, sincerely Love us, patiently Wait for us, lovingly prepare for us.

And never ever let us look away from you for even one moment.

Forever grace us with your Merciful Glance and never stop Loving us, Ya Al Wadud....

[Sep, 1, 2016; 76 likes]

44. Ever lied to someone and STILL find them believing in what you say the next time?

Ever been caught "borrowing" someone's possession and STILL found them leaving their purse unattended in your absence?

Ever blatantly flirted with someone in your spouse's presence and they STILL have not confronted you about it?

Ever broken promises and your loved ones STILL believe you when you make a new promise?

Ever disobeyed your parents and they STILL give you back your confiscated cell phone and your going out privileges?

Ever said sorry a million times and people STILL believe you when you "sincerely" apologize for the million and one time?

What is wrong with all these people?

Are they fools?

Are they pushovers?

Do they not care?

Are they blind?

Then why do they give us a second chance? a third chance? a 100th chance?

Are they weak?

ANSWER:

They are not WEAK. They love us STRONGLY.

Their love for us is so strong that they overlook their own hurt, their own disappointment, their own bitterness, their own loss of faith in us, their rage and anger at us to give us an opportunity to MAKE IT RIGHT.

This is why they allow us to be alone with the very thing that they fear the most.

Because they want to be able to trust us again.

Don't confuse someone's love for you as their weakness.

Don't abuse it. Don't take it for granted.

Don't think that because they don't yell at you, confront you, sulk or stop talking to you--or that because they treat you with respect that it means you are worthy of respect.

It means they are great enough to allow you respect even though you yourself have not left anything worth respecting.

Don't make a mockery of someone's deep, strong love for you by pushing them to the limit.
For everyone has a breaking point.

Everyone reaches a point where they decide,
"ENOUGH IS ENOUGH".

Let us never push our loved ones to treat us the way we deserve to be treated.

Allah (swt) repeatedly forgives us in the same way. He too gives us respite from His own
WRATH. He gives us the Mercy we do not deserve.

Let us not take His Mercy as His inability to punish us.

It is His great Love for His creations that allows Him to overlook our evil deeds.

Let us not take this Love as our right.

Let us earn this privilege.

With our loved ones as well as with our Lord (swt)

Next time someone trusts you again, give them every reason to believe in you again.

Only those who love us deeply can forgive us like this.

And without those people in our lives, there will be no one left who will be willing to give us a
second chance.

[Aug, 4, 2016; 96 likes]

45.

CELEBRATING MY 20TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY WITH CANDID REFLECTIONS ON MARRIAGE

What an incredible milestone. In a few weeks on 25 Zilqaad, on the day of Dahwul Ardh, I will
have been married to my husband Mohsin for 20 years.

UNBELIEVABLE....

I thank Allah swt for the gift of being able to experience the joys of marriage—and to learn from
the lessons it has taught me, as well.

Subhanallah, this journey of life has taken us through the days of struggling as students (when he
was in Medical school and I was in Graduate school completing my Master's degree), through
days of extreme poverty (which no one even knew about), of subsequent joyful days of financial
ease and comfort, through the joys and trials of being parents to three children (now 16, 15 and 7
yrs), through moves between 3 States, 2 countries, 6 house moves, deaths of our fathers, new
careers (he became a Medical doctor and my life changed as I became a Zakira) and our frequent
ongoing travels for our work.

I didn't really understand the true, incredible accomplishment and gift of such a long marriage
until Mohsin and I travelled across Europe last September. We were in London to receive my
“Award of Excellence” from Ahlulbayt TV and decided to give ourselves a vacation without the
children!!! With just one hand luggage each (so you can say we kind of backpacked across
Europe) we travelled from London to Paris to Switzerland and on to Venice, Italy.

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It was the trip of a lifetime.

We ran to catch fleeting trains, ran out of breath as we jumped onto moving buses, stayed in very dinghy motels and also extremely luxurious hotels, experienced breathtaking cruises, took short plane rides, a scenic train ride up to the snow-topped peaks of Europe, rode a gondola in Venice, ate meagre meals and then dined in extremely expensive restaurants!!!It was just a total fantastic experience!!

But more than the undoubtedly incredible, unbelievable sights we saw, I found it FASCINATING to watch US function as a couple on a very busy journey together.

For the first time, I was really able to pay attention and to really watch and reflect on us as a team. I marvelled at the way we worked so efficiently together. We knew exactly what to do and how to mould together and to work as ONE.

I was blown away. And I realized an important thing. This ability to function well together was a result of years of adjusting, of compromising, of give and take, of turning a blind eye, of tolerating, of just letting go, of just STICKING TOGETHER through the years!! I also realized that the mere act of living with someone for so long makes you know how to live with them. Your mind, your body, your soul learns how to accommodate them completely. So many people give up too early not knowing that with time,adjustment sometimes happens even automatically! The things you fought about in year 2 become non-issues by year 15 especially if you are committed to growing together.

I realized that my husband was the only one in my life who knew me so closely over the past 19 years. He was essentially, the CONSTANT in a life full of fluctuations and ups and downs. Even my mother or siblings wouldn't know me as well as he knew me now, especially because he knew me as an adult—not as a struggling teenager who was still finding herself. He knew me. The real me. And you know what? I knew him! I knew exactly what was about to stress him, I knew exactly how he would deal with a certain situation, I knew when to not feel offended and when to understand not to take things personally. Past experience had made me familiar with what his triggers were.

As we spent the 3 weeks together, I saw that I knew what he would like to eat and he knew what would entertain me. He knew how easily I would adjust to the unknown and how much he could push me before I lost my temper. I knew his propensity to be late and knew to brace myself for missed trains, he knew how to charm me,distract me and make me happy no matter how disappointed I was about something.

We prayed salaah together on the snowy Swiss Alps and in our water-hotel in Venice. We listened to Dua Komail in Paris from our laptops and tuned into majalises from obscure places in Europe.

I loved the fact that I had a spouse who did not make a distinction between a vacation and being in constant remembrance of Allah swt. The two went hand in hand. And it made me hold HIS hand with pride and joy!

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In those 3 weeks we spent together, we never argued ONCE!! We were in good spirits (so we were in our best state of mind) and we worked efficiently like a well-oiled wheel on a cart!!

It really felt so rewarding. I realized that all those hard years of figuring each other out, of feeling hurt and then negotiating and working things out, of arguing and forgiving, of trying to understand what made the other person “tick” had FINALLY PAID OFF.

I realized that this efficiency, these glances across the table that were equivalent to entire conversations, these quiet moments of just hanging out together doing our own thing, this ability to circumvent a bad mood or an impending explosive argument were the result of 19 YEARS TOGETHER.

It cannot happen overnight. It cannot happen in 5 years. It happens when you invest a lifetime of hard work into each other.

It happens when you just stick together--sometimes too tired to even work at your marriage--but the mere fact that you are together makes the days go by. And then you are over the hurdle and find yourself at the top of the mountain!!

Our marriage was, in fact, a hard earned trophy that I was extremely grateful to win. For I had a friend, a life companion, who had been through a COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE WITH ME. This friend, this constant, had been through the same friends, the same cities, the same wins and losses, the same betrayals, the same hurts the same joys, the same children, the same relatives, the same money issues, the same houses, the same dreams, the same LIFE.

I looked at Mohsin and realized, he had lived MY entire life for the past 19 years. He was ME. I was HIM. We were US.

Suddenly, I could now understand why widows like my mother and my mother-in-law had spent years crying for their deceased spouses. Losing a spouse, especially after a long marriage, can really be like losing an important part of one's own history. One becomes so connected that it can be like losing a part of one's body!!

And I secretly patted myself on the back for not giving up on us over the years. Thank God I never, ever packed my bags and threw in the towel. Thank God I put up with whatever our fate, whatever his mood, or my feelings, or his habits, or my family, or the kids, or whatever bad patch, or this or that COME BETWEEN US. Thank God I had kept this marriage together. Thank God I had not let some bad phases in our marriage ruin a lifetime of achievements. Thank God I had been able to accept Mohsin for whatever he was and he was able to love me despite my often being unlovable.

Often during the trip, I would silently speak to God and say,

“Thank you Allah for giving us the tawfeeq to never give up.
To believe in the sanctity of marriage.

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To be able to be miserable and yet not leave.

To feel helpless and hopeless and yet not break the bonds that Allah swt had blessed.

Thank God for my marriage.”

Trust me, I was never this sentimental about our relationship before. For ours was an arranged marriage and I did not marry him for romantic love. I married him because he had all the qualities I knew a spouse should have. And in ALL HONESTY, I felt not an iota of physical attraction to him. I was impressed by his brains and his spiritual religiosity and with all the factors that made him very marketable but I did not feel an emotional attraction.

There was absolutely nothing “wrong” with him. He was a perfectly attractive man but I didn’t feel anything for him.

I was all set to reject him because he didn’t make my heart pound!!! He was a great guy but he was not a “macho man” who towered over people and spoke in a loud man’s voice. Not at all. Mohsin’s entire expression was one of total serenity, gentleness and kindness. He spoke with almost a murmur and his body frame was that of a teenager. He looked nothing like the dashing, domineering men in the romance novels I had read about and definitely nothing like a Bollywood hero. One could take a look at him and the descriptive word that would come to mind was: “harmless”.

It was my father who felt that Mohsin would be ideal for me. I was amazed that my father considered this young man, who had just left our home after meeting me for the first time, as marriage material!!! A young boy of just 22 yrs with “just a Bachelor’s Degree” and a lot of great dreams actually eligible for marriage for his most precious and favourite daughter!! I had always respected my father’s judgment and when he quietly smiled and softly said, “But I liked the boy” I literally did a double take and widened my eyes in shock.

If my father liked him, there must be surely something great about this young man. I braced myself and boldly told my father that I felt no physical attraction for the young man. Instead of reacting to my uncharacteristic audaciousness, my dad calmly smiled and said, “I know your personality. And I truly think this is the type of man who can keep you happy.” I reflected on this for a shocked moment. And then I quietly said I would give it a thought overnight.

I went up to my room like a doomed man heads to the gallows.

And I cried all night. I cried because I felt nothing for him. I cried because he was not the dashing, man of my dreams. I cried because I couldn’t bear the idea of spending even a day with him in my life. Horrific images of grocery shopping with this stranger, of buying a house together, of posing for family pictures with him beside me etc etc flashed through my mind.

I cried so much that I became physically ill and had to be taken to the hospital. I had a high temperature and couldn’t even walk. I had essentially made myself sick with worry. No one had

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forced or said another word to me about the prospective suitor, but I knew there was nothing **WRONG** with the guy. I knew I had no excuse for refusing the proposal. I knew I had to face the inevitable.

It really was a very difficult phase in my life. And something everyone still teases me about today. They say in reality I was “smitten” with him. I think the truth is, my hesitation was not about looks at all but because I was really afraid of commitment.

I confronted my thoughts over the next few days and asked myself if I was being fair. I scolded myself for judging a human being for his looks! I asked myself what kind of a person can be so shallow as to base the prospect of an entire lifetime on just physical attraction.

A human being is made up of so many facets, correct? They are the **SUM** of personality, education, life experience, values, looks, family, etc etc. Therefore, **LOOKS** and **PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS** are just **ONE** facet of a multi-faceted human being. Correct?

So why judge someone on just **ONE** facet? Isn't that unreasonable?

Would I like someone to judge me the same way? Wouldn't I scream out, “hey, I am a great human being!! How can you just judge a book by it's cover?!!!”

Similarly, I scolded myself, the success of a marriage is based on so many facets as well, correct? Marriage is based on adjustment, compromise, forgiveness, compatibility, experiences, negotiation, physical closeness, emotional closeness, effective conflict resolution etc etc Marriage is the **SUM** of all those things and physical closeness is **JUST ONE FACTOR**, one facet of marriage.

So why judge the success of a marriage on just one facet? Isn't **THAT** unreasonable?

As I look back at our marriage, I realize how foolish my initial reaction to my future spouse had been.

When I look back at the hundreds of mundane decisions and life altering resolutions we have made together, at the hundreds of grocery trips we have made together, the countless shopping excursions for winter coats or back to school clothes we have hunted for, the child rearing and the house moving, and the family vacations and the funerals and the job searches etc etc I realize something **INCREDIBLE**:

what has helped us as a couple was **NOT** how physically attracted we are to each other, but rather **WHAT QUALITIES WE EACH HAVE** that make the mundane and important tasks of life easier.

This is a **HUGE LESSON**. A lesson I could shout from the top of mountains!!!

We base the decision for an entire marriage simply on our visceral reaction to that person's looks and physical pull. But how many hours of a day, of an entire marriage do we really spend being

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physically intimate with a spouse? In the grand scheme of things, in the big total, it is actually a small fraction of what marriage is truly about.

Having a spouse who values peace, forgiveness, acceptance, tolerance, kindness and generosity as taught by our Holy Messenger (s.a.w) is truly what make small things such as sharing just one plate of food together, giving up the warmer blanket, going to a museum one is not particularly interested in or even unfairly accepting blame for a missed train or show, that much more bearable.

You can be sitting beside a gorgeous wife who turns heads when you walk, and you can be totally, totally miserable because she is not a wonderful human being. She is difficult to talk to, she is unreasonable, she doesn't have mercy on old parents or on orphan children.

You can be posing for a picture with a dashing husband beside you and be sobbing inside because he does not love God, because he has low morals or terrible ethics.

Looks can NOT make up for character. They may contribute something to a marriage. But not everything.

People often ask me to match make for them and then they inevitably turn down a potential mate because they did not find them "physically attractive". I can't count the number of times girls reject a boy because he is too short, or dark! I can't count the number of times boys reject girls because they are not slim, not fair, not petite, not smooth skinned enough etc etc. You get the picture.

And then of course are other things like a mate not being rich enough, educated enough, young enough or a girl being older than the boy by a mere year!

Wow. If it looks shallow on paper, imagine how shallow it sounds when you actually hear people saying this.

How I wish I could shake them and say, "Listen to me!!! people get fat, they lose their complexion, they lose their money, they lose their fancy jobs, they move cities! The only thing that MATTERS and that remains CONSTANT is how they are as a human being!!! How tall they are wont help you when you try to resolve a conflict!! How slim she is wont help you when you need her to have a forgiving nature!!"

How sad that we lose a lifetime of happiness over something so shallow!! Especially when physical attraction CAN and DOES occur once you know someone more deeply.

It truly does. And that devotion,that attraction to someone because they are simply a GOOD human being, really,really feels fantastic. It feels real. It makes you respect yourself! Because you know that you love that person because they are loveable in the eyes ofAllah (swt) They have earned your love with hard work, not simply by being born with beautiful hair or green eyes!!!

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I think that the fact that one is not immediately physically attracted to a person is a GOOD thing!! It shows that you as a human being are not superficial, that you can only be physically attracted to someone ONCE YOU GET TO KNOW THEM.

But most people don't give it a chance!!!

They reject right away!!!

I too was one of those superficial people. I thought looks were important but I was wrong. Looks are ONE of the things that are important. But a true believer looks beyond that and judges a character, a soul, a personality to assess for compatibility as a life partner. Luckily I took one agonizing night of soul-searching to open my eyes to this fact. One month later, after only seeing him twice in my life, I was engaged to Mohsin.

People so often choose a life companion based on how physically attractive they are. And while looks are important and it can be wonderful to have a drop-dead gorgeous spouse holding one's hand, in the bigger scheme of things this doesn't make the journeys we take as spouses together any SMOOTHER.

For at the end of the day, the partnership of marriage is about how two people can work together to face the challenges of life together and to make them surmountable for each other and to just make them easier to cross.

It is truly the qualities that one's life companion has, which stem from faith based values and beliefs that make negotiation, decision making, planning and navigating the turns of life easier. And it is this that makes all the difference.

As our travels took us from London to Paris, then on to Switzerland and beyond to Venice, Italy, I found myself watching my husband and I fell more in love with him as he took charge to make our trip smoother. I was in awe of his ability to navigate through various languages (French, German, English, Italian!!), at his efficiency in booking rooms, trains etc, at his ability to enjoy museums and have intellectual conversations, at his friendliness with strangers etc. We talked a lot, caught up on things and enjoyed uninterrupted conversations without the kids. I was proud of him and saw him in a new light. I saw how much he had grown up, how life had taught him lessons, what a better spouse he had become over time and much more.

I realized that when one selects a spouse who shares the same precious values, then the other things that can be potential "deal breakers" can truly be surmounted by simply taking things in stride and by focusing on the gains rather than the losses.

All of us have strong likes and dislikes but it IS possible to overlook these or to swallow one's anger because there are greater gifts to treasure and more greater things to be gained.

My love for my husband has solidified over the years because I have seen him under pressure, over difficulties, over painful moments, over joyous events, over financial gains, over spiritual tests and over his parenting efforts with our teenagers. I see him being an uncle to my nephews

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and I see how he respects my mother and I watch how he helps ME to be a better daughter and I realize it makes me love him more and more.

“Wow,” I often remark as I watch him in action.

I often muse that a lesser man may have even contemplated suicide if faced with the life struggles my husband has faced, or even stopped having faith with all the losses he has had over the years and I truly admire and deeply love him especially for his steadfast,intense, firm faith in Allah swt and the Ahlulbayt (a.s)

The times I am most emotionally attracted to my husband is when I see him on the prayer mat, conversing with his Lord. It makes me want to kiss him and hug him and cherish him. His love for God makes him that much more loveable to me.

I admire my husband for being just a few months older than me and yet being so much in charge and so very responsible. I look up to him in reverence for being able to handle bills, finances, mortgages, transactions,flights, school applications etc etc. It makes me fall in love with him more and more when I can sit back and let him handle those complicated things, even when I know perfectly well how to do it.

I love being a woman and it is so beautiful to have a husband who takes his responsibilities as a Muslim man seriously.

I admire how he loves his children despite their ungratefulness and rudeness and how he works hard to bring home halal earned money. I admire his ethics, his humility, his piety, his family values.

He becomes more and more attractive to me over the years!

I sometimes watch him sleep and envy him for what a sinless, pious life he leads. When I hear him snore, I feel no irritation. The sound reminds me that he has worked hard for a living to put food on our table and I feel so guilty that he receives so little from all of us for doing so much.

It makes me love him more passionately than any romantic attraction could have ever done. So many of the handsome, dashing young men that I used to admire in my youth have now become bald and gained weight. They look nothing like they did when I first knew them. We have all aged.

My husband too, has lost hair and gained weight. But when I look at him, his diminishing looks do not lessen my love for him. Thankfully, I never married him for those anyway, did I? What I see, and what has remained constant and even become enhanced over the years, are his gentleman-like behaviors.

When you marry for looks, you risk your love diminishing as the looks diminish. When you marry for character, your love for that person has the potential to increase with every improvement they make to their character.

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I reflect and I realize that a “macho-man” with a thundering voice and towering height would not have fared well in our marital arguments. I am no easy person to live with. He would have yelled the house down with that voice and God Forbid even threatened to use his towering looks to intimidate me.

With a gentle man like my husband, our arguments have remained civil and not too loud. He is a true momin and fears Allah swt. And when a man fears Allah (swt) he never threatens anyone, especially not a woman he is married to!!

I look back at the past 20 years and can honestly acquiesce with my marhoom father’s words on that fateful night when Mohsin Dhalla came to my home to meet me for the first time,

“I truly think this is the type of man who can keep you happy”.

Thank you daddy, for knowing that one must look at what a man (or a woman) is worth in CHARACTER. Thank you for seeing the beauty in Mohsin. The beauty I had failed to notice.

Thank you Allah swt for the gift of marriage.
Thank you Allah swt for the gift of Mohsin.

May Allah swt keep our marriages intact, successful and joyful. May He (swt) keep our spouses alive so that we can hold hands with them as we travel on the sirat e mustaqeem together, with firm and steady steps AMEEN

*NOTE:

I WROTE THIS PIECE NOT TO JUST SHARE MY PERSONAL LIFE BUT TO SHARE AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE.

SO PLEASE FEEL FREE TO SHARE--I PRAY IT WILL GUIDE THOSE WHO ARE CONTEMPLATING MARRIAGE AND REASSURE THOSE ALREADY MARRIED TO KEEP WORKING HARD TO KEEP THEIR MARRIAGES GOING.

[Sep, 12, 2013; 313 likes]



46. It was just a simple everyday act that I witnessed just now but somehow, today on the day of Dah wul Ardh and our Islamic 23rd wedding anniversary, this moment filled my heart and soul with a joy that I cannot even express adequately.

In the early hours of Fajr as I sat reading the Holy Quran, I heard my husband walking to our children's bedrooms and gently, kindly waking them up for salaah.

It's actually just one of those unwritten routines followed in our home that we don't really even mention. I do the difficult job of waking a very sleepy and tired Mohsin up and then he does the even more difficult job of waking whiny teenagers and our 10 yr old up.

But today watching this everyday scenario made me bow my head tearfully in sajda at the blessings Allah swt has showered upon me.

Subhanallah, I thought to myself... the choices we make today really do become the realities of our tomorrow.

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And I thanked Allah swt for Guiding me that fateful day 24 years ago when I made the decision to marry a young man simply for his piety. A young man who didn't have much money and who was still very much a student and who was still trying to make a mark in this world.

But the most salient thing about his personality was that he was a devout Muslim Shia Ithnasheri whose faith was his main identity.

And it is that main identity of his that still continues to make him my knight in shining armour no matter how successful he has become in his education, wealth and status and throughout whatever ups and downs life and our own relationship throws at us.

This is a man who wakes up our children for Fajr.

He helps me to bring up our children in the way that would please Allah swt.

He is a valuable companion to me on this sirat e mustaqeem and helps me to make our home a blessed place of shared Islamic values and principles.

And I realize right now in this blessed moment. That it is not the roses, not the customary dinner celebration, nor the expensive gifts that mark the milestone dates of a marriage as a day of rejoicing and celebration.

It is priceless, extremely valuable gifts such as these that bring the deepest inner delight and a true happiness and sense of accomplishment for making it this far.

[Aug, 29, 2016; 295 likes]

47. By a strange stroke of luck I suddenly find myself with a whole hour of free time without my husband and kids.

Woohoo!!!! The whole house to myself!!! Thank you God!! What have I done to deserve this incredible blessing??!!

My first thought is to savour this wonderful, wonderful silence.

Ahhhhh.....

I can hear the clocks ticking in the house!!

I can hear myself think!!!

No one to interrupt my thoughts, my tv show, my texting, my cup of coffee.

Mmmm. This is the life.

I am sitting on the couch just taking it all in.

No one is jumping on me. No one is snatching the remote control.

No sounds of video games, phones ringing, kids arguing, no one calling out "mummmmmmy!!!!" every 2 seconds.

No one is hungry. No one is angry. No one needs consoling. No one feels neglected.

No one is looking for their favourite shirt in the clothes hamper.

Ahh.....even breathing feels so so therapeutic right now.

How can sitting on the couch doing absolutely nothing with the tv off feel like I am enjoying a luxurious massage at a spa?

But it does!!!!

OMG it feels like I am sitting on the beach with the blue waves of the ocean in front of me.

I feel like I can conquer the world! I can do ANYTHING I like right now!!!

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I can watch the most boring documentary about the most obscure topic and no one will judge my choice of entertainment.

Oh God don't let this moment end.

I am king of the world!!!

Let me go to the park!!!

But what fun is it with no Shireen to push on the swing....

Let me go to the mall!!

But what fun is it with no Zaynab by my side, squealing in joy at all the sparkling, pretty cosmetic jewellery for sale!!!

Let me have a cup of coffee!!!

But what fun will it be without my mother in law sitting beside me on the couch discussing world events.

Let me watch a movie!!!

But there is no joy without Mohsin to discuss the philosophical epiphanies with.

Let me play a board game!!!

But without my son Hassan there is no one to impress with making big words in scrabble.

I look around and realize all this that I have and I own is empty without all these people in my life.

No picnic, no walk on the beach, no busy mall, no tasty meal is fun without loved ones to enjoy it with!!!

I can have a mansion, a luxury car, money in my purse and time to squander away but if there is no family it is all meaningless and silent.

It's like owning an entire amusement park but the merry-go-rounds are going round and round empty and the roller coasters are going up and down completely empty with no people shouting and screaming in delight on them.

Oh wow.

The very people I couldn't wait to get out of the house because they drive me nuts are the ones I realize I can't live without and the ones I love the most in the world.

It's not that I am miserable being alone.

I am just glad it's temporary!!!

And I am struck not only by how blessed my life is but at the irony of it all:

I spent the one precious free hour I finally got alone with myself writing and thinking about how much I wish my family was here with me!!! Lolllllzzzzzz

[Aug, 24, 2016; 166 likes]

48. Life is full of failed attempts.

But we mistakenly label our attempts as Failures.

And that is a huge fallacy.

For true failure is not when we aim for a basket and the basketball misses.

Because every basketball player will readily attest that their amazing ability to aim correctly and

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get the basket did NOT happen overnight.

There were many, many misses. Many shots not taken. Many misdirected attempts and many heartbreaking moments.

True failure is how we react to a failed attempt.

True failure is when we stop trying to make an attempt.

True failure is when we cannot handle the disappointments in life and we react hysterically.

When we self-destruct or destruct relationships and people.

Or when we react with deep depression or with devastatingly negative thinking. Or get suicidal when the going gets tough.

When we get so angry at ourselves for messing up that we get paralyzed with the fear of failure itself.

True failure is breaking up relationships because we didn't do things correctly and it was simply easier to walk away than to really learn how to interact properly.

True failure is to become a bitter person and to blame others for our own lack of resilience.

True failure is to hang up the towel and to decide we are simply just not good enough.

True failure is to lose hope. To be full of despair and to never give things and people another chance.

And true success is to have attempted many, many times, and to have fallen and gotten up again and again.

And to have survived the bruises and the heartache and to still keep saying,

"Let me just give it another shot"

[Ag, 25, 2015; 74 likes]

49. Marriage is one of the most challenging experiences in a human being's life.

On a personal level it forces one to truly mature and to really work on one's own flaws so that one can love another. To deal with personal recurring demons, to get over the imprint of past insecurities and to forget the hurts in our childhood etc

On a relationship level it forces one to live with another human being and to love them and, in essence, tolerate them despite their annoyances, their flaws, their colossal mistakes and their irritating tendencies.

And then there's the added complication of LIFE and all the ups and downs and tests and challenges it has to offer. The tests of natural disasters such as unemployment, death, in-laws, illness and more than the heart can bear.

Surviving inspite of all these personal and emotional challenges and curve balls is no easy feat.

Look around you at all those married people. And realize that every married couple is, in essence two brave warriors that have been on an often very heart-breaking battlefield.

Every marriage that has survived even one year has meant those two individuals truly had to push themselves hard to keep going.

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Even one year is a huge accomplishment.

It's no joke.

10 years? 15? 20? 30? 45???!

Those people are heroes indeed and deserve a salute.

But Subhanallah it's not all sacrifice and doom.

There are rewards. And there are incredible blessings from Allah swt for really hanging in there. He (swt) is the only one who knows how hard it was.

And the appreciation of those blessings truly hits you when you suddenly look around at your own family during an especially mundane, everyday family moment.

It could be during dinner time. Or when you are all watching tv together. Or with all your kids cuddled around you in your bed.

Without marriage there wouldn't be these children who add life and joy and laughter and lots of exciting fights in the house (!!). Without this spouse there wouldn't be someone to struggle with when those shocking bills come in the mail and the mortgage payments looms ahead, no one to struggle with as the housework piles up and the lawn gets overgrown, no one to scramble with at midnight to take out the garbage on recycling days and no one to endure boring weddings and must-attend events with.

Without this marriage there wouldn't be the extended families we enjoy during special days and share grief with during heartbreaking moments.

Alone, we would be just that....

Alone

So let's thank Allah swt for giving us the courage, the steadfastness, the resilience and the endurance to make it through the years.

Let's be grateful to our spouses for hanging in there with us so that we could reap the rewards that are now blooming and blossoming around us.

Alhamdulillah for the milestones, the graduations, the engagements, the weddings, the grandchildren and so much more that defies description and even enumerating.

Today, on a random Wednesday of life let us pause and thank Allah swt for these gifts of life.

No matter how flawed, how broken, how imperfect it all is. It still is something amazing.

Let us acknowledge our loved ones. Let us acknowledge how happy we truly are--even though there is much to also grieve over.

For a moment let us take it all in and be happy.

Forget all the sadness, the struggles, the challenges the hurt, the bitterness, the disappointments, the regrets and the empty places in our heart that are not getting filled.

Let us be thankful. Grateful. Happy and content.

Whether those moments were fleeting, or are in our lives right now or are forever gone.

Let's be thankful anyway. For at least they happened....

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For those fond moments we went bike riding with our kids. Or to the park on a sunny day and watched them laugh in glee on the swings.

That picnic we had. That family vacation in Mexico. That funny movie we all watched together. That birthday party we all enjoyed so much. That awesome heart to heart talk we had with our husband or wife. That special day when we all discussed a majlis we all enjoyed together and learned more about Islam together.

That amazing moment when our kids said "thank you. I love you. I am so blessed to have parents like you"

That touching moment when our spouse said "you are the best thing that has ever happened to me"

Let's be thankful for it all.

Right now.

Smile and take a deep breath.

Exhale with happiness.

Talk to Allah swt.

Do a sajda if you can.

Or a virtual sajda in your mind.

And say:

Shukrillillah. Thank you Allah for all these gifts. And for the gift of life

[Aug, 10, 2016; 308 likes]

50. I feel blessed and honoured to have once met this amazing human being, Marhoom Abdul Sattar Edhi, just a few years ago.

A mutual friend had arranged the meeting and we were on the street. He was unbelievably humble and so kind, so down to earth. And as we spoke a crowd quickly gathered around us. People instantly recognized his familiar looks and it was obvious to see they were overcome with emotion.

Tears flowed, people reached out to touch him and cameras began to flash.

This was a man whose Edhi Foundation ran 1,200 free ambulances, hundreds of medical centres, graveyards and an adoption service for abandoned children.

His foundation had rescued over 20,000 abandoned infants, rehabilitated over 50,000 orphans and has trained over 40,000 nurses.

He was a celebrity that had drawn an instant crowd but he was completely calm. And he spoke just like he does in the video. Calmly. With total wisdom and by simply touching the soul.

It was fascinating to watch him. So calm and poised and unaffected by fame. It was completely clear that he was an angel in the form of a human being.

He had a mission. He had a message. And he was willing to repeat it a million times to any who would listen.

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Brought on this earth to inspire us. To show us what perseverance is. To show that one man can truly make a difference.

And change the entire world.

[Jul, 8, 2016; 142 likes]

51. Triple Blessings on the auspicious day of Lailatul Qadr!! With your Duas both our teenagers Hassan and Zaynab graduated from high school together and are headed to University in September inshallah.

The two are 18 months apart and practically grew up like twins and it was really touching to see them called up one after the other on stage.

Alhamdulillah for these blessings. May Allah swt reward all parents with these joys ameen

Hassan inshallah is starting his Bachelors Degree at my alma mater York University (and wants to go to Law school inshallah) and Zaynab is starting her Bachelors Degree in Social Work at Ryerson University inshallah.

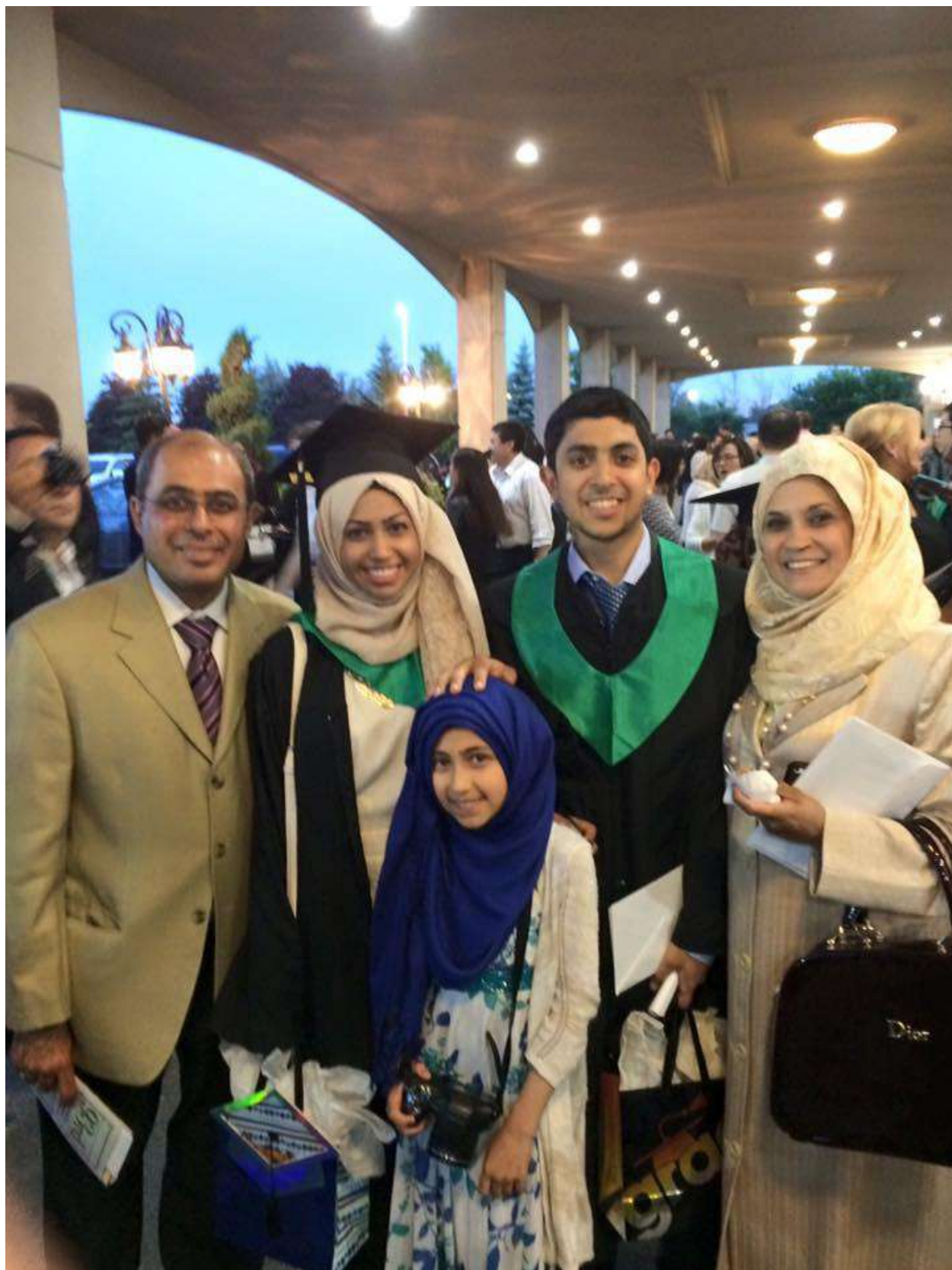
They were blessed to have a cheering team of 8 of us with both their maternal and paternal grandmothers in the audience as well as a favourite aunt, teacher and a cousin.

Needles to say a million pictures were taken 😄.😄.

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Please do remember them in your Duas that they forever stay on the Sirat e Mustaqeem ameen
[Jun, 29, 2016; 434 likes]



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52. Did you know I always pray for you?

My dearest brothers and sisters, be rest assured--I will inshallah remember you all in my duas on this holiest and most powerful of nights of Lailatul Qadr.

I remember you all each night in my salat Layl as well--one of the names in my list for the forgiveness of marhumeen is "marhumeen of all my fb friends".

When I went for ziarat I arranged for a Maulana to perform the long Amaal at Masjid e Kufa "for the isaaley Sawab of the marhumeen of all my fb friends"

And I prayed for all "my fb friends" during my Amaal in Lailatul Raghaib too.

I did a special tawaf at the khaney Kaba for all my fb friends when I was there 2 years ago and whenever I am at the Holy shrines I pray for all of you by asking for the Hajaat of all my fb friends to be accepted.

You are all very special to me and I consider you a very precious part of my life. I thank you for always taking the time to read my very long posts and for always liking, sharing and commenting.

It means the world to me and I am very familiar with your names as I do read each comment and glance at the names who have made the effort to like my posts.

I ask Allah swt to give you all inner peace and overflowing tonight and for the rest of the year.

I ask for acceptance of your Amaal, your good deeds, your acts of worship, charity and Dhikr.

I ask for your forgiveness of sins and for the fulfillment of all your hajaat

I pray fervently for the safety and success of your children, your extended families and for the magfirat of your marhumeen.

May your families and your communities experience unity and true friendship.

May Allah swt never let your eyes shed any tears except for the remembrance of the tragedy that befell the Ahlulbayt a.s

May He swt include you in the army of the Awaited One ajtfs and hasten his reappearance AMEEN

With all my duas, love and affection

[Jun, 28, 2016; 406 likes]

53. I would say, first and foremost, one has to stop thinking of this as a profession. Being an Islamic preacher means that one truly has to do a lot of soul-searching, reflection and striving to be true to the faith; it means truly living Islam, in the holistic way that it is meant to be lived.

...My advice would be to serve in ALL ways possible in the community. This means teaching at madressa, serving as a volunteer, being on the ghusl/mayyet team and not just reading but actively writing about Islam. This is how you make sense of what knowledge you have gained.

...But to tell you the truth, this is still not enough if our community wants to produce more Zakireen.

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No matter how much training and sincere efforts potential speakers make, Islamic speakers will flourish only when we, as a community, learn to nurture budding talent.

By recognizing talent and allowing it to blossom. By making room for new voices and by letting new faces come to the forefront.

So many potential marsiya and nawha reciters stand beside the microphone, waiting for a chance to recite.

So many potential Islamic Preachers wait with their handwritten majalises waiting for an opportunity to address the audience.

So many young people practice reciting duas but then are rarely given a chance to recite in large gatherings.

So many wish to volunteer but are turned away.

In every community, there are heartbreaking stories of promising talent facing so much rejection that it finally leads to a total abandonment of the quest to recite or to volunteer.

We may not realize it but that is a huge loss every time it happens!! Not everyone has the resilience to withstand so much rejection.

And why should expressing love for Allah (swt) be only for the tough, thick-skinned ones who are aggressive enough to grab the microphone?

Until we give new people a chance and respectfully treat everyone as a potential, future marhoom Mulla Saheb or Nadeem Serwar, we will never truly find fresh faces at the microphones of our masajids.

We lament that no one wants to take up the cause. But in all honesty, we need to do some deep reflection to understand if we, as a community, are doing everything possible to make the path easy for those who dare to tread it.

Talent must be nurtured, supported and appreciated.

Our relentless standards of perfection often lead us to be highly critical of those who have the guts to attempt lofty ambitions.

And it becomes the familiar dilemma we hear from unemployed people who complain that they are turned away because they lack “work experience” but how on earth can they gain work experience if no one gives them a chance to work in the first place?

We must open our hearts and make room for the young, the old and yes, even those who seem the most unlikely to be a future Zakireen.

Give them a chance and if they fail to impress, give them another chance. And another!!

I have seen so many preachers significantly improve over the years and it stands to reason that the more you have an opportunity to address a crowd, the more you can learn from your mistakes.

Everyone is on a path to discover the message of Allah (swt) and thus everyone has something to share about what has inspired them.

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Age and experience can be surmounted; even knowledge can eventually be attained.

What is most rare, most priceless is that inner spark to serve and to speak about Him and to express love for Him that is a refreshing and most essential quality.

We must be careful not to extinguish that spark for it is a huge responsibility and we will have to answer to Allah (swt) for silencing those who loved Him.

[Jun, 27, 2014; 40 likes]

54. In these turbulent times when people are killing in the name of religion, it truly was inspiring and heartwarming to spend an evening with some very esteemed Christian guests from the Anglican Church at our mosque last night.

The invitees were key and selected guests of our Resident Alim Maulana Syed Mohamed Rizvi and included an Archbishop, pastors of congregations as well as high-level Christian scholars and theology students.

Jazakallah Khair to the Tabligh committee for inviting me to join this special Iftaar with other respected scholars, lecturers and sheikhs from our own community.

Our female Christian guests sat with the ladies congregation and respectfully arrived wearing hijabs!! They attentively listened to the daily lecture by Maulana Syed Rizvi and asked many questions.

Pastor April and theology student Marty were actually fasting (they had only had some water and juice all day) so breaking the fast with them, along with student Ahmeda, was an even more special experience. All three ladies were very eager to try our cultural foods and were very adventurous indeed (even trying fried green chillies and other spicy foods like Haleem, kebabs, samosas etc)

We had a lovely conversation as we ate and I told them about Imam Ali a.s and his beautiful wisdom from the Nahjul Balagha (especially focusing on letter #31 the Will of Imam Ali).

I also told them how we Muslims believe in the coming again of Prophet Jesus and await his reappearance along with our saviour and imam Mahdi ajtfs. I said "We Muslims and Christians are destined to join together one day so why not begin that friendship right now so that it paves the way for the Awaited Ones?"

These words made all of us beam with joy and happiness

After Iftaar we all convened in the boardroom where Maulana gave a speech about Fasting in Monotheistic religions. The Archbishop gave a detailed speech on how Christians also fast including how some even fast for up to 40 days! Some types of fasts that some Christians do involve not eating at all for several days (and just drinking water)

All of us agreed that the act of fasting is a spiritual exercise and a path towards true asceticism.

Maulana presented the Archbishop with the gift of a book and gave all attendees a booklet he has written about Fasting.

We then had a group discussion and shared information about our rituals, similarities in worshipping and the significance and importance of doing supplication (especially during the holy days).

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I shared a story (you can see me telling it in one of the attached pictures) of how a young Shia man (named Qamar) a few years ago had a devastating car accident in the USA as he drove by a Church and was pronounced dead by paramedics. The congregation had been in worship when the noise of the accident brought them all outside and they all began to pray fervently for the man.

The prayers of the Christians truly helped and miraculously, his heart began to beat again. When he recovered months later he went back to the Church to thank the congregation and told them that he knew he would not have survived if it weren't for their prayers.

I said to the guests, "There is truly power in prayer and God does listen when we call out to him. So please pray for us, and we will pray for you and do visit us again as it was so wonderful to meet you all."

It truly was a beautiful evening and we all left with hope and joy in our hearts.

Inshallah we look forward to July 3 when our mosque will be having many more dignitaries, politicians and guests of all faiths visit us for the interfaith Iftar. There will be not only special lectures, a meal and a meet and greet but there will also be a festive Eid bazaar with henna application, jewellery and clothing items for sale.

Hoping everyone will bring a friend or neighbour to be a part of the festivities.

" O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)."

Quran 49:13

[Jun 23, 2016; 95 likes]



55. I placed my forehead in sajda after Fajr salaah this morning and for a moment imagined the millions of people around the world who were also awake and also preparing to fast for the Pleasure of Allah swt.

And for a glorious moment I felt an intense sense of kinship with all of them. Like they were my own flesh and blood, like my very own brothers and sisters.

A moment of truth!!! We are all one big family and we all come from Allah swt!!!

And I truly loved them all for our shared love for The Most Merciful and the Most Greatest, Allah swt.

At that moment I fervently begged Allah swt to make the fasts easy for all of those obedient men, women, children and seniors around the world.

These are the days of summer and the days are long for so many countries around the world. Ya Allah (swt) You can make the most difficult of tasks miraculously easy. And they are all doing this because they love You. So I beg you, please have Mercy on them and accept their efforts. Overlook their mistakes and their flaws. And Embrace them for their sincerity, oh Most Compassionate One.

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My dear brothers and sisters around the world,

May these blessed days of Mahe Ramadhan come towards you like a long-awaited and beloved friend whose company is truly cherished and sought after by you. AMEEN

May these days of fasting pass with surprising ease. AMEEN

May you find new and old friends and enjoy sharing healthy meals together in the joyous atmosphere of the lit up masajids. AMEEN

May the words of the Holy Quran touch your soul and revive your spirit and become preserved in your memory and suddenly flowing easily from your lips. AMEEN

May you experience spirituality throughout your body and soul. Let each pang of hunger and thirst, every sleepy moment, every moment of utter exhaustion, every aching limb fill you with a satisfaction that your body is experiencing the effects of worship in such a holistic way.

May every thing you cook, every penny you spend, every morsel you share, every kindness you show be for the pleasure of the Almighty (swt)

May you enjoy being a good person. And may goodness, forgiveness, kindness, patience and mercy become second nature to you AMEEN

May these days elevate you in the eyes of Allah swt and cleanse you from your sins. May your book of good deeds become overflowing with all sorts of acts of virtue and noble traits that you so eagerly are working on. AMEEN

May your children and your loved ones make your heart burst with pride at their fervour and their enthusiasm to please Allah swt. AMEEN

May the day of Eid be easily within your grasp and a destination that you reach with a full sense of satisfaction for a reward well deserved AMEEN

with all my affection, my sisterly love and my sincere duas

[Jun, 18, 2015; 191 likes]

56. One of the things I love most about Shahr Ramadhan is the prevailing atmosphere of Eid every single day.

Our masajids all over the world positively sparkle with bright lights as they become filled with families and the sounds of little children reciting the Holy Quran and of people chatting and sharing food.

Wherever the eyes glance they are delighted with scenes of charity and volunteerism at every corner.

In larger congregations like the Toronto, Canada jamaat at Jaffari Islamic Centre the atmosphere is even more incredible.

Food is catered for well over a 1000 attendees on any given night. On the nights of Lailatul Qadr the crowd reaches over 2,500.

My sister Shabnees Siwjee is Chairlady of the congregation and incidentally, her husband Mehboob Siwjee is the Director of Operations (meaning they both supervise and manage the entire work with the help of

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many sub-committees). It is uncommon for a husband and wife to both be in charge like this but this is a family that truly loves to serve.

On the ladies side alone, my sister has a volunteer team named Kaneez e Fatema consisting of over 200 ladies, teenagers and also children who serve (wearing green vests) during the Iftaar. My 10 yr old Shireen and 17 yr old Zaynab are also on the team.

In all of this is the ECO team which works hard to reduce garbage and wastage. The team is made up of a core team and we all (ladies from the congregation) sign up for helping with recycling, garbage, compost and yes, washing and drying 1800 plates!!

Yes you heard it right. The mosque caters to almost 2000 people and we use REAL PLATES and spoons and forks. All cups are recyclable but those are for people who don't already bring their own mugs and glasses for tea and water.

It is undoubtedly a huge enterprise and undertaking but Subhanallah it has been in full-scale operation for over 3 years now!!

Granted there is a huge kitchen, and an industrial dishwasher (and an industrial sized walk-in freezer, ice makers, friers, rice making and dough making machinery--see attached pics) but it still requires for us to scrape foods off, load the dishes and wipe them too.

This week the ladies were assigned the washing (next week the men will take over for the week) and I signed up for a few days. It was so much fun!!

I can't wait for my lecture days to be completed so that I can be back in the kitchen with the volunteers again.

There's a lot of laughing, chatting, weight-lifting and water splashing and one is guaranteed to make new friends.

Am sharing these pictures to give you a sense of the behind the scenes work that goes on in our places of worship. And inshallah hope that perhaps other imambargahs will attempt this endeavour.

It really helps reduce paper plate wastage and all food is composted, any paper products are recycled and basically there are NO GARBAGE CANS in the mosque.

Each person lines up with their plate where volunteers in aprons direct them to:
scrape their own plate in the compost,
pour any remaining liquids in special jugs and
pile their own plates and spoons in designated places.

The plates are then brought by trolley to the kitchen where 15 volunteers scrape the plates again, load them onto trays, spray with water, run them through the dishwasher, dry them with towels and pile neatly for the next day.

The team then cleans the machinery and leaves the place in pristine condition.

Subhanalah may Allah swt reward these Angels (males and females) who serve the community so enthusiastically and selflessly!!

Ameen!!!

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[Jun, 14, 2016; 399 likes]



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57. "And say unto those who believe not:
Act according to your power. Lo! We (too) are acting.
And wait! Lo! We (too) are waiting".

(Sura Hud 11:122-123)

Overcome with tears and a deep sense of grief as I sit here preparing my mahe Ramadhan lectures on the topic of "The Qa'em in the Holy Quran"

Never has this world needed you more than it does now, Ya Imam Mahdi ajtfs

Ya Imam we are rising to the occasion, standing up for the oppressed and doing our best to show the world what we Muslims truly stand for, and yet the evil ones keep destroying all our hard work every single day.

How shortlived are the moments of soaring pride we feel and how rare these have become.

For whenever our glory shines, some deranged maniac goes on a killing spree of innocents with a machine gun, some lunatic detonates a bomb at the sacred shrines and some crazed followers of satan cut the heads of innocent human beings.

Ya Imam we complain to you about the state of this world. We report to you about the terrible atrocities.

It is us Muslims who suffer most at these acts of terrorism. And it is us Muslims who get blamed for them too!

We confide in you in these moments of utter grief and admit to you that much as we have faith, we do sometimes feel so utterly helpless and despondent.

Ya AL QA'EM, the one who rises, we realize that nothing can counteract these rising forces of evil but YOUR RISING.

So we beg you Ya imam, to inspire in us piety so that your army can be built and you can finally come out of ghaibat.

And we cry out to you imam, that while we, the waiting ones, the muntazir wait for you, then please, Oh the awaited one, The Al Muntadher

evoke in us patience and reassurance.

Give us the towfiq to do this inteazar with sabr.

For hope is all we have, Ya Imam.

But sabr is the hardest thing in these terrible times

[Jun, 13, 2016; 36 likes]

58. Completely blown away by the life story of sister Amina who I met by chance when she sat behind me at the masjid last night.

It started with a smile of welcome and a few minutes later she revealed to me that she was a Sunni Moroccan who reverted to Shia 25 years ago....and it all happened because she spent a few minutes talking to her halal meat butcher!!

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

Sister Amina was new to Canada at that time and a newlywed who had been married just a month earlier to someone she was introduced to by some acquaintance.

The conversation was just social chit chat when the butcher asked her if she was sunni or Shia.

Amina told him she didn't even know what those words meant.

All she knew was that the Shia were hated in her childhood country Morocco. It was something that people were often killed for.

She was barely a practicing Muslim who did the minimum--she fasted and sometimes prayed. Her brother in Morocco had always been religious and would always tell her and her sisters to read the books he was reading but they never gave him any attention. It had never seemed important.

The butcher offered her a book. He said "read this". And he just wouldn't take any payment for the book he had given to her.

At home she found herself drawn to the book. She began to read. And her mind felt completely shocked at what she was reading. She was mesmerized.

She showed her husband the book. He looked through it and said, "Keep reading. And let me know what you find out."

Days went by and her heart kept being drawn to the answers that the book was giving her.

Finally she told her husband she was making a dramatic life change and she didn't know how it would effect their marriage. But she simply had to do it.

"I am becoming a Shia" she said to him.

And what happened next was even more shocking than what she had told to the man that she had married just over a month ago.

"My dear wife," he said. "I too am a Shia, but I didn't know how to tell you...I know how much your people hate Shia".

She later realized the signs were all there but she had been clueless. Her husband was Persian and her Nikah had been recited by none other than Maulana Syed Mohamed Rizvi.

I asked her what book it was that the butcher had given to her.

It was "Then I was Guided" by Tejani.

Her story gets even more amazing.

Telling her family was the most difficult part. They were crushed and so disappointed. And when she finally revealed her reversion story to her religious brother (who had now also moved to Canada) she braced herself for his anger and wrath.

He said,

"Do you remember when I used to always give you and our sisters books to read? I used to tell you try to understand history. Know what our faith is all about, I told you. But you never cared!"

Amina bowed her head in regret.

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"Those," said her brother, "were the same exact books you are reading right now.

My sister, I too am a Shia. But I could never tell anyone in Morocco. Not even my own family for fear of being killed or thrown out. I was in taqiyya"

Twenty five years later Amina is a devout Shia Muslim and one of her sisters also became a Shia. One sister, however, continues to lament their choices and prays that Allah will forgive her siblings for becoming "kafir"

"Is love of Ahlubayt a.s being a kafir?" asks Amina, her eyes lighting up with passion.

"Does it make sense that the only daughter of the Holy Prophet saww refused certain people to attend her funeral and to even know the location of her grave?

What went wrong there. Why did that happen?

Why did they kill Imam Hussein?

What are the chain of events that led to that in the first place?

Who is ultimately responsible
for setting the chain of events for that tragedy to happen?

If having these answers makes me a Kafir to them then it is these people who need to do true research."

Amina has inspired me with her strength, her piety and her ability to take a stance at such a young age in her life.

And it seems that she was destined to be blessed. It is as if she was being called towards the Ahlubayt a.s and was chosen as every thing in her life was leading her to this blessed path.

It felt as if I had met an angel and as I prayed jamaat Salaat beside her I asked Allah swt to increase this new connection I had with her and to make me as blessed as her simply by her aura and by me just standing next to her.

Ameen.

How sad it is that we do not cherish the treasure that we were all born with and have to be reminded of how honoured we are by those who have had to struggle to find this gift.

[Jun, 12, 2016; 362 likes]



59. MEMORIES OF MAHE RAMADHAN

Mahe Ramadhan was such a magical, beautiful time when I was a little 10 yr old girl growing up in Dubai. My mother, a perfect housewife in every sense, would fill the dinner table with all sorts of delicacies at least 2 hours before the call for maghrib prayers!!!

The fragrances of delicious food would fill our home and I remember surveying the overflowing dinner table with yearning, longing eyes.

The best, colourful china decorated each place setting. Mom would set the plates so that the flower on each plate was at the top right and each plate would be placed on the pretty place mats in the same spot, 2 inches from each corner of the mat.

Every glass was stuffed with white napkins skillfully pleated into place just like they did in fancy

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5-star hotels.

Pink falooda (made in the East African style, complete with streaks of green colour and sprinkled with roasted, slivered nuts) would be placed in pretty, tiny, glass dessert bowls for each of us. There would be perfectly shaped samosas, each one a mirror-image of the one beside it, and each fried to achieve the same golden colour.

It was always so much fun to watch mom in the kitchen. I would sit cross-legged in a yoga position on the floor and watch her in fascination.

Every now and then she would give me something to peel or to slice. And she would talk and talk and tell me about the world, about people, about life, about her own childhood, about how fantastic God was, and what a woman and a mother should be like.

Sometimes she would recite nasheeds loudly or give me pointers on how to project my voice when in front of a crowd.

Sometimes she would tell me jokes and make me laugh and laugh until I was literally rolling on the floor.

But there could never be a more skillful cook than mom.

She would boil potatoes and labouriously mash them with a hand-held (non-electric) masher. Then she would make perfect cutlets called "chaamp", stuffing pockets of mashed potato with tasty mince meat. I would always get to make one or two with my little hands. Then she would dip them in an egg mixture and carefully fry each cutlet, ensuring that the heat was just high enough to not burn and yet allowing them to not break while frying.

She would make the pastry (called "chapri") for the samosas herself and slice each pastry in perfect lines on the hot skillet. Again, I would get a chance to make one or two samosas too and I always proudly ate my own when iftaar time came.

I would get the opportunity to help shape the curly edges of the sweet delicacy "singola" or "mitha samosa" (sweet pastries shaped like half moons and stuffed with coconut and nuts). This required special skill and mom was adamant that each curl should pleat in proper symmetry or it would ruin the presentation on the table.

I would watch in wonder as she made fluffy globs of "kalimati" (yeast fritters in sugary syrup) and marvel at how quickly she did it all before the sugar set in and coated them all in a sugary, crystal glaze.

Her tasty potato parathas were always a marvel to watch as she kneaded out the dough, rolled out each paratha and worked quickly on the hot skillet. The first paratha would be placed on the hot skillet first, then a glorious filling would be smeared on it and then another paratha would be placed on top. Mom would flip the heavy stuffed paratha skillfully ensuring that it was sealed well and that each side would have a roasted, golden brown tinge.

These were special delicacies especially reserved for the holy month of Ramadhan. The familiar scents of these foods cooking and frying always signalled to us children that this must be the month of mahe Ramadhan.

Mom truly was the perfect woman. The house would be sparkling clean, vacuumed and dusted, with each cushion propped perfectly on the sofas and even the pleats on the curtain aligned in equal pleats. I know because I would watch mom fiddling with those curtains as she cleaned house.

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And every one of us 5 children (all of my siblings were teenagers by now) would be dressed in our best clothes selected by mom herself.

Soon, mom herself would appear from her bedroom dressed like a bollywood actress in a beautiful sari, with every hair in place and smelling fragrantly of jasmine and attar.

Mom always dressed beautifully even when working in the kitchen. But she always retreated to her bedroom to shower and dress up especially before my father was due to arrive home. Mom's changed clothes, fresh lipstick and make-up was always a sign that dad was about to arrive. Sometimes she would even put a flower in her hair.

Trust me, I am not making any of this up. My childhood home and family atmosphere, even when it was not Mahe Ramadhan, was typically like this.

And very soon, the streets of Dubai would come alive with the sounds of people walking to the nearby masjids to recite their maghrib salaah.

A cannon would be blasted in the far off horizon, signalling the maghrib hour, followed by the melodious sounds of muezzins from every corner masjid calling out the adhaan and inviting the faithful to pray.

Our family ate each meal together and the conversations were always so lively and entertaining that we would linger long after everyone had eaten their fill.

Each of us were great story-tellers (especially my parents) and we could all tell a joke or story with perfect comic timing so that dinner times at our homes always involved a lot of loud laughter, mimicry and hilarious anecdotes of the kind of day we had just experienced that day. All our dinner table chairs were squeaky because of how long we spent at the table and how much we rocked with laughter.

Eating with the family was always something we all looked forward to because we genuinely enjoyed each others' company.

My parents were amazing conversationalists and they could skillfully weave stories of world events, descriptions of historical facts and debates about religious topics into our family dinners without us even realizing it.

Hearing my parents chat was one of my favourite things to do and one of the main reasons I would beg to spend the night cuddled between them in bed. They could talk about the most fascinating topics into the wee hours of the night and I used to marvel at their amazing, enduring friendship that had started when they married at the tender age of 15 yrs old. My parents were classmates and childhood sweethearts who were actually married at 15 years old!!

I am so glad that my mother made such an effort for my father and her marriage. He only lived a month past his 56th birthday, leaving mom a widow for the past 20 years.

Remembering those beautiful days yesterday as I packed a take-away meal to complement our iftaar at masjid made me painfully nostalgic and very guilty for the "legacy" I myself am leaving for my children.

Twenty years from now, what will my three children remember about the Mahe Ramadhan of their childhoods? What special fragrances will immediately trigger the memories of Mahe Ramadhan in their minds? What special home rituals will they remember now that we barely eat together as a family?

I am so grateful for the fantastic Islamic education they receive every single day of Mahe

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Ramadhan and the great friendships they develop when we share iftaar at our masjid. It is a priceless opportunity without a doubt.

But I cannot help but feel a pinch of regret for the memories we are not making as a family.

Our efforts at making a healthy home, devoid of fried foods has meant that our children have not acquired a taste for these gourmet, albeit unhealthy, delicacies, of our culture.

Our busy lives often means that we don't eat together, or that we simply all eat together in front of the tv watching a movie together. All this multi-tasking means cell-phones come to the table, meals are rushed and the conversations are focused on catching up with administrative issues such as synchronizing our calendars and figuring out who needs to be dropped off where and when.

No one dresses up for dinner, let alone for each other or to especially preserve the romance of a spousal relationship.

Everyone enjoys retreating to the safety of their own bedrooms, cell phone in hand, with their earbuds tuned to their own favourite programs.

Before we know it, we will all be all grown up and heading to different paths and careers. And we will definitely wish we had made the most of the time we did have together....

These sad thoughts filled my heart as I worked at the kitchen counter yesterday when suddenly my children came into the kitchen, one by one.

"Mummy what's that delicious smell?!" said Shireen.

"mmmm, I can't wait to eat that!" said Zaynab.

"I am so hungry" said Hassan.

And I was taken aback and very shocked that what had brought my kids to the kitchen were the fragrances of my Indian food cooking, not the smell of pizza or pasta!!!!

Yayyyyyy!!! I rejoiced!!!

All was not lost!!! The children did respond to these foods!!

And I realized, once in a while it is important to make these food (in small quantities to prevent the admittedly unhealthy effects) but to at least give them a taste of the flavours of their culture.

And I vowed, in my mind, to plan and to insist not only on more family dinners but to also teach my children how to make these traditional foods that are so special to me.

Our children, too, deserve the gifts of childhood memories that our parents so lovingly gave to us!!!

And I realized, that the month of Ramadhan is not only about reconnecting with God but to also reconnect with our families. For this is the one time of the year when we are compelled to come to the table at the same time and to truly enjoy the tastes of food together over a hearty meal. Often we are so hungry that we eat whatever is placed in front of us--so it's a great time to try new foods, when the palate is ready to appreciate new tastes.

Thank you Allah (swt) for the gift of family!! May Allah swt bless all of us with these precious opportunities to savour the moments we have been blessed with. AMEEN

[Jul, 4, 2014; 146 likes]

60. Truly humbled....my non-Muslim neighbours continue to teach ME about what is truly Islamic behaviour

It was the night of the wiladat of Imam Hussein a.s and our family was leaving for the festivities at our imambargah.

We were about to get into our car when I saw our elderly Italian neighbour across the street gardening at his lawn.

I was dressed in my black abaya and had never spoken to him since we moved into the neighbourhood less than a year ago. The harsh winter had kept us all cocooned in our homes. This was our first spring at our new place

Hearing my hello and seeing me wave, he left his rake and crossed the street to me.

After the niceties I told him I admired his lawn and that I was completely hopeless at gardening. I showed him the beautiful flower pots I had just bought and was worried I would kill the flowers inadvertently.

Antonio told me I needed to remove them from the pot, dig them into the soil, remove weeds from the surrounding area, water them and add flower food.

I thanked him profusely (the entire family was waiting inside the car) and told him I would really need his advice again.

When we returned 4 hours later from the masjid we were all amazed at the incredible sight:

Antonio had planted all the 12 flower pots, removed all weeds, added fresh soil and food and watered all the plants.

I was completely overwhelmed with gratitude. It was not only a gift from Antonio but felt like a gift from Imam Hussein a.s to tell you the truth....Every time I see those flowers I give this man dua in my heart and my love for this stranger overflows from my heart.

I had to travel for a few days so I didn't even get to thank him until later (see pic of him working on his own garden when I went to thank him). He was completely nonchalant about it and said he would come over to look them over again.

I shuddered thinking what he would think if he saw the overgrown dandelions, new weeds and grass that needed to be trimmed from the edges of the entire yard. I prayed to Allah swt than an angel would come and fix the rapidly degenerating state of my beautiful new garden.

Next day I was leaving my home for my jog and I saw a strange sight. A tall man was trimming the edges of our lawn!!

The lawn had been mowed beautifully and weeds had been removed.

I took a picture and watched in disbelief. He finally turned around and I saw how the sun had made him sweat and turn red.

"John!!!" I said in surprise. It was our next door 60 yr old neighbour.

"What ever in the world made you do this?!!"

He shrugged. He looked perplexed himself.

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"I don't know" he said shaking his head

"You know I was praying someone would come and do this for me!" I said with a laugh.

John smiled.

"That must be it then. Your prayers made me suddenly decide to come out here! You guys are nice people. I see how busy you are. Thought I'd help out a little"

"John. I don't think we could ever be as nice as YOU all are!" I exclaimed.

And the next day John also came to fix a leak in our garage. He removed the dry wall, drilled things, got up on a ladder and caulked and hammered and has been working on it for a few days now...

Even when we are not home!!!!

Islamophobia??!!!!

These non-Muslims have shown me what love is. What kindness is and what generosity is.

And what a true neighbour is.

Trust me, we are new to the neighbourhood and apart from a quick hi in the freezing cold, we don't even speak to them usually!!

In fact, when we moved in last year to this predominantly Jewish neighbourhood, we had a majlis and the streets were filled with over 300 cars to inconvenience people around a 2 mile radius.

Many even came over with concern to ask if everything was alright. Why were there so many cars, they asked.

About 18 years ago we lived in Kingston, Ontario where my husband attended Medical school. Our area was hit by an ice storm that downed all power lines and wiped out electricity and heating and left us all shivering in -30 temperatures in our darkened homes.

The army was called in to check on us all and a state of emergency was declared by the government.

I was pregnant with my Zaynab and we had our one year old Hassan too. It was also mahe Ramadhan and there was no way to cook Iftaar.

It was impossible to walk outside as the streets were insanely slippery. People were breaking bones. And trees were falling randomly as the ice was too heavy on the branches.

In this state, our 85 year old Estonian neighbour Juhann, a retired family Physician, walked over to our home and knocked on our door.

He had brought wooden logs and came in to start a fire in our old-fashioned fireplace and woodstove.

We stood around dumbly and watched as he started up the fire. We had no idea how to do that.

Because of his efforts, we stayed warm (while wearing 4 layers of clothes and gloves) and were able to cook soup for those fasting at our home. We also were able to stay at our home instead of being taken to a nearby gymnasium as refugees for warmth and shelter.

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Next morning at 6 am someone knocked the door again.

There stood 85 yr old Juhaan carrying fresh logs.

"Your logs must have just finished burning. I have come to restart a new fire for you" he said with a broad smile.

A week later, Juhann even climbed a ladder and cut off branches of trees that were dangerously hanging over our roof due to the half broken trees. I have a picture of him somewhere showing him standing precariously on a ladder and sawing off branches.

When he passed away a year later we attended his funeral at the local church and cried louder than his own children.

I would love to say that it was our personality that made these neighbours selflessly help us. But that would be a lie.

It was these good Samaritans who had reached out to us. They had shown good neighbourly behaviour and exemplified what Islam has taught us all along --and what we rarely ourselves take to heart.

We think Allah swt when He mentions neighbours it means to fellow Muslims.

But if we truly understood what God wants for us we would know that in these acts to fellow human beings and towards mankind we enjoin goodness and make the entire world a better place.

In the process we may even inspire them to take the faith we so devotedly follow but that shouldn't be our main mission and agenda.

Let's start with a smile, a hello and then lending a chair for a BBQ or a ladder or a grass trimmer.

Or let us be like Antonio, John and Juhann and actually get down on our hands and knees and help our neighbours in such a way that they can't help but remember us in their duas because everything around them reminds them of us.....

"Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy,

the near neighbor,

the neighbor farther away,

the companion at your side..."

Holy Quran 4:36

[Jun, 6, 2016; 259 likes]

61. It was so wonderful to host a dinner last month in honour of TV host and presenter Zahra Al-Alawi of Ahlulbayt TV from England at my home along with 50 of my friends.

I did all the cooking myself (out of sheer love for her) and the dessert table menu was a gift from all the attendees who each brought something to share.

I made the Kheer and my little 10 yr old Shireen Fatema made ALL of the 75 puri for nazr of Imam Jaffer Sadiq a.s (I made her skip school to help me with this task--and she was awesome)

Zakira Shyrose

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The crowning glory and evening conversation piece was the specialty cake the ABTV team ordered from master cake decorator Shaina Khalfan

There is a reason though that this whole post is about the food lol

Let me explain...

Over the years I have seen a lot of funny stuff on fb. People have opened fb accounts using my pictures and their own names. I sometimes see people posting my Shireen's pictures as if it their own daughter. Often people randomly use my pic as their profile picture and some even share my written posts signing them as if it is their own writing.

But this particular stunt by a gentleman in United Kingdom took the "cake".

I was scrolling casually through my newsfeed and came across this new restaurant opening somewhere in England.

There was a picture of the restaurant along with a picture of the street and grand opening information.

And to showcase the food and menu??

There was my dinner table with my cooking displayed as a sample.

😂.😂.😂.😂.😂.😂.

All the pictures of the food were basically from the album shared by Zahra Al-Alawi in her post from May 3.

LOL.

#Feelingtrulyhonoured 😂.😂.😂.

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

[Jun, 4, 2016; 115 likes]

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

A large, elaborate buffet table set for a party. The table is covered with a white tablecloth and features a variety of appetizers, desserts, and fruits. In the foreground, there is a large, round fruit platter with sliced kiwi, strawberries, blueberries, and a small bowl of dip. To the left, a tiered stand holds several small appetizers, and a sign on the table reads "Kulsoom Puff pastry". In the center, there is a large bowl of fruit, including grapes and kiwi. To the right, there are several trays of pastries and breads, including a large tray of small, round pastries. In the background, a large vase of pink roses sits on the table, and a silver serving cart is visible. The setting appears to be indoors, with a window in the background showing a view of the outdoors.





62. Allah swt truly works in mysterious ways...

Without truly planning to, I decided yesterday to stop my car at a local halal restaurant (that I had never visited before) to buy some food for some guests who had unexpectedly arrived at my home and were being entertained by my mother-in-law.

While waiting for my take-out order I received an unexpected phone call from a youth who was desperately in need of guidance.

As I spoke to him, I became completely lost in what I was saying to him when I noticed a woman staring at me. She was openly listening to what I was saying.

Soon she put away whatever she was writing and just focused on my words. She was watching me intently.

I remained on the call and paid for my order while still counselling the youth on the call and as I took the food

and began to exit the restaurant she approached me and stopped me. She held out her hand and touched my arm.

"Please speak to me. I need to know who you are"

I put my call on hold and smiled at her.

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"I am Shyrose," I said and I spontaneously hugged her.

"Please forgive me for listening to your phone call and for interrupting you. But I simply cannot let you leave without ever meeting you again.

Your guidance, your words, your approach and your style makes me feel like I have found the person I was looking for in my life. Who are you?"

Soon the lady's husband arrived and they sat down to eat. They offered me the bhajiyas they were eating.

I never do anything without searching for a gut feeling. And something told me I needed to stay even though my guests had already arrived and were waiting at my home.

I hung up the call without even saying goodbye. My text message notification immediately flashed and the youth promised to call me when I was free next.

The lady didn't eat. With her elbows resting on the table, she propped her chin on her hands and watched me speak as if she was watching a TV screen.

I quickly told them I was a Shia islamic preacher and I spoke rapidly about myself as I really had to leave.

The lady told me she had become lost and had ended up in this random restaurant and had called her husband to pick her up.

She said "if I hadn't come here I would have never met you. I feel as if we were meant to meet"

The couple were of the Ismaili sect of Islam and were South Asians from East Africa. As we spoke, I stood up and apologized that I had to leave.

The lady said she really needed to speak to me more. She said she felt she had to hear more from me. I smiled and said perhaps we would meet sometime for a coffee in life.

But in my heart I knew this would never happen as I am too busy to even take my own mom for a coffee.

So as I walked away, I found myself slowly turning around to face them again.

"Why don't you come over to my place right now? We can eat this food together and can continue our chat some more"

After barely a minute of debate the lady agreed to come home with me! Her husband promised to pick her up in half an hour.

I took her home. And she met my family and we shared a meal together.

I took her to my backyard and we sat on the swing and chatted.

A few hours later her husband picked her up.

I don't know what we really spoke about but one sentence stands out.

She said "I want you to become my teacher. I need your guidance. I feel I have found the person I was searching for, for all these years"

And when she left my home, our last words were that she would be inshallah joining me at our local imambargah for my lectures during Shahr Ramadhan and that she was eagerly waiting for me to teach her how to pray Salaat.

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And this lady of Ismaili faith and upbringing said to me that she was enthralled about what I had told her and now wanted to go to Imam Raza a.s in Mashad and to Imam Hussein a.s in Kerbala!!!

Her parting words as I waved goodbye to her were what jolted me the most.

"But I will never go alone. I will go with you. And you will hold my hand and take me to introduce me yourself to the imams"

Ameen.

Please pray for this blessed lady my dear brothers and sisters. And pray for me to be able to do justice to this huge task ahead of me.

Labayk Ya Hussein!!

[Jun, 3, 2016; 329 likes]

63. Subhanallah not one dull or boring moment throughout this entire weekend at UMAA Convention 2016 Chicago.

So so inspired by the enthusiasm of the convention attendees who attended from all over USA Canada and Europe in record numbers again this year (over 3000)

I couldn't believe how many people knew me from obscure places in the USA (Omaha, Indianapolis, Kentucky, Milwaukee, Atlanta, Florida, Jersey etc) they would come rushing to hug me as if I was a long lost friend!!

Many were Fb friends, people who watch me on YouTube and who Google me and regularly visit my website and they had detailed and awesome feedback about my specific articles, lectures or TV interviews.

Unbelievable!

I was always getting stopped by little children for selfies--many told me they watch my puppet shows and wait for my show every week on Ahlulbayt TV.

Met the president of UMAA who told me he was so thrilled by my lectures and to begin preparing my lectures for the next one in Washington DC !!!!!

and I met some incredible and extremely well known ullama alim, e deen, Zakireen nawhakhwaan, social activists, English Urdu and Arabic poets, Qari of the Holy Quran and scholars and famous health professionals, researchers and authors of books.

Met the legendary Mir Hassan Mir, author John Esposito, poet Hassan Al Nashed and so many more.

So many authors gave me a signed copy of their books including Sheikh Mohamed Al Hilli (see picture) and Bridget James.

The bazaar of books, clothes, Islamic items and jewellery was so exciting

Most of all it was amazing to meet all the incredible youth volunteers who literally carried the entire conference on their shoulders. And the sound and Audio visual team who were always working extremely hard.

These youth treated me like a respected best friend and I will never forget their love and kindness.

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Leaving Chicago very reluctantly!! Can't wait to meet everyone again next year ameen!!

And with your Duas my 17 yr old daughter Zaynab Dhalla won the Spoken Word poetry contest!!! There were extremely talented youth competing and the event was held at the ampitheatre with over 300 people in attendance
[May, 30, 2016]



Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences



64. With my beloved 80 yr old mother Shirin SS Habib Jaffer who never misses any event where I will speak.

The crowd is so excited to hear Mir Hassan Mir (and everyone has been given flashing lights and torches to wave in the air)

I will be on the stage for 5 minutes but need your Duas that those 5 minutes can bring tears of love for Imam Mahdi ajtfs in this huge crowd ameen

Her Duas and upbringing and my father's love are the reason that I am where I am today.

May Allah swt give our parents a long, healthy life and Jannah to those who are no longer with us on this earth. Ameen

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

[May, 28, 2016; 207 likes]

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences



65. As I heard my biography and name being announced while I sat on stage beside extremely learned and experienced Scholars and I faced an audience of over a thousand (with many learned ulama in the front row) I truly had a moment of

"How in the world did a minuscule person like me end up here on this stage?"

I asked Allah swt how did I ever become a zakira? Never in a million years had I ever aspired for this very lofty and responsibility-ridden title.

And just as I stood up to walk to the podium the names of my Marhoom grandparents, whom I have never met, came to my mind.

And I remembered how I had always heard the name of my famous paternal grandfather "Mulla Moledina (Pugu)" (named thus because he lived on Pugu Road in Tanga, East Africa)

He travelled across Africa reciting majlis and wrote books and wrote and recited his own nawha and Marsiya too.

And I remembered in a flash how my mother's mother was a zakira from India who was brought to Africa to marry my maternal grandfather (a man of immense wealth who had pretty much purchased the entire mosque for the community and in whose honour the streets were named)

And I remembered my father's mother who lay blind and bedridden for over 25 years and who occupied herself by reciting majlis and Marsiya to herself. She lay there alone in her blind state and would sob and lament upon the musibat faced by Imam Hussein a.s

I thought she was alone. Today I know the Angels sat and listened to her...

And I realized our good deeds for the Ahlulbayt a.s do not go unrewarded.

And when we do the Zakiree of the Ahlulbayt a.s it remains in our blood and passes through the generations.

And even a grandchild growing up and attending high school in Canada can suddenly wear hijab at 22 yrs old and suddenly start reciting majlis in her 30's, without any formal islamic education (or even knowledge of the work of her ancestors) and travel the world to spread the message of the Ahlulbayt a.s beside top and highly learned scholars.

In an hour I have to be on stage to speak for a few minutes in front of a glittering audience in the presence of great ulama and reciters. The legendary sanakhwaan Mir Hassan Mir will be reciting right after I leave the stage.

And I realize that these gifts are not mine. They are the blessings earned by my ancestors who have toiled sincerely to serve Islam.

And these gifts will continue for He swt rewards ehsaan always with greater ehsaan and He gives according to His wealth his "hasiyat" , not according to "our hasiyat" whether we deserve so much or not.

I pray Allah swt sprinkles these blessings on all our children, on the umma of our beloved Prophet (saww) on the upcoming army of the Mahdi ajtfs and that this tradition of being Zakir e ahleybait a.s will continue for centuries and centuries in our generations to come ameen

Zakira Shyrose

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I beg Allah swt to make me worthy of these gifts that were never mine but are a result of sawab e Jariya of those who came before me

And I beg of you all to pray for me so that I can have the eloquence and the opportunity to receive true and formal islamic knowledge and to really have the opportunity to perfect my deen so that I can share even more precious gems from Allah swt and the Ahlulbayt a.s. Ameen.

At UMAA 2016

cholar Jeopardy--a nail biting but often hilarious game show to start off the convention at UMAA 2016

With Sayed Ammar Nakshwani, Zakira Shyrose, Sh. Mohamed Al Hilli and Sh. Azhar Nasser

Categories included Holy Quran, Islamic history, science, Sports, Celebrities, Chicago and random questions on Double Jeopardy etc

The event was sold out and there was standing room left only

Winning team was of course Team As-Sadiq (with Sayed Ammar and Zakira Shyrose)

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

[May, 28, 2016; 121 likes]





66. So delighted to be in Chicago for the UMAA Convention. Over 3000 participants are expected and there is a palpable buzz of excitement in the air as the team prepares. I arrived a day early so that I could be well rested for the very busy weekend of lectures (6) that I have to present.

The hotel is massive and so beautiful. Subhanallah all the hotels in the area will be filled with the Lovers of Imam Majdi ajtfs and it fills my heart with joy to know that we will be immersed in his (ajtfs) remembrance all weekend!!

What an amazing, amazing way to spend our hours, our days, our family time.

Here is a letter that I just emailed to the UMAA team (which is comprised mostly of young men and women under age of 30 Mashallah!)

Assalam Alaikum Dear UMAA team

Subhanallah it has been a true pleasure to see your team in action.

I just want to express my admiration at all the amazing things that you all have accomplished as a team.

The conference weekend may be just about to begin and much needs to work in order for things to move smoothly, but please know that your efforts so far are evident already.

Mashallah it truly is inspiring to see how hard you are working and how committed you are to

Zakira Shyrose

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making this an amazing conference ameen

What is most beautiful to watch is to see the sincere enthusiasm and zeal in your actions.

I apologize for arriving a bit early and for making you all start working earlier than you had scheduled to do, but I just want you to know that I truly appreciate each and every gesture that you have all made to make me comfortable.

It has made the duas just flow freely from my heart for all of you.

Rida has been the most amazing contact person to plan together with and I can't wait to meet her!! Khatija has been so loving that I want to take her home with me. Adeel was the perfect, friendly host when he picked me up from the airport, the ride to the hotel was smooth, check in was a breeze and I can't thank you enough for allowing me to use room service so that I have never had to step out of my hotel room.

I must confess I did feel very guilty when I saw how pricey the dinner and breakfast was but I also felt great gratitude to you all for going the extra mile to make me feel well cared for, honoured and respected.

Not having to step out has allowed me to focus on preparing my lectures and to spend my time doing exactly what I wanted to--in meditation, worship and in immersing myself in the material without any interruption.

The sweetest moment was when half the team members came to visit me in my room to welcome me. Subhanallah it really touched me and I really got a true sense of what a loving and sincere group of young people you are.

Seeing your young, innocent faces filled my heart with pride and love and I felt so so grateful to you all for being such incredible ambassadors to Imam Zamana (ajtf)

In my heart I spoke to Imam (ajtfs) and congratulated him on having such an awesome army. I told him just this very small fraction of his army has shown me how powerful he can be through his devoted followers. I thanked him for hosting us, his slaves, with so much comfort and generosity and I told him that I could see his hands working through the UMAA team.

I have asked Imam (ajtfs) and will continue to ask him to infuse barakah into all your actions this weekend (and beyond). And to bless you not only with ease and unseen help of angels to complete the gargantuan task ahead but to also give you complete inner peace, composure and calmness to deal with the glitches that will appear (as they are wont to do in a conference of this size).

Be strong, be fantastic and be successful knowing that this is imam's work that you are doing--and it is he who will ensure it happens beautifully. You are the vehicle and your main focus should be to remain kind, loving, generous and courteous no matter what happens. For that is how you will earn true blessings and barakah in all that you do.

Hang in there and my duas are with you for an amazing, out of this world, one of a kind and THE best UMAA convention EVER!!!! Ameen!!!

Let's do this!!!

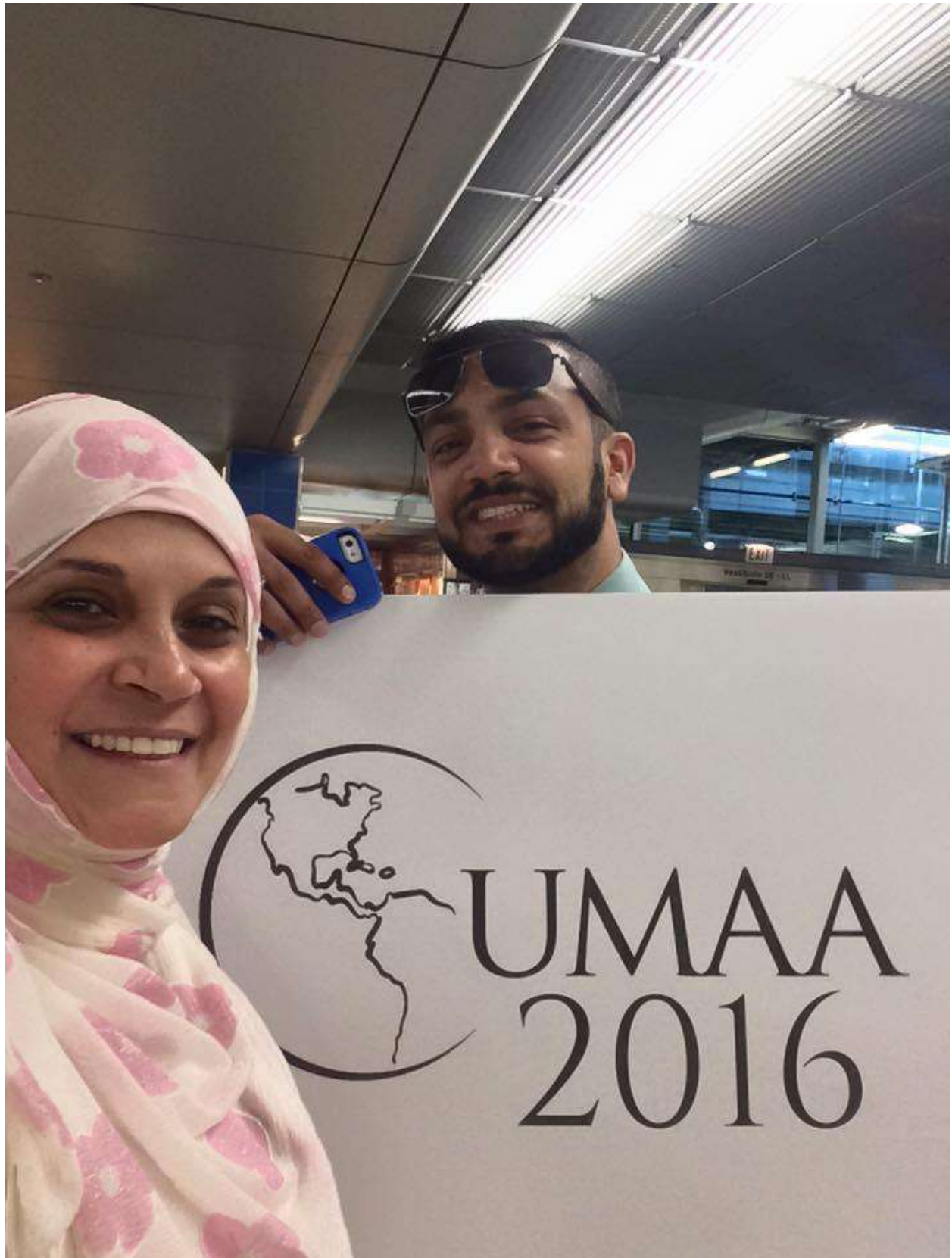
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Labayk Ya MAHDI (ajtfs)!!!!!!
[May, 27, 2016; 167 likes]

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Zakira Shyrose

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67. OMG I still can't believe it!!!

Remember that 5K Marathon I ran last week to raise money for Tait Mackenzie Hospital's Stroke research and healthcare?

Well, my name was put in a draw by marathon sponsor Scotia Bank Canada to win a huge hamper of goodies and guess who won out of all those 1,700 marathon winners?

Shyrose Dhalla!!!!!!

Subhanallah!! Allah swt truly is very Generous!

I was treated to a free breakfast, given my winning prize AND was granted the great honour of getting to present a huge cheque (\$23,000 fundraised by the Bank) to the hospital representatives on behalf of Scotia Bank.

LOL No one expected the winner to be a Muslim woman in full chador!!! And I truly felt grateful to be representing Islam in such a positive light.

And you know what was even more surprising? The senior level representative sent by the hospital to accept the cheque was none other than my own sister Shabnees Siwjee (also in hijab!!!) who is chair of the Foundation's Special Gifts Committee!!! Mashallah, it truly showed everyone that Muslims do work hard for their local communities.

The most incredible moment in all of this was when I gave a speech explaining why I ran the marathon.

I explained that as a Muslim Preacher and a writer, I had recently interviewed a stroke victim, Ruksana Akbarali Dhirani who told me her poignant story of how she suffered a stroke.

This was a story that touched my heart because it brought home the fact that healing can happen when adequate health care and the blessings of God work hand in hand.

And I wanted to do my part to make it possible for others to find healing too. Thanks to Ruksana Dhirani for inspiring me and to real estate agent Rashida Dhalla for sponsoring me for a large sum so that I could be one of the top 30 fundraisers for the hospital.

I congratulated Scotia Bank for being part of such an awesome cause and hoped that it would inspire other institutions to be part of supporting our local hospital.

Many of those who heard the speech, including the Vice President of Scotia Bank told me that my words really touched them and that they wanted to read the article of the miraculous healing of a stroke survivor that I had written about.

Allah swt truly has a plan and by letting my name be selected out of so many participants, He swt allowed the story of healing that occurred at the flag of Hazrat Abbas a.s to be told to so many who have never even heard the name of Babul Hawaij.

Shukrlillah for these incredible gifts you give to us each day, Ya Allah.

[May, 26, 2016; 334 ikes]

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Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences



Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences



68. LOL Remembering my broken Swahili is taking it's time--I went to a shop, pointed to a dress and asked "what time is it" (instead of "how much is it") The local African shopkeeper collapsed into uncontrollable laughter!!! I finally saw what ROFL"rolling on floor laughing" actually looks like

[May, 24, 2011; 22 likes]

69. The sound of Victoria Day fireworks exploding in my neighbourhood and rockets whistling in a loud crescendo before they crash has jolted me repeatedly over the last half hour as I sit at my computer.

The fireworks explode one by one, without pause, in a relentless cacophony of sound. And when I look up I see flashes of bright yellow, green, red and blue through the tightly drawn curtains.

Even though I know people are enjoying themselves out there and that these are signs of festivities, my heart still reacts in panic and with palpitations.

And even though I know exactly what these sounds are, my body still repeatedly reacts reflexively with a jolt, followed by shock and with my pulse reacting erratically.

It is the natural response of a human heart. A flight or fight response when accosted with a loud, traumatic sound.

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

And suddenly my thoughts go to those children, women, men, elderly and the disabled of war torn countries like Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen and hundreds of other places on earth where bombs are constantly exploding.

And machine guns are always shooting relentlessly.

And fire engine sirens are always sounding alarmingly in the distance.

Those helpless human beings also know exactly what those sounds are too.

And they know it means only death and destruction.

And their bodies recoil with the fear of the unknown.

Those whistling rockets? Hearing those sounds must make all the people hold their breath and shut their eyes tightly and wait expectantly to find out if it will end up on the very spot where they are seeking shelter.

The sounds of bombs nearby could mean their grandparents were now dead.

Those machine gun sounds? It could be the sound of guns being aimed at their beloved uncle who had just left their home after bringing them some bread for their supper.

Those bright lights in the sky....

They aren't for festivities, they must be saying.

"They are the colours of the enemy rejoicing over our annihilation. Over our grief and loss.

Those missiles? They are the clear messages of hatred being sent by unknown people who want us dead. Not just dead but completely crushed and mulched".

Children of Iraq. Children of Syria. Children of every war-torn country in the world.

I am sorry. I am so so sorry.

I am sorry you have to grow up in a world where there is only hatred, misery, destruction and cruelty.

I am sorry for letting you feel so scared and not doing anything to make it better.

I am sorry I haven't taken you in my arms and placed a hand of sympathy over your head.

I am sorry I forgot your clothes are torn, you are hungry and there isn't even any clean water to drink.

I am sorry that I didn't even realize that your parents are not even alive anymore.

I am sorry I have been neglectful and remiss and unaware that I am now supposed to be your mother, your sister, your friend, your support, your healer.

I am sorry I never cared.

I am sorry I never even shed a tear.

I am sorry I forgot we are one Ummah, each one of us like parts of a body.

And that when one part of the body hurts, the other must cry out in agony....

Most of all Oh children,

I am sorry that in this cruel world of enemies that has made your existence so unbearable, I, who was supposed to be a friend, has also become a worse enemy with my continued silence and

inaction.

[May 23, 2016; 82 likes]

70. Allah swt has truly blessed me with amazing people in my life who have made it possible for me to do many impossible things.

The support, love and help of close family, extended family and friends has been most crucial on this path.

But what is most amazing is when complete strangers have offered their assistance and been like pillars of strength.

Over the years young people have not only carried my laptop, done my printing and stood by my side as ready-helpers in every city (some have even filled and held my plate for me while I talked to people) but they have also undertaken the printing, typesetting and distribution of my lectures in book form in many cities.

Many have taken detailed handwritten notes of my lectures and uploaded them onto websites and even printed them for distribution.

Some have recorded and distributed lecture and marsiya CDs and have also videotaped and audio-recorded my every lecture.

Many make my event-advertising fliers and record my radio programs and upload these onto YouTube.

Others have driven me to events, airports and also taken me shopping.

I have never even had to ask for these favours. Nether have I ever even paid for them.

These youth have always offered and done these amazing acts on their own initiative and out of the goodness of their own hearts.

They have become like my own children when I am away from my hometown. And so many of them even call me "mom"!!

One of these amazing young people is Kazim Rahemtulla from Switzerland.

Years ago this young man asked me for permission to start an official fb Public Figure page in my name. Despite my constant insistence that it wasn't necessary Kazim kept writing to me and predicting that one day my FB page would reach its limit of 5000 friends allowed and I would need another page.

He was so persistent that I finally let him make my page and sure enough, just as he had predicted, my personal fb page soon reached it's limit (with 5000 Friends and 7,522 followers)

Today the page Kazim started is just shy of 5000 followers making it possible for me to reach almost 18,000 people with a single post.

And the page he has made has allowed me to connect with and to receive emails and invitations from so many people around the world.

Kazim works quietly. He uploads each and every post I write onto that page and manages it diligently. He sends me stats of how many visitors it gets and alerts me if I need to respond to any emails.

He is the main reason I also have a very active Twitter and Instagram account (which has a 1000 followers).

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

Whenever I come to recite majlis in Europe, Kazim makes an effort to come and visit me. He has come to visit me in London and at CampUK in Birmingham. Last year he travelled to Paris to come meet me and my mother.

People often tease him for being a Zakira Shyrose teacher's pet. But truth be told Kazim does my work without sometimes hearing from me for months. I don't even use my fb page to promote his nawha and Nasheed recitations.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rrmA94pi5X0>

And yet he continues to loyally work behind the scenes. And he continues to serve his Jamaat in Switzerland as a volunteer and a Madressa teacher MASHALLAH.

Today on his birthday I want to let him know that I appreciate his many efforts even if I don't always have the time to acknowledge his sincere work.

I ask Allah swt to accept his good deeds in working so hard to promote Islam and to get the message of the Ahlulbayt a.s around the world.

Kazim you are an inspiration. You have taught me what is loyalty what is generosity and what is true kindness.

I am indebted to you for more than even you can imagine.

May Allah swt give you infinite success my dear son and may He swt fulfill all your hajaat and help you to make your parents Tahera Moledina Rahemtulla and sister Zai Nab very proud of you in every thing you do. Ameen

Stay blessed my son. And know that Allah swt is aware of all that you do and He will surely recompense you for your efforts ameen

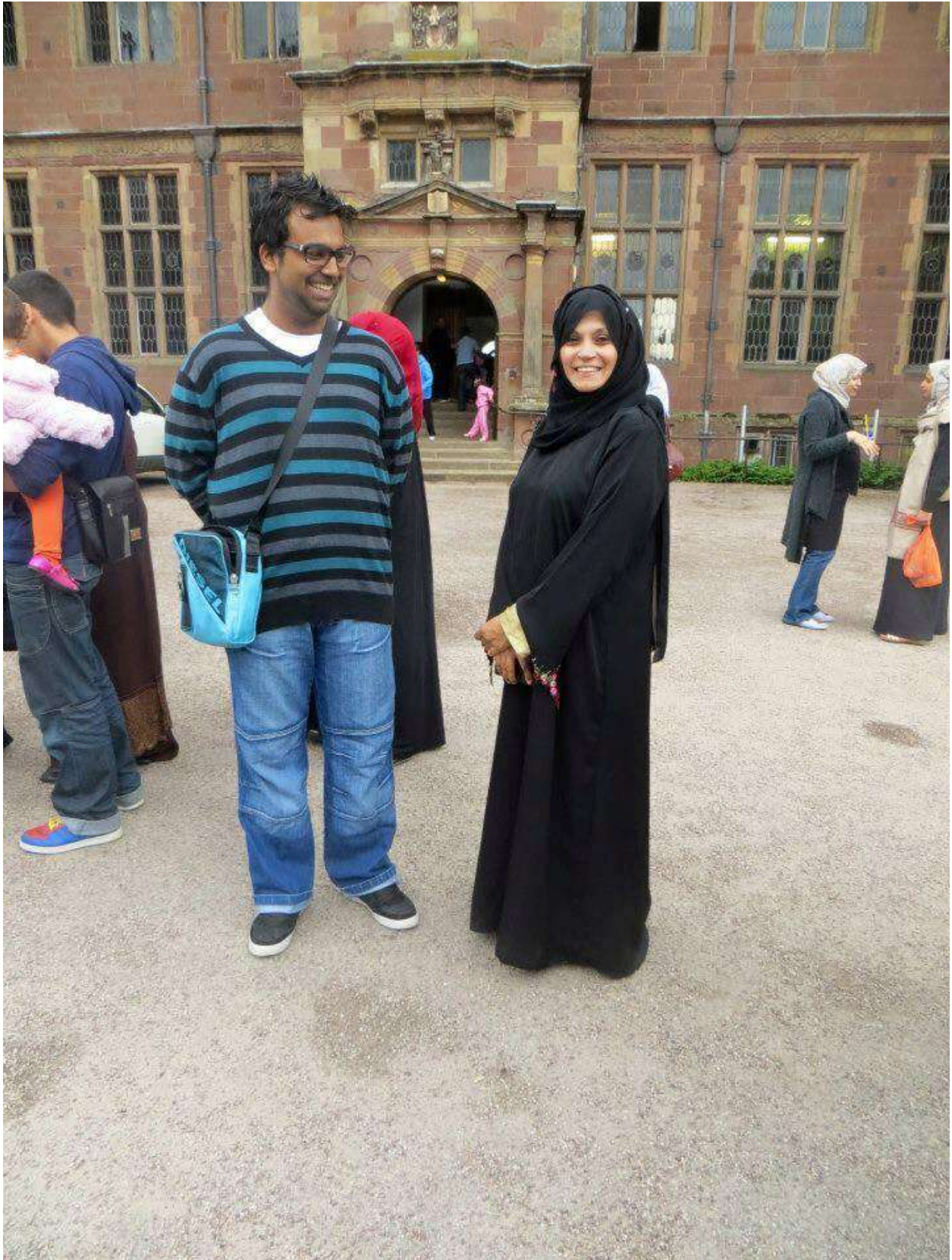
Zakira Shyrose

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Happy Birthday Kazim!!
[May, 13, 2016; 99 likes]

Zakira Shyrore

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71. THAT AMAZING MOMENT WHEN I HEARD THE SOUNDS OF "NADEY ALI" NEAR THE HAJAR AL ASWAD--AND WHAT HAPPENED AFTER

During our Umrah trip in March, I became aware of the dangers of openly showing love for the Ahlulbayt (a.s).

It was a sad state of affairs.

Standing and sending salutations outside the walls of jannatul baqi was forbidden.

Shedding tears made the guards come and question people who dared to do so. Even dressing in the Iranian chador was to put oneself at risk for being singled out and treated harshly. Praying with open hands made people stare.

This fear was on top of not even being allowed to touch or kiss even the makame Ibrahim or to pray 2 rakat salaah there!!!

The words "bida'a" were shouted out by the guards at us pilgrims and they told us in many languages to "just see, don't kiss, don't touch".

At one very perplexing point, as we held the black cloth of the HOLY KAABA and kissed it, a guard came and pushed us all away (men, women, children) saying, 'Bida'a!!! Bida'a! Don't kiss! Don't touch!!'

Not even touch the kaaba?!! Was nothing sacred anymore?

So we learned to be careful.

But there were wonderful moments amidst all this fear and sadness. Hearing huge, huge crowds of Iranians reciting loudly and boldly, the "Dua Faraj" in tawaf!!! And on Thursday, hearing them recite, in unison, the entire "Dua Komail" again during Tawaf!! Subhanallah! What an amazing feeling!!

But the most amazing moment was when I heard the words of "Nadey Ali" being recited by a Sunni lady!!!

We were squeezed together in the crushing crowds near the "Hajr ul Aswad" (the blessed Black Stone). I realized what a mistake I had made to try and reach it when I saw how unruly the men were.

People were getting injured, smothered and elbows were hitting noses. Men were getting seriously hurt and women's hijabs were being entangled around their necks dangerously. I seriously regretted trying to venture into this crowd.

There was no way to get nearer to the stone. And no way out of the crowd.

We were hopelessly trapped, women against the bodies of tall, tough men and breathing had become almost impossible!

At this point, I looked beside me and saw a very elderly lady. She looked at least 80 years old!!!

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I was immediately alarmed and was sure she would die in this crushing of bodies!! She was dressed in very simple clothes and had a wrinkled "dupatta" (loose head-covering worn by Pakistani women) on her greying hair.

Her adult son was beside her (he looked like he was over 60 yrs old himself). The mother said to her son in Urdu:

"Son, how are we going to touch the stone?!!! This is not possible!! I so much wanted to touch the stone. I really really wanted to touch the stone"

And she began to cry and the tears streamed down her face.

It was amazing how I could watch and listen to this exchange amidst such chaos and noise. But they were right beside me.

And then the son said:

"Ammi. It can't be done!! But wait! (as if getting a wonderful idea) Call out to Hazrat Ali. Only Ali radhi allah can help in a situation like this."

The old lady looked at her son as if he had told her something she had never thought of.

"Yes!! you are right son!! this is something only the help of Ali radhi allah can make happen"

The son said:

"Ammi, recite Nadey Ali. Do you know the words?"

The mother said confidently:

"Yes, I know it. I know it!!!"

And she held up her hands high in the air and began to recite:

"Nadey Aliyyn mazharal ajaib.."

And the hair on my body stood up like I was witnessing the most amazing moment of my life.

That woman recited the words loudly and so boldly that she was like a warrior!! Her croaking became clear and loud and for me, at least, all sounds around us ceased.

My eyes widened in amazement at her courage and at the fact that she even knew the words!!

"Ya Ali Adrikni, Ya Ali Adrikni, Ya Ali Adrikni" she said again and again.

And God is my witness, the Holy Kaba--that was right in front of us--is my witness, the crowds parted in front of her and behind her and I swear to you, that old frail lady recited "Nadey Ali" with her hands up in the air, undisturbed, as if she was peacefully on her prayer mat at home.

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

She stood as if no one was around her!!! I could see her and see the people but it was like a wide enough pocket of air had opened up around her entire body.

When I remember that moment, I see her standing without anyone around her. It still gives me chills and that moment is forever engraved in my mind.

I looked at her and I looked at the Hajr ul Aswad in front of her. It was right there, within reach. But there was no way to get there.

The old woman kept reciting, her hands outstretched in dua. And as she recited, she and her son moved ahead.

And they cut through that crowd right in front of my eyes.

She was engulfed in the crowds and I saw, with my own eyes, as she emerged right near the stone and then placed her frail, wrinkled hands on the Hajr ul Aswad. And then someone lifted her and she kissed the inside of the stone with her lips. It was as if she was drinking calmly from a bowl.

Her son touched it and kissed it too.

She returned and I kissed her and congratulated her. She was smiling and at peace. Her wishes had been fulfilled.

Even though I had been right beside her, I never made it to the Hajr Aswad that day (it was impossible). Alhamdulillah I did touch it on my last day in Mecca.

I asked myself how did someone who had evidently never called out to Ali suddenly get their hajaat fulfilled?

And then I realized. Imam Ali (a.s) hears the call of everyone who asks for his assistance. Whether a believer or not. Ali (a.s) is for everyone. He is a treasure that is ours to become wealthy with, but if we never choose to reach out, how will we gather the gems that he has for us?

When we call out to God, He (swt) sends his ambassadors to assist us in our endeavours!!

"Jab Khuda ko pukara, Ali aagaye. Jab Ali aagaye. Zindagi aagayi!!!"

Thank you Allah swt for the gift of Ali (a.s). Thank you for making us his lovers and his faithful supporters and believers. Thank you Allah swt for choosing us for this incredible gift that was given to us on a silver spoon when we were born.

"Pilaya maa nay dhoodh may, bas ek naam Ya Ali"

Our heartiest congratulations to the family of the Holy Prophet (saww) and Imam Zamana (ajtf) on the birth of a son who became the Commander of the Faithful, the first to accept Islam, the most brave warrior of Islam, the most generous, the most pious, the most exemplary, the successor, the one and only!!!!

[May, 13, 2014; 687 likes]

72. My dear children,

It's Mother's Day and you have showered me with such beautiful, expensive gifts, hand-written cards, lovingly made meals and other lovely treats. You have spent so much and worked so hard to make this day special for me. And I feel so happy and overwhelmed with joy and I thank you for all this!!

But I also want to especially thank you for all the other times throughout this past year that you made it feel like Mother's Day for me.

I cherish those moments with all my heart even though you didn't even have to spend any money or any energy on those gifts!!!

Thank you so much for that cold day in January when you actually put aside your cell phone and warmed my heart by actually listening to me talk as I drove you to school in the snow. And then you shared your own stories with me and we even laughed at something together and that laughter that bubbled from deep within us was so real and it filled us with a cosy glow.

That whole day I felt so loved and validated. It was the best Mother's Day I ever had!!

And remember February when I was laying on the couch not really watching what was playing on the TV just really feeling so fat and unattractive and my dear son you sat beside me? And then you looked at me seriously and said "Mom, you work so hard for all of us and are always so loving. You are the most beautiful woman I have ever met."

Those few words made all my dark clouds disappear and for a few moments I didn't even hate all those extra pounds I gained when I had you!!! Everything in the world suddenly felt so wonderful and being a mother felt like the best thing that had ever happened to me. Thank you for that Mother's Day!!

Thank you for that Mother's Day in March when you actually allowed me to teach you how to line up the canned goods by colour and size in the shelves with their labels facing out just like my own mother once taught me. You didn't roll your eyes or call my system of stacking the grocery things silly or senseless. You quietly followed my request and even looked for approval in my eyes. I felt like skipping with joy!

And then in April you once called me on the phone and you spoke so kindly to me that I never once felt judged or unreasonable or embarrassing and awkward or uncool and out of touch with this world or just plain dumb. You let me voice my thoughts, express my opinions and even let me give you advice without arguing or pointing out how wrong I was.

That was a Mother's Day that made me feel so respected and cherished. There was a bounce in my step all day long!!

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

In May you came to me out of the blue and said "mom I have 40 minutes to spare before I start working on my essay. Is there anything I can help you with at home?"

What a special Mother's Day for sure!!

In June you were at the mall with your dad and you convinced him to buy me flowers for no special reason at all!! I was so grateful to you for helping us to appreciate each other more. It made it a perfect Mother's Day.

In July you agreed to come to the mosque with me even though you had a million things to do. You sat beside me, listened to the majlis and even let me introduce you to my friends. You made that a beautiful Mother's Day because you did something that means so much to me.

In August when I told you I had invited some people over for dinner you didn't throw a tantrum or rant about how much you hated guests and having to do extra work. You helped me prepare things and you actually made an effort to get to know the people who are special to me in my life. That made my Mother's Day truly awesome.

In September you responded to my text right away just like you immediately respond to those of your friends. And you didn't just write back "k" like you usually do. You actually wrote a few sentences and even added a few emojis. It was such a sweet Mother's Day for me 😊❤️❤️

In October you stopped for a moment before you got out of the car and you said, "thanks mom for always driving me to where I need to go. I know you are busy and have to come out in the freezing cold so many times a day. It means so much to me." And that was a Mother's Day I will never forget.

In November you cuddled beside me on the couch and for a while it felt like you were my little baby again. We watched a chick flick together and you left your cell phone out of reach, upstairs in your room. I felt like the luckiest mom in the entire world and it was such a lovely Mother's Day.

In December you heard me opening the front door and you ran up to greet me with a huge welcoming hug and kiss. And for a moment I was transported to those times when you were 5 years old and would come rushing to greet me with arms outstretched and loudly shrieking "mummmmmmyyyyyy!!!!"

So you see honey, it's those lovely moments that make me feel so grateful that I am your mother. It's the everyday things that are most precious to me and fill me up with joy and give me a true sense of being truly loved and cherished.

And my love, if you can't remember doing any of those things from the past year, don't worry. You aren't going senile.

I might have dreamed up a few of those glorious moments 😊.

Heh heh heh

Lucky for you I am quite patient and you have a whole year to make all of my dreams a reality after all 😊😊.

Your very clever and very understanding,
mom

[May, 10, 2015; 126 likes]

73. I have yet to see a child who hasn't made a huge mistake. And our own childhoods are no clean slates. How many of us did terrible things decades ago that make us cringe and cry in regret even now.

How often we made our parents ashamed of our foolish acts.

And how often people would shake their heads and wonder how a child from such a good home could do something so terrible.

Kids mess up. They mess up bad. And so did we. And so will the generation of kids who come after ours.

Life's lessons are painful. And the only way you learn what is a boundary and unacceptable is when you cross it by mistake and get burned.

And in this digital age of social media our children's mistakes (and our own) have even bigger repercussions.

Our kids crash and burn publicly. Kids post offensive and cruel things without thinking. How many times I have seen kids from exemplary families post offensive tweets or revealing pictures. And how many times I have mourned for the parents who have done everything right and will still be blamed.

And how many times I have lamented for the child who has unwittingly and innocently ruined their own reputation and gained worldwide notoriety.

Someone once wisely said "it takes a village to raise a child" and when we were ourselves young, we saw the concern of our elders who would march us to our parents and complain to them that they had seen us doing something naughty.

And they would leave our parents to consequence us. Which our parents did.

In this day and age that village mentality should be global.

Wherever you are in the world if you see someone's child post something inappropriate help that child and save their future by informing their parents in a discreet manner.

If that is not possible at least don't take screenshots and forward. And share. And make it viral.

Privacy is not only a moral issue it is also a legal one. An email is private property. No matter how old the sender is.

Ever noticed the warning at the bottom of emails? It says the message is only for the recipient. And if you even get it by mistake do not read or forward.

People write many things in private to each other. Is nothing sacred anymore? Can we not even trust our friends to keep our secrets when we slip and gossip?

And are we helping anyone by showing them what was written about them? Or are we just taking that arrow that missed its mark and stabbing it into a "friend's" heart?

Let's think of what's at stake here.

These are our children. Our community. Our fellow Muslims. Our global community.

Don't be the cause of a child's foolish mistake to become their Achilles heel. Don't hold the paintbrush that will taint their reputation forever.

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Whether its a whatsapp message about a child struggling with gender issues, about a youth who has left the faith, about a teen who has committed a huge crime or has made terrible decisions or was caught with drugs or has run away from home--don't press that forward button.

Someday these children will be adults. They will regret their irresponsible actions that they committed when they were exactly that-- irresponsible--and didn't use their good judgement.

Leave them a path for them to return home.

Don't burn their bridges. Don't make them distrust the very adults who were supposed to be looking out for them.

Don't treat them like adults. They are children for God's sake.

Children and teens have an underdeveloped frontal brain cortex. They don't understand the repercussions of an act. They can't think so far in the future.

That's why they are called children.

If your child wrote something terrible would you want it to be sent worldwide? Would you want their futures ruined?

Think twice. Think many many times before you expose a child.

Because we adults, we are supposed to have a developed brain. We are supposed to understand how serious it could get.

And don't forget. Not only do we have to answer to a child who will one day question why we didn't care enough to protect their identity, not only will we have to answer to Allah swt for not covering a child's faults and a family's shame, but we may also be sometimes putting ourselves in a difficult legal position for invading a private email with a snapshot.

Islam is such a beautiful religion and gives us so much to prepare us for such ethical crossroads in our lives.

If only we could take the lessons from our faith to heart.

[May, 2, 2016; 250 likes]

74. Today, as on every sacred day of Juma, Imam Zamana a.s (ajtf) awaits eagerly for the command of Allah s.w.t to allow him to emerge with LIGHT into this bleak, dark world that desperately needs justice. Allama Majlisi says that Imam a.s looks towards us, his followers, with love and affection and prays fervently for our piety and safety. Amazingly, it is said that much as we wait for him with lamenting and tears, he too waits for us with the same longing and affection!

I have often tried to understand this deep love between the Imam and his followers. It has been easy to understand the love we feel for him for he is worthy of our love and has a right to our devotion and allegiance--but why would Imam a.s love us, the sinful, disobedient and heedless followers? Why would such an exalted, pure, infallible personality give us a second glance? Surely, he is only interested in the most pious of us, the ones who truly merit his acknowledgement.

But now that I am a parent, I am beginning to understand what love is. I am beginning to understand the unconditional, all encompassing feeling of deep attachment and responsibility that one can feel when one knows one is in total charge of a helpless, naive being.

Each child is so inexplicably precious to a mother--no matter how old, how beautiful, how intelligent or how inadequate that child may be. Have you ever heard the phrase "he has a face only a mother could love?" That explains it totally. A mother loves all her children. She sees beauty in them and can only see their potential, innocence, and helplessness. She forgives knowing they had a moment of weakness. She loves, for she can only see their worth, no matter how low they may think of themselves.

A mother feels so connected to her child that their pain becomes her own pain, their victories her own victories, their joy her own joy.

Thus, when that child makes wrong choices, a mother cries so heartrendingly. For she grieves that her child is heading on the wrong path, is going further away from her (where true love is) and is setting the stage for his own destruction. She feels the impending loss as deeply as if it is her own loss. And she prays to her Lord to guide Him, to bring his heart where salvation is. And she never gives up on her child. She pines for him and waits patiently that the goodness she knows that is in him will one day make him open his eyes and realize his mistakes. And when he returns home, it is that same mother that awaits with her arms wide open in love and forgiveness.

When I try to understand my Imam a.s (ajtf) in this context, I realize that my love for him is nothing compared to his love for me!!!! For we love him KNOWING that he will deliver on his promises and that he will never let our hope go unfulfilled. But he loves us despite the fact that we have yet to show our own worthiness. We have not been lovable enough to warrant such love from him. And yet he loves.....

Today let us return home. Let us come back on the sirat e mustaqeem and find our way back to Allah s.w.t and His living representative and guide on this earth, the Mahdi, Imam Zamana a.s Let us blossom in this love he sends our way and let it motivate us, strengthen us and reorient us. Let us call out to him and say Ya Imam, here I am! Forgive me ya Imam. Please take me and show me the way towards your obedience and pleasure! And do not ever let me turn away from you again....

Imam Zamana's dua for his Shias:

'O Allah! Our Shias have been created from our light and the remainder of our earth (teenat). They have sinned in the hope of our love and benevolence. If their sin is related to Your Exalted Self, then You forgive them. We will be satisfied with Your forgiveness. And if their sin is related to the rights of their brethren, then You correct their shortcomings and grant them from the part of Khums which is our right so that they may be satisfied with it. Protect them from the fire of Hell and do not gather them along with our enemies in Your punishment.'

-referenced by Allamah Majlisi (r.a.) and Mohaddes Noori (r.a.) as narrated by Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.)

[Apr, 20, 2014; 90 likes]

75. YA FATIMA WE LONG TO TOUCH YOUR GRAVE!!

Standing against the tall walls surrounding Jannatul Baqi, I experienced a very deep sense of utter, heartbreaking sadness.

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"Ya Fatema, where are you?!" I asked.

And all I heard was silence. And all that stretched within those high walls, for miles and miles, was a desolate scene of sand and blowing wind and hot sun and thousands and thousands of unmarked, desecrated graves.

I felt so cut off, so far away, so disconnected, so helpless so powerless.

The walls I stood against were at least a mile away from the graves. Only men were allowed to enter.

Armed policeman and guards blocked the way along with a long linked chain across the way.

If it weren't for the Iranis gathering in groups no one would even realize what this place is from the outside.

Street vendors shout out their prices and all sorts of merchandise is haggled over in this holy area!!!

Never have I felt so powerless as a woman as I did then.

"My dear, suffering Lady (a.s) what have they done to you!!! How deeply they injured and hurt you that you turned away and became forever hidden from all. How anguished a soul you continue to be that your lovers and devotees come to you from far and wide and still must remain held back and prevented from saying "salaam" to you!"

And the tears flowed from my eyes as I longed to rest my eyes for just one moment on those blessed graves of my imams (a.s) and my Bibi Zahra (a.s) and Bibi Umul Baneen (a.s) and the members of the Ahlulbayt (a.s) and over 1000 companions of the Holy Prophet (saww).

I looked over at the green dome where the Holy Prophet (saww) lays buried and for a moment the thought struck me that even Rasulallah (saww) is oppressed!! For it must break his heart to see his beloved Fatema, whom he used to give his own honoured place to sit in, being buried in ruins and barred from her followers.

I joined a group of Iranis seated far outside the gates, in the courtyard of the Masjid un Nabawi (near the green dome) and in hushed tones we began to recite the ziyarat to send our salutations on these blessed personalities.

Soon another group joined. Now we were suddenly a group of at least 100 people.

We sat and listened quietly and strained to hear as the Agha recited the ziyarat, our tears flowing silently.

It caught the eyes of a policeman. Soon, he rushed to us and yelled at us to leave NOW!!!

The hatred and anger in the policeman's eyes was startling!!

It felt like we were naughty children being told to SCRAM!!

"Yallah!!" Yallah!!!!

"BID'A!!! BID'A"" he practically barked.

The elderly Irani Agha (dressed in the cloak and turban of a Syed and learned Scholar) who was reciting, politely and silently gestured to the policeman as if begging to be given just 5 minutes more.

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The policeman became furious.

He literally shooed us all away and all the grown adults literally ran away!!

For a moment his eyes locked eyes with mine.

It was the most intimidating way anyone has ever looked at me.

So much hate and disgust was in that look that I was suddenly very frightened and confused.

What had we done wrong?

We had dared to acknowledge the Ahlulbayt (a.s) and our tears threatened to create a revolution.

Just as the sobbing for 40 years of Imam Zainul Abedin (a.s) had made people realize the injustice suffered by the Ahlulbayt (a.s)--our quiet tears now, 1400 years later, were unbearably loud and had the same power to make people ask dangerous questions such as

"What was behind this tragedy of the door and the miscarriage of an unborn child that these people still cry about so painfully?"

Never have I craved more and ached more for the return of Imam Zamana (ajtf) as I did then.

I realized what a huge huge battle we are up against in those few seconds.

And I truly felt how impossible it is for things to change.

No one can bring us justice--no one has the power to remove these barriers and to eradicate this cruelty --except our Awaited One (ajtf)

May Allah swt hasten his reappearance ameen

Mar, 8, 2015; 104 likes]

76. My dear love, my child, my flesh, my blood, my future....

I look at you and wish i could take away all your pain. it really is hard to be a teenager. i know. i was once young too....

Believe it or not, I remember being a teenager like it was YESTERDAY. Yes, all aunties and moms and dads "look" more ancient than dinosaurs but honestly, our heart stays so fresh and youthful that it shocks us when we look in the mirror and see how old we have become lol

my love, i remember those tough times of growing up: the immense school work load, that intense desire to have just have fun and to forget it all, that restlessness, that emotional blender inside, that longing to be in that special friends' circle, the hurt of being gossiped out/left out/betrayed, of being caged by parents who just didn't understand, of just wanting to be alone and wanting to process all these new thoughts/feelings/experiences, of wanting to be loved and wondering if i was attractive or lovable, of trying so hard and then angrily NOT caring a BIT to be like everyone else.

i know my love, i KNOW. I have been there. Done that. And now when i look at you, i wish i could help you, listen to you, touch you, reach out to you. But you don't like me.....or do you?

What has happened to us my love? there was a time when you would cry if i was just a few seconds out of your view. you would cling to me, wrote me lovely letters, drew pictures of rainbows and beautiful scenes with just YOU and ME in it, you told me i was perfect, that you

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wanted to marry me LOL and now when i am near you, i feel hatred from you.....but you couldn't possibly hate me could you?

Forgive me my child. There were times when you came for a hug, or to talk and i was too busy. i snapped at you, misunderstood what you meant, blamed you for what you did not do, suspected you, neglected you, even abused you mentally, emotionally, God Forbid physically. And now i am so very sorry. I am human, i was going through my own personal issues, but i have lost the most precious thing now....which is YOU

you walk by my room and you don't say hello. you sit across from me at the dinner table and you snap at me and hate my food, hate the way i talk, mock my jokes and find my questions intrusive. Your voice is full of hatred, icy and sarcastic. I am afraid to say a word to you because you will be angry. because you are so sensitive and so very angry all the time.... I am afraid of YOU the person i love the most, the person i would give my life for. but you hate me....or do you?

my child, what should i do? how do i reach out to you?

i love you i love you, i love you. how do i tell you? how do i take away that mournful, lonely look from your face? what did i do? how do i fix it?

and the days go by, and i see you grow and grow. And grow AWAY from me. you have friends, interests, activities, passions, computers, mp3 players etc etc. when i call you to watch tv with me you say you have homework. you don't want to come to family gatherings, mix with relatives, even come downstairs to greet guests at home....so when, when can we talk? how will you stay in the loop or know what is happening in our families?

i see in you so many contradictions and i don't know how to treat you. you look so mature, so tall, so gorgeous--and sometimes you act like a total baby and fight with your siblings like you are younger than THEM! lol one day you are so confident, so sure, so efficient, so brilliant and then the next you don't understand such a basic thing that it blows my mind!!! you are so independent and hate being explained a thing and then you come to sleep with me and are scared at night because you watched a horror movie LOL you advise your dad and me and amaze me with your maturity and then you go and make such a mistake in your own life that we can't believe we are talking about the same kid! you don't want me to say i love you or kiss you but then i hear you on the phone with your friends crying and saying "no one loves me in this house"

huh?

i try all these clever ways to find a moment alone with you. i work my schedule to drive you to school, to parties, to soccer, to do anything so that we can just have two minutes in the car alone. And when i ask you questions you grunt. you get irritable. you want to listen to the radio, you want to think, you are in a foul mood. i know mornings suck. but i woke up this morning too! and i too am tired and angry about a million things. but why are we taking it out on each other?

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And then i take it personally and i too shut down

And we become like those grumpy people in the car next to us. That chinese family right there who are scowling, looking straight ahead and snapping answers to each other. Or look at that funny looking indian family, all dressed up in shiny garish clothes but look at that grouchy dad, yo, and man, everyone is totally quiet and angry, rushing to some event that they are perpetually late to--wait a minute, that's US. that's OUR reflection in that store window we just drove by---OMG yikes. errr... lol? we have become a statistic. we are now THOSE GUYS. We are not fun to be with anymore

I try to hug you and you feel embarrassed. i try to say loving things to you--now i am corny. i make a joke you roll your eyes. i am nice to you in front of your friends--and i am like, SO, embarrassing. i try to act cool--now i am just an "epic fail" i say "how was school" and now i am the prosecutor in a murder case. but honey i DO want to know that you learned about the Appalachians, that you figured out how to work the bunsen burner, that you hate fractions, that your teacher is a wicked, mean evil, unsympathetic, cruel woman (just like me lol)

but you don't want to talk. and you don't want to share your pain, your challenges, your regrets, your joys, your dreams... you were student of the month? hey why am i reading about this in the school newsletter and not from you? and i take it personally and i too shut it down

we sit beside each other and yet we are a million miles apart. you think i hate you, and i think you hate me

and you know what? we could make both of our lives full of sunshine. because honestly? if we know each other's triggers, we also know exactly what each of us likes too. if just one of us turned to the other and said "i love you" or "I am sorry" or even "thank you" they really would become magic words

but we are too proud. after all, you are my kid, just like me.....

and you know what the ironic thing is? human beings just need to know that they are acknowledged, heard, understood, appreciated. And somehow we have started speaking another language--i don't understand what you are trying to say, and you don't know what i mean!

and maybe we are just saying "i love you" anyway, but the message comes out garbled

my love, let me in. let me at least try to soothe you. there was a time even if you were bleeding, i could just hold you and blow on your wound and it would make you all better. and now nothing works. and you wont let me try

please, please, just give me a sign. when you speak, angry words come out. when you answer, accusing statements are made. when you ask, it is as if i am your biggest enemy

i did something wrong somewhere along the way. i know i did something wrong. otherwise, how

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could things have gone so horribly wrong? no one hates anyone with so much passion unless they deserve it.....right?

but somehow, in the deepest place of my heart i can hear you saying, "no mom, no dad, that's not true. i don't hate you. i am just going through some stuff right now. and it is not all about you. sometimes it is just me. please don't take it so seriously"

and i want to say the same thing to you my child. "no son, no daughter, what you think about me is also not true. i don't hate you! i am also just going through some stuff right now. and it is not all about you. sometimes it is just me. please don't take it so seriously"

If this is the case, then if we held hands, couldn't we make it through these tough times in BOTH of our lives, better? my love, we could be a TEAM. we could become stronger.

i am not asking that you make me your best friend. but at least.... a friend? (hello, are you even my fb friend? are you even reading this? * fail)

can we look past the hurt, the mistakes, the misunderstandings and just make a new friendship?

mother's day is coming in a few months. can you give me the biggest gift of my life? can you spare an hour a week where we can go out together, maybe have lunch or something? and the rule would be, we will be civil. no fighting allowed. Can you, when you are rushing to school, hurrying through dinner, heading out the door to some activity take a moment to look into my eyes and say "mom, sorry i have been so distant. i love you. i can't wait to come back to you"

can u just notice that i cleaned something, bought you something, cooked your food, defended you, praised you, thought of you, worried about you? can u just acknowledge it and make no judgements. just say "wow mom you took so much trouble for me"

my child I too am a daughter. i too have make the same kind of mistakes with my mom. and even i STILL struggle to give her more time, more kindness, more love. I snap at her when i have other stresses, i am mean, i blame her for all the troubles in my life, i tell her she controls me or doesn't understand me. And i am unfair to her. As i am yelling at her, i can hear myself, i know what i am saying is not true, i know my words hit her heart like a whip--and i can't stop myself.....so i know what you are going through my child. I am the same flawed human being. But when i mess up (which is 90% of my interaction with her)and i call her and say the same kind of sorrys an amazing thing happens: she always, always takes me back. She cries, she feels very sad but she still takes me back. That's how moms are. And it makes the way ahead for both of us easier. my mom and I could not be so close if we didn't reach out every now and then

and you and i could have the same thing, kid!!

For some, their moms are dead. Never to hear sorry, never to be able to say i forgive you, never to hug again. For me, that fear makes me love my mom harder and hug her longer. I can see her getting older in front of me

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but i too am getting old, can't you see? i too will die....maybe earlier than both of us expected. or you could die....who knows how long anyone has?

my child, let us not wait any longer. what if one of us gets cancer, run over by a car, drowns, falls or gets an aneurysm? we will both cry because we DID love each other but just never found time to express that love

Today, let us pledge to be friends (um, sending you an fb request right now) and let us change everything for the better. You and I

And now, to make your life really really miserable, i am tagging you in this post, my child
LOLLZZZZZZZZZZ

(*evil laughter) bwhahahahahahahah!
[Feb, 17, 2012; 271 likes]



77. Valentine's Day.....

And everyone is offering their hearts readily, practically begging for someone, anyone, to rule their heart.

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"TAKE MY HEART!!!" say the bright, red cards little school children give to each and every person in their class.

"MY HEART BEATS FOR YOU!!!" sings the e-card from a teenager to a casual acquaintance.

"MY HEART IS YOURS AND ONLY YOURS!!!" says the pop-up hallmark card.

Expressing love is important and having room for others in our hearts is crucial. But giving our heart away?

That's downright dangerous.

And frankly, the heart is not ours to give, in the first place.

We belong to Him (swt), and all that we have is on loan from Him to us.

You cannot give away what is not yours in the first place....

The heart is very very precious. And therefore, WHO we allow to rule our heart and WHAT we put into this heart is extremely important.

For the heart is the KEY to our ignition.

The heart gives the power to our mind and our body to take us where it wills.

What is it but the intense longing of a HEART for the summit of a tall mountain that fuels the mind and the body to climb over the most steepest of paths, fighting hunger and thirst in the most harshest of conditions?

The heart's desires can be that overpowering and compelling.

And giving someone the key to such a powerful force within us is essentially giving them control over us so that we literally become, as the saying goes, "putty in their hands". It is allowing them to shape us like a piece of pliant clay and to do with us as they see fit. It is taking away our own power to reflect, to think, to assess.

Doing this is not only misplacing the seat of power that actually belongs to Allah swt but also potentially putting ourselves in the hands of someone who can take us on a dangerous path altogether.

What makes this particularly perilous is that the heart is no simple, static thing. It is a complex, enigmatic and exceptionally vulnerable force that is full of inconsistencies and paradoxes.

And it is those inconsistencies and paradoxes that can pose the most danger when the heart is placed in the hands of a mortal human being.

How deeply a heart loves and how completely it can hate!

How willful it is that if it loves, it can betray it's own master's better judgment and become hopelessly someone else's.

And how ruthless it can be that if it fancies someone's beloved, it can steal to make it his own.

How unbelievable strong it can be that it's love can withstand the terrible storms of a lifetime of ups and downs.

And how completely delicate it is that if wounded it can cease to completely love another ever, ever again.

How giving, compassionate and generous this heart can be that it can quell its own desires and give freely to others.

And how completely selfish and arrogant it can be that the feelings and needs of others are considered totally regardless.

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How guided this heart can be that it can completely give up a life of addiction and a habitual life of cruelty, selfishness and plotting ALL for the pleasure of Allah swt

And how misguided it can be that it can cause one to oppress one's own spouse, hurt family members and annihilate entire nations and kill others for power.

The heart is a beautiful, life-giving and wonderful gift.

And it can also be the cause of our complete physical and spiritual destruction.

And that is why, My Lord, My God, I am so so eternally thankful to You that You are the Master of my heart, and its teacher and its guide.

If you were not there to train this willful heart of mine, it would be completely drowned in the vortex of greed, arrogance, cruelty, hatred and bitterness.

And I would be ruined in this world and in the hereafter.

And on this Valentine's Day, when lovers profess their love to each other, I want to say that I love YOU my God.

My heart beats for you Ya Allah.

I am yours and only yours.

If there is anyone who can have the power to treat me like a piece of clay, to mould in whatever way they desire, it is YOU for you have praised those who embrace your ownership over them. ...then their skins and their hearts become pliant to the remembrance of Allah; this is Allah's guidance, He guides with it whom He pleases; and (as for) him whom Allah makes err, there is no guide for him.

[Holy Quran 39:23]

And what an incredible Beloved you are that when I have COMPLETELY submitted myself to You in my love and devotion you command me to love each and every human being in my life and in this world.

You teach me to love my spouse, my parents, my children, my relatives, my fellow believers, this entire world of human beings, plants and animals.

In loving You, my Lord, I have learned how to love others.

What an incredible love yours is that makes love for others BLOSSOM and BLOOM within it!!

Thank you for Your Guidance, Thank You for your love, Thank You for being You, my Beloved from your slave

.....forever lost in Your Love

"Has not the time yet come for those who believe that their hearts should be humble for the remembrance of Allah and what has come down of the truth? And ~that) they should not be like those who were given the Book before, but the time became prolonged to them, so their hearts hardened, and most of them are transgressors. "

(Holy Quran 57:16)

[Feb, 12, 2014; 161 likes]

78. In one of my most beautiful moments here in Karachi, Pakistan, I woke up to the sound of the Adhaan waking me up for my Fajr prayers. I realized in just 2 weeks, my consciousness had

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become attuned to being awakened to this sound rather than to the sound of my alarm clock which rang just a few minutes later.

It was the sound of a loving mother soothingly waking up her willful child. As I listened, and savoured the sound like a thirsty person tastes each drop of cold, sweet sherbet as it travels down the throat I became aware of other voices. I listened intently as microphones came to life and Muezzins across the area began to recite their Adhaan. The voices moved progressively like a wave and the echoes of hundreds of Muezzins reciting across the land, the city filled my ears. My soul was shaken as I imagined hundreds of mosques across the city coming to life with lights being turned on and voices of Adhan filling the air.

Then I saw the outskirts of the city coming to life in my mind's eyes. All waking up obediently to go into sajda in front of their Lord. Then the entire world came into my mind's eye. Each city, each country, each continent awakening at various times in the day to Guidance and Invitation from the King of Kings--"haya alass Salah!!! Haya alal Falaah! Haya ala khairil amal!!" Hasten to the prayer! Hasten to Success!! Hasten to the Best of Deeds!!

Like a mother awakens all her children in the home, Allah s.w.t awakens each of us with a reminder "wake up my child, for much more precious things await you. Do not waste your time in neglect and abandon--go face the day and remember me, remember how to come back home" And like obedient children, many of us wake up. Some with difficulty some with enthusiastic love. And then there are our other siblings who spend the day asleep, unwilling to be alerted to Guidance and Love.

Oh Allah, accept this ibadat from us. Verily you are the Seeing and Knowing. Rabana takabil Mina inaka antus sameel ul aleem. You know whether we worship, how we worship and how sincere we are. Please continue to Guide us, do not let our disobedience be the cause of our being led astray. For we love you and only you. Iyaka na budu wa iyaka nasteen. eeh dinas siratul mustaqeem (lead us to the straight path) AMEEN

[January, 19, 2012; 63 likes]

79. It was a very draining but extremely electric and rewarding experience to recite Chehlum majlis at Masjid Shahe Khorasan in Karachi, Pakistan

As we drove this morning on Chehlum day to masjid Shahe Khorasan I noticed an unusually quiet city. The roads were bare. No people, empty stretches of streets. It was almost spooky. and then I noticed the police. Everywhere. The roads had been cleared, security was ultra-tight. A chill descended over me and I began to pray.

I felt a sense of foreboding and it felt like I was in a war zone. There were tankers everywhere, army in military fatigues, snipers on buildings, machine guns pointed at cars from police vehicles. The azadars would need protection today...

I wondered how long the love for the Ahlul Bait a.s will be misunderstood--a hatred that started from the time of bani Umayyad until now. I asked Imam Hussain a.s to keep me alive until I could share what I wanted to today, until I had evoked the tears for the Chehlum mourners. Let me complete my mission maula.

We went through security checkpoints, then out of our car and amid security to the masjid. I was escorted by police as I was the zakira. We went through frisking by female police, our bags were opened and checked and then went in further. We were checked once more at the door of the mosque.

I arrived and within minutes was led straight to the mimbar.

I got on the mimbar and there were women as far as my eyes could see. There were tents put up so that people could sit all the way out into the courtyard. I was told a 1000 women would be in attendance but the checkpoints and security made it harder for women to enter. The throngs slowly made their way into the mosque and the crowd grew and grew. There were easily 700 women in front of me (but I knew there were others sitting in the side halls, outside halls etc) My mom says she was afraid for me--maybe I would be nervous in front of the huge crowds but I felt nothing but enthusiasm to share what I wanted with them. I was totally calm and totally at peace. No fear for life, no fear for how I would present my material.

My voice on the microphone traveled out into the street, and the narey haideris and salawats and takbir! from the crowd were phenomenal!! Everyone listened in PIN DROP silence. It was amazing that there were so many people there and not one of them even moved. They listened in transfixed silence.

During my majlis I spoke about our sins and gave a passage from Dua Komail. The crowd cried as if it was the masayaib of Imam Hussein a.s The crescendo of lamenting, crying, and sighs was so high that I wondered how I could bring them back to earth and resume my next point. But alhamdlilah it went just smoothly.

The masayaib was 15 minutes--from the release of the family of the Holy Prophet s.a.w and all the way to their passage to Kerbala and onto medina. Never have I seen so much loud crying, so much passion, so much lamenting. It was like being in another world!! Never had I myself been able to recite the masaiyab this way. It came from the heavens, there is no doubt in my mind.

I descended the mimbar and was kissed by woman after woman after woman. Many many kissed my lips out of happiness--the lips that had recited about the musibat of Imam Hussein a.s People kissed me, hugged me, prayed and prayed for me. I couldn't leave, they would pull me back. So I stayed and let them kiss me for it gave them joy--and they wanted to pray for me. I heard more duas than I can count or relate. It was a phenomenal experience. I was given a garland of roses and the dark circles under my eyes from crying over the musibat of the Ahle Bayt a.s tells you why I had received those. May Allah s.w.t accept everyone's tears, forgive our sins, give us hidayat, keep us humble and grounded, understand what is real and worthy in His eyes and only in His eyes and keep us on the sirat e mustaqeem. AMEEN

[Jan, 15, 2012; 153 likes]

80. As brothers and sisters in humanity and citizens of this planet earth we all do share some common principles.

And these are that a human being deserves the freedom to live in safety no matter what his beliefs, that a human being should not be oppressed, that he can expect justice and fairness wherever he lives and from whoever the powers that be, that if he is suspected of a crime then he has the right to a fair trail and the freedom to have dignity.

Today, the world has seen all these and many more sacred values and principles shattered and boldly, defiantly, obliterated.

No matter what our faith and where we live on this planet earth, the execution of not just one, but 47 people today, is cause for great alarm and for great outrage.

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We need to know what happened and who these people were. And why was killing them the only option.

What was their crime?

Does a human being not have a right to have a voice?

Read the statement below to understand the facts. And then do your own research to learn more.

If the world remains silent on this today then it will truly mean that all the lofty ideals and values that we so proudly proclaim about us as a human race are just empty words.

It will mean there are double standards and only selective justice. That no matter how civilized and powerful and connected and informed the world becomes, atrocities can still happen so openly and defiantly in front of us and the entire world can still remain silent and even befriend bullies and make alliances with murderers.

It will mean that all this rejoicing and celebration that the world just witnessed over the hope of a new year, for the beginning of a new chapter and for new achievements and growth has been for nothing....

Can we truly rejoice and have hope when humankind still believes in killing its own?

[Jan, 2, 2016; 59 likes]

81. Shia Muslim Women doing our part to dispel stereotypes and to give back to the community

It's been a a wonderful day

volunteering (from 10.30 am-8 pm) raising money for a fetal monitor for Mackenzie Richmond Hill Hospital (formerly York Central Hospital) at the Promenade Mall

All proceeds from our Christmas Gift Wrapping services go towards this noble cause and I thank my sister and Board Director Shabnees Siwjee for organizing this event and for giving us an opportunity to be a part of this!

So proud of my daughters Zaynab and Shireen and friends Sukaina Husseinali M and Anar for making the time to help out today. May Allah swt reward you for your efforts ameen

I know it makes people smile and truly feel the holiday spirit when they see Muslim women volunteering and lovingly wrapping their Xmas gifts. In fact I smile to myself every time I catch myself saying "bismillahir rehman nir raheem" as I cut the wrapping paper that will be used for celebrating the birthday of Nabi Essa a.s 😊.

How wonderful when the followers of Imam Zamana ajtfs work shoulder to shoulder, alongside the followers of Nabi Essa a.s.

This is called preparing for the coming of our Imam ajtfs and maintaining brotherhood for when these two Awaited, Blessed ones will return, join forces and work together against oppression

May Allah swt hasten their appearance

ameen

[Dec, 17, 2015; 214 likes]





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82. Subhanallah the world is truly full of wonderful, loving and truly pious people who work for the cause of Allah swt.

My weekend in Edmonton, Canada gave me the blessed opportunity to serve the Shia communities at 3 different masajids of Momineen from 3 different countries: the East African (Khojas), the Lebanese and the Pakistani Momineen.

The languages, the food, the rituals and customs may have been different but SUBHANALLAH the love for Imam Hussein (a.s) and the Holy Prophet saww and his pure family (a.s) united us and made us feel like we were truly one family.

Jazakallah to my dear hosts Kaniz Mavani Farhana Mohamed Abbas Mohamed who took such great care of my mother and myself in every way possible.

I take with me, the pure love of the amazing people of Edmonton. I am truly in awe of the respect, the hospitality, the akhlaq, the generosity and the admirable acts of azadari of all the people I was blessed to meet.

Truly, the snow, the freezing cold, the distance from other large shia communities and from the homeland has not deterred these lovers of the Ahlulbayt a.s to carry out acts of faith, worship, education and kindness at their Madressa, imambargahs and homes.

Can't thank enough those who invited us to eat at their homes, showered us with gifts and took us out to eat and for sightseeing. Zuher Dhalla Farha Dhalla, Zee Syed Zul Lila and family Abbas and Fatma Shivji and so many others. Can never forget your kindness

Mashallah amazing majalises, Niyaz, tabaruk, latmiyya, manners in the children and adults, alam, taboot and tears for the Ahlulbayt a.s.

Am in awe and so inspired Shia of Edmonton!!! May bibi Fatema (a.s) accept your efforts and give witness on the day of Judgement of your sincerity and love for Aba'bdillahil Hussein a.s

Ameen

[Dec, 14, 2015; 108 likes]

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83. Was amazed to have this cashier at a restaurant in the airport smile with joy when she saw the scarf around my neck.

"Your scarf says Ya Hussein. Where did you get that??!!!" she said with tears in her eyes.

I said "This is from Kerbala--I pray imam a.s calls you there very soon ameen"

I told her I was heading to Edmonton to recite majlis e Hussein and she her face lit up and she said

"Can you ask Imam Hussein a.s to solve my difficulty? He was the one who I prayed to and he gave me my husband to me but now only he can reunite us. Please pray his sponsorship works out. Our two children miss him it has been so many years that we have been apart"

I raised my hands and prayed for her and she came around the counter and hugged me and we took more pics.

Subhanallah!!! Here I was--a bit apprehensive for the first time about flying with my usual black abaya on....and look how the name of imam Hussein a.s brought us lovers of the Ahlulbayt a.s together!!

Truly we need to have no fear and to carry the flag of Islam proudly! When we boldly wear our hijabs and show our signs of being a "maulayee" we give each other more strength and allow this mutual love to evoke blessings from above ameen.

Soumaya, I feel very confident that your difficulties will be solved very very soon ameen.

I wish I had taken off my neck scarf and given it to you!! It occurred to me too late!!Inshallah hope we can meet again soon so that I can gift it to you. May Allah swt bless you ameen

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[Dec, 11, 2015; 297 likes]

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84. Ya Rasulallah!!! What an UNBEATABLE legacy you have left for us Muslims that even 1400 centuries later, your name evokes pride and your teachings continue to touch the hearts of more and more people each day.

I am proud to be known as your follower. Proud to tell the world about you!

Proud to proclaim from the rooftops that my Prophet (saww) was a man of peace, was a man who lived for human rights, a man who taught all to love and a man who showed by example that we must allow rights, self-dignity and safety to ALL--whether men, women, children, people of colour, animals, the earth, the law, people of other faiths, cultures

"It is this Prophet (saww) that came to this world to be an emancipator of slaves, of the oppressed

The one who stood for women's rights

And how could he stand for women's rights if the women of his home could not be a living testament to those rights?!

When Mohamed (peace be upon him) came to a country that was ignorant and that buried their daughters,

it was this man who said

my daughter is cherished and I stand when she enters the home

My daughter will speak and she will have a voice!!

And it is this Mohamed who taught his daughter Fatima what women's rights are so that Those rights to own property, which were given by the constitutional right of the Holy Quran and were embedded in the constitution of the Holy Quran,

It was this Fatima, who stood up for women's right to own property, left by her own father to her

And she went in the court of the Caliph of the time and she defended herself, quoted from the constitution

and successfully showed the world that a woman can speak,

and a woman is intelligent

and a woman can stand up for the oppressed!!"

-quoted from speech of Zakira Shyrose (Ashura Procession Oct 2015, Stockholm, Sweden)

[Dec, 10, 2015; 78 likes]

85. Alhamdulillah I have arrived home safely to my 3 lovely children and my dear husband. I realize each and every day of my life that I could not do what I do if these precious people in my life (as well as my amazing extended family from both sides) did not support and sacrifice in every little and large way for me.

As I look around at the way my dear husband has held up the fort in my absence I am in awe of the way Allah s.w.t sends angels in our lives to pave the way ahead for us. I am so so grateful that I married my husband not necessarily for what I loved in a human being but rather for the fact that HE loved God as much as I did (even at the age of just 22 yrs). Today, that choice has given me more blessings from Allah s.w.t than I can count or even comprehend.

When Imam Ali a.s was asked by the Holy Prophet s.a.w if he had found a suitable wife in bibi

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Fatema a.s, Imam Ali a.s gave an incredible answer that has inspired me over the years and shown me what marriage is all about. He said "Ya Rasulallah, in serving my Lord, there could not be a better partner than Fatema"

Life is about serving God. And as we make our way through life, the companion we choose on that path must also have the same spiritual goals, values and beliefs. I am so blessed that my husband values the work that I do so much that he has willingly struggled, suffered and tolerated over the last 2 months while I travelled to UK, USA and Pakistan to recite majalises. Despite being a professional with a busy career, he has put his heart and soul into the task he willingly took upon himself: he has put the children to sleep, cooked, attended school meetings, cleaned the kitchen, driven kids to school, had heart to heart chats with them, hugged them, read to them, taken them to mosque, and basically led the life of a single parent. In fact, all the time, work and effort into obtaining visas, passport, air-tickets and hundreds of long-distance phone calls over the last 2 months were handled single-handedly by him. I just packed and arrived at the airport totally carefree about the whole process. Not many men would do this with such a smile on their faces--I honestly don't know if I myself could do this if I was a husband LOL--and I am indebted to him and to God for this huge ne'mat in my life.

My husband wont be reading this (and he is such a private person that he would be very embarrassed if he did read this LOL) but I write this to illustrate a huge point and to inspire those who read this. Marry a person because they love and fear Allah s.w.t and you will receive more than your wildest dreams. For in loving Allah s.w.t is success, blessings, Mercy and increased Barkat. I married my husband when he was a young student with just some dreams of making it in this world. His spirituality and sincerity for Allah s.w.t attracted me to him and I married him (after just 2 meetings) not knowing what the future would hold--I entrusted ourselves to Allah s.w.t Today my husband is a successful medical doctor and little did I know that his love for Allah s.w.t would especially help ME in my distant future (I had no idea I would one day be a zakira)!!! Subhanallah!

And together, we are travelling on this path, serving Allah s.w.t in not only our individual ways but also as a collective entity, with our children and our extended families doing their part in this worthy task.

"Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us: For Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-knowing"

[2:127] Rabbana taqabbal minna innaka antas Sameeaul Aleem رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

[البقرة: 127]

AMEEN

[Jan, 24, 2012; 423 likes]



86. MY INCREDIBLE MIRACLE IN KERBALA:

At the age of 22 years, I had "everything" a person could dream of: a few months left to earn my University degree, TV appearances, Radio interviews, publications, fame and much more than I can list. I had been offered a modelling contract, an opportunity to meet Bollywood producers for a singing career and a contract to produce a drama for LIVE Canadian audiences.

And I made a choice at that point in my life:

I chose to give ALL of myself to Allah (swt)

Despite the advice, protests and even threats of many well-wishers, I wore hijab and dedicated my voice to Allah (swt). I swore to Him that my voice would no longer sing the praises for anyone but HIM and that no man would hear my voice in song, munajat, marsiya or nawha again. My hijab would encompass not only my beauty but also my voice. And all my talents would be only for Allah swt.

It was Divine Guidance, and a Divine Calling. And I effectively responded to His command:

"Say. Surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are (all) for Allah, the Lord of

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the worlds;" (6:162)

Twenty-one years have passed since that fateful day. And I have never, ever looked back.

AND I HAVE NOT LOST A THING!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

For Allah swt has given me more fame, fortune and inner satisfaction than I could have ever DREAMED of!! And He did this without my ever asking for it or aspiring for it.

And 21 years later, after a very speedy journey that has taken me to every height of success (when I thought there was no more success left for me to experience), I experienced yet another miracle in my life. This time it was bigger, better and more profound than any I have ever experienced.

I WAS INVITED TO KERBALA TO RECITE MAJLIS E HUSSAIN.

And I entered the Holy city, for the first time in my life, as a guest of Imam (a.s) to sing HIS praises and to use every God-Given talent given to me-- for my religion and for the pure Ahlul Bayt (a.s)

The pinnacle of intensity was in the incredible miracle I felt last week, with my entire soul, when I recited marsiya and latmiyya (nawha) in the HARRAM OF IMAM HUSSEIN A.S As I recited, women came from every corner of the shrine and came towards me like I was the main focus. They left the zareeh and came to me to listen to the story of Kerbala.

They did not understand a word I said (they were Iraqi, Irani, Punjabi, Egyptian, etc etc) and yet they sobbed and sobbed at my words. They did azadari and beat their chests motivated by MY VOICE and they could not be silenced!!! The lady guards came to quieten them but no one would listen!! So the men were cleared from the hall behind us!!! (so as to not hear our voices) Eventually, the female guards left their posts and listened to my majlis and my marsiya and my latmiyya and cried with the rest of the ladies.

Women came and came. Waves of women left, waves of women took their place. Everytime I looked around, I saw new faces. And they sent me flying kisses and held out their arms for an embrace!!

When I was finished they crowded around me and every single one of them kissed my hands, my forehead, my face, my eyes, even my lips. They begged me to pray for them, they thanked me, they prayed for me. They held me and cried. They told me their hearts were heavy with sadness and I had lightened their hearts by allowing them to cry for Aba'abdillah (a.s)

And my mother and my mother in law sat beside me and wept like babies at the miracle of it all. Later, I went on TV and the TV station was above the city. Behind me were the 2 Rozas of Imam Hussein (a.s) and Hazrat Abbas (a.s) and to my side--within touching distance from the open window, was the Teelay Zainab (a.s) (the hill that bibi a.s witnessed the beheading of Imam Hussein a.s)

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It was a surreal, incredible, mind-blowing moment. The holy city of Kerbala was around me, glittering like enormous jewels and I was beholding it from this elevated spot. And the city was watching me on TV, my words being translated in Arabic and Farsi in real time.

I looked around me and looked at myself. And I wondered if this was really me. If this was really my fortune. Had I died and gone to heaven? Or had heaven come to me ON THIS EARTH?

Why? I asked myself? Why to a sinner, a mere mortal, an inconsequential being?

And then I heard the answer in my soul:

This is how we reward those who give up everything for US. This is how we elevate them, this is how we give: in the HERE and in the HEREAFTER too.

And I realized that my voice had become more beautiful because it sang the praises of my Lord, and my beauty had become full of noor because I had searched for purity within my soul and my life had become a success because I had devoted every talent to HIM.

Today my voice echoes through vast mosques and the people cry for the love of God it evokes in them. Today I sit on a throne, the mimbar, and people respond to my words with love for God!!! Today I use my words to turn people towards Him. Today the hands are raised not in claps but to beat their chests to the sound of my voice. Today, I am not thrown money at but am instead showered with blessings from every place I look towards. subhanallah, subhanallah, subhanallah!

I have received more than any Bollywood career, any academic success, any love match, any money, any lottery could have ever given me. And I have an inner peace, an inner joy, an inner exhilaration that NOTHING can compare with!

And the words of my Master, Imam Hussein (a.s) come back to me again and again,

""O God, what did he find who lost you?

and what did he lose who found you?"

[3.26] Say: O Allah, Master of the Kingdom! Thou givest the kingdom to whomsoever Thou pleasest and takest away the kingdom from whomsoever Thou pleasest, and Thou exaltest whom Thou pleasest and abasest whom Thou pleasest in Thine hand is the good; surety, Thou hast power over all things.

With this story of my own personal miracle experienced in Kerbala, I invite you, my dear brothers and sisters, to give yourselves to Allah swt. Today, pledge yourself to God and watch the miracles happen in your own life. Allah swt is the KING of the UNIVERSE. He can give you

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everything if you give YOURSELF first, to Him.

Make that sacrifice, take that step, be it wearing hijab, starting to pray, forgiving someone, changing a job that is based on cheating, giving up a vice, whatever it is. DO IT NOW, DO IT TODAY.

And watch the miracles happen in your life.

I am a living testament to that. And I share this with you because I have found a wealth unlike any. The love of God....

Please click on "like" so that I know you have read this today. Share this status and forward it-- so that I know that my personal story has been shared with as many people as possible.

[Dec, 1, 2012; 1k likes]



87. Subhanallah!

One of my most memorable Ashra Zainabiyya, indeed, to do azadari with the Gujarati speaking Momin community (originally from Ahmedabad) of Jaffari Centre in Atlanta, Georgia.

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I was truly inspired with how much this community works to serve the Ahlulbayt a.s and how sincerely they grieve and mourn over the musibah that befell the family of the Holy Prophet (saww)

The ladies (over 500) were so involved with every word I recited in my Urdu majlis and readily responded so positively and verbally.

Every Narey Haidery was answered with every single person raising both arms in the air and the crowd loudly chanting "Yaaa Ali" in unison.

It gave me goosebumps each time.

The crowd laments and sobs as soon as the name of Imam Hussein a.s is mentioned in the masayeb.

The hussainiyya is absolutely magnificent, well stocked and enormous with seperate large chandeliered halls reserved for majlis and for serving niyaz.

There is a large gold and silver replica of the roza and zareeh of Imam Hussein a.s and beautiful towering alams and flags of Islam.

Full niyaz and meals are served before every majlis and the program is set to start after 9.30 pm to accomodate business owners.

All members of the community have the same last name (Momin) that was chosen by their ancestors when they accepted the path of the Ahlulbayt a.s

The community members are all related to each other and help each other to immigrate. It is common for young cousins and relatives to study here and stay with families.

Mostly all community members own Dairy Queen franchises and are successful businessmen who contribute to invite top, well known scholars and nawhakhaan from around the world and to sponsor the niyaz and tabaruk.

I am indebted and so very grateful to my hosts Sima Momin and Tanvir Momin and Salomee Momin and Raza Momin and Naushad uncle and Parin aunty and Kauser aunty for their incredible hospitality and love.

It was truly an honour to stay in their homes and to use the same rooms that were used by previous visiting reciters such as Sayed Ammar Nakshwani, Sheikh Mohamed Hilli, nawhakhaan Ali Safdar and many others.

Recently the Tejani brothers and Hashim sisters also were invitees to Jaffari Centre of Atlanta.

I cannot find adequate words to thank all the wonderful ladies of this community who have gone out of their way to make my mother and I comfortable, to cook tasty meals for us, to invite us to their homes and to restaurants and to give us beautiful gifts and so much love.

My duas are for this amazing community that Allah swt keeps them safe, immensely successful and their children healthy and on the straight path

Ameen

Praying that Allah swt gives me a chance to serve in Atlanta, Georgia very soon again ameen
[Nov, 30, 2015; 236 likes]

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88. Was truly blessed to be able to recite ashra zainabiyya majalis in Atlanta where Legendary nawhakhwaan Nadeem Sarwar and world renowned maulana Abid Bilgrami were also serving the ahlulbayt a.s

Mom was so thrilled that Nadeem bhai remembered his visit to our home in Toronto from almost 17 years ago!!

He remembered our house, my brother's sense of humour and warm hospitality and how we spent all night in azadari.

What's even more special is that he told me he had seen my majlis on the Urdu channel Ahley Bayt tv and that he was proud of me.

He said we are servants of the ahlulbayt a.s and smiled and said,

"Hum aur aap ek hi kabilay May say hay"

("you and I are from the same tribe")

May Allah swt bless him and his sons Ali Shanawar and Ali Jee with continued beauty in their voices and and a sincere love and dedication to serve Islam for a very long time to come ameen

[Nov, 30, 2015; 429 likes]



89. The dark clouds of recent, terrible, world events have shown an unexpected silver lining. People all over the world are suddenly experiencing a surge of consciousness and awareness. Evil has revealed itself. And now it is being recognized. And the world has realized who the common enemy is.

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Sympathy from the most unexpected people to the most unexpected ones is suddenly being shown! People are defending Muslims on social media and on buses and trains and are lovingly embracing strangers who hold signs that proclaim "I am a Muslim".

And we are all finding strength within that we never realized we had inside us.

Tears are being shed for the oppressed of the entire world, important hidden political undercurrents are being reflected upon and all of us are being forced to face some very ugly truths about those we once considered friends or allies.

The enormous impact and power of social media and it's inherent biased nature is also suddenly being revealed to us. Things that we once considered benign or harmless are suddenly being noticed for how very powerful they really are.

Despite the pain we are experiencing, this all is actually a blessing in disguise.

For a curtain is being lifted and our heedlessness and ignorance is being removed.

In this atmosphere of fear and confusion we are suddenly being compelled to confront our own hidden weaknesses and fears and the shock we feel at our own doubts is motivating us to work at eradicating those weak links that had remained undetected and hidden within us.

So many unsung heroes are suddenly emerging.

Whether they are grieving victims, political leaders, activists or just regular people that we pass on the streets...heroes are truly emerging everywhere.

It is an amazing, wonderful thing to behold amidst all this sadness and chaos.

And in all of this are the women in our daily lives who leave home each day boldly wearing their hijab.

Now, more than ever, the hijab has become a bold expression of courage, strength and piety. It has become a flag of Islam. A silent and yet a very loud message to the world:

"Do what you will, say what you will. This hijab will not leave me."

Ya Fatema a.s. Ya Zaynab a.s. we follow in your example of being fearless and walk on the road that you have paved for us with your own courage and steadfastness.

Our daughters, our mothers, our sisters, our females are the true heroes in all of this.

Despite the frightening news stories and the palpable and prevailing sense of danger out there, our women have not succumbed to the pressure nor have given in to the impulsive, self-protective need to hide their true identity.

We salute them and pray for their strength and their safety. And beg Allah swt to protect them from the hatred and the dangers of the Yazids of our time.

Our duas are with them.

Lets take a moment to encourage the women in our lives and to let them know how proud we are of them.

And let us thank Allah swt for all the heroes that He swt has blessed our world with.

[Nov, 19, 2015; 98 likes]

90. "I wonder about the person who contemplates about his nutrition but he does not consider (the food of) his intellect.

Thus, he avoids of what hurts him in his stomach but he lets his mind to be filled with what destroys him."

-IMAM HASSAN (a.s)

In this day and age when there is a great preoccupation on being physically fit and there is an increased consciousness on eating healthy foods, this saying of Imam Hassan a.s is a great reminder that we need to be alert for our spiritual health too.

The heart, the soul and the mind also need nourishment. And one must be aware of what one allows into one's entire system.

Increased access to social media, youtube, the Internet, television, radio, books, magazines and movies has made it even more imperative that we carefully filter what we allow to have an influence on our vulnerable nafs.

Let us aim for a complete state of healthiness and work towards a healthy body, mind and soul.
[Nov, 18, 2015; 64 likes]

91. "There is none who recites poetry about Husain (a.s) and weeps and makes others weep by means of it, except that Allah makes Paradise incumbent upon him and forgives his sins."

-Imam Jaffer Sadiq (a.s)

It truly was one of the most special moments of my life to meet world-renowned poet of the ahlulbayt a.s Sanaakhwaan Mir Hasan Mir last night.

His voice and beautiful delivery of marsiya and nawha had the entire congregation of over 3000 attendees completely overcome with grief over the troubles that befell the Ahlulbayt a.s in Kerbala.

There was not a dry eye in the audience and the sounds of sobbing felt as if it was the day of Ashura.

My heart kept doing dua for him and I asked Allah swt to forgive any of his sins and to grant him all his Hajaat ameen.

I have recited his poetry for so many years and am so familiar with his voice and face that it didn't feel at all as if I was meeting him for the first time. It was as if I was meeting my own brother once again.

Mashallah he was so kind, so friendly and so full of respect and what was most incredible was that he had been following me on facebook for all this time!!

Instead of listening to my effusive praise for him, he at once began to express great joy and appreciation for my lectures and told me that he was immensely proud of me for the work that I do to spread the message of Islam and Imam Hussein (a.s)!!!!

Subhanallah what a humble and beautiful soul!!! I immediately could see why Allah swt has blessed him with so much. He had taken the time and effort to encourage someone so inconsequential and to say such kind words!! What an amazing human being.

May Allah swt bless him with a long and healthy life, eloquence and continued beauty in his voice so that he may continue to touch our hearts with the remembrance of the 14 Masumeen a.s. AMEEN

GEO MERE BHAI!!!

[Nov, 12, 2015; 476 likes]



92. A few years ago when I was in Leicester, UK to recite Muharram majalis, I saw a curious sight in the quiet room where the alam and taboot was stored.

A Hindu lady came into that room with fruits and other offerings and the gentlemen in charge of preparing the alam quietly moved aside so that she could kiss and touch the swing of Ali Asghar (a.s).

She held on to that swing and shed tears. And spoke some words to that cradle.

The Vice President of the jamaat at that time, brother Naushadali Rajan quietly explained to me that this Hindu lady comes every year like this. She had been childless for years and someone had suggested to her to ask for her Hajaat at the cradle of this masoom of the Ahlulbayt a.s. who was mercilessly slaughtered at the age of 6 months with a 3-pronged arrow when he was in the state of abject thirst and hunger.

She did so and was blessed with a child and has never forgotten the ehsaan since.

Who was Ali Asgar?

What was his crime?

How did he become a martyr at the age of just 6 months?

Watch this 5 minute documentary, filmed at the site where this innocent baby was martyred.

And ask for your Hajaat and for the Hajaat of others awaiting a child to be fulfilled ameen.

[Nov, 5, 2015; 193 likes]

93. It was utterly heartbreaking to attend the burial as well as the scene of the shocking hate crime that occurred just a few days ago at a school in Trollhatten, Sweden.

Seeing the hundreds of candles, flower bouquets, teddy bears and cards at the scene of the racially motivated sword attack showed that the Swedish local population is truly grieving and hurting.

The graveyard was full of Swedish locals solemnly carrying bouquets of flowers. Students, teachers and people from all walks of lives had come to pay their respects. The media had come in large numbers.

Free bouquets and wreaths were provided by the local government for all visitors to place on to the graves.

The sad and solemn faces of the local Swedes showed that they felt utter guilt and regret for what one racist person had done. They wanted to show that his actions did not speak for all of them.

One of the victims, 20 yr old Lavin Eskandar was a Shia student whose ghusl and kafan was done at the local mosque in Trollhatten where I had been invited to recite a few majalises as a visiting guest speaker.

Media footage shows me reciting sura fateha at the freshly dug grave of the young men. It was so difficult to find words to adequately express consolation when I met the family members and friends of the victims.

What can one say at such a heart-wrenching time such as this?

Marhoom Lavin, a beautiful 20 yr old young man of Iraqi descent, was helping at the school as a teaching assistant and reports show that he challenged the masked murderer to take off his mask,

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yelled at children to run and tried to overpower the attacker, but he was cut down and died at the scene.

Police say that the surveillance video shows that the masked 21 yr old armed with a large sword chose his victims according to their skin colour.

Pupils at the school range in age from pre-school to high school, many of them the children of immigrants

Another victim, 15-year-old Ahmed Hassan also died of stab wounds. He was sitting in a class when the killer knocked on the door. Hassan opened it and was stabbed in the abdomen, according to reports.

Reports say 6 people were injured and a 14-year-old boy and a 41-year-old teacher remain in hospital in critical condition.

Please recite sura Fateha for the 2 Muslim victims and pray for those who have been injured in this horrible tragedy as well as for the families of all the victims.

[Oct, 31, 2015; 84 likes]





94. Stop for a moment today on this day of Ashura when you are shedding tears and chanting "Ya Hussein Ya Hussein!" and close your eyes and just listen.

Hear the voices of the people beside you intermingled with yours.

Now hear the voices of those in the various Hussainiyas in your city chanting the same words
"Ya Hussein!! Ya Hussein!!"

Now hear the voices in the countries around the world chanting these same words "ya Hussein Ya Hussein!!"

And now take yourself to Kerbala where over 20 million have gathered and are chanting "Ya Hussein Ya Hussein!!"

Feel your voice intermingling with the lovers of Imam Hussein (a.s) around the world!!

For at every given moment today, like a tidal wave of tears and a massive tsunami of love, the faithful around this entire planet are lost in the remembrance of Hussein!!

Now hear the angels and the 124,000 Prophets and the imams (a.s) chanting those same words "Ya Hussein Ya Hussein!!"

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And listen to the chants of the birds, the animals, the breeze, the swaying trees, the jinn and the celestial beings.

All are saying "Ya Hussein!! Ya Hussein!!"

For 1400 years they have tried to stop this chant.

For 1400 years they have oppressed the mourners, killed them, driven them out, attempted to intimidate and to quieten them.

And yet our voices continue to get louder and louder!!

For the truth shall always, always prevail.

Ya Hussein we grieve what they did to you!

Ya Hussein we grieve for what they continue to do to those who love you!!

Ya Hussein we love you!

Ya Hussein we pledge our allegiance to you!!

Ya Hussein we promise never to leave you!!!

[Oct, 24, 2015; 135 likes]

95. At the airport and leaving London (for Sweden) with a joyful heart and with beautiful memories of Ahlulbayt TV's wonderful hospitality.

It truly is always a pleasure to meet again and to spend precious moments with the friendly, humble and immensely pious presenters, crew and admin staff at the channel.

Channel director Amir Taki and TV host Zahra Al-Alawi and Children's Hour show producer Subhan Ali Hisbani and Campuk's brother Mustafa Field and sister Hawra Imane Field jazakallah khair for always making me feel so welcome and for arranging for my every comfort and safety whenever I travel down to be a guest of the channel. Your reward truly lies with Allah swt

Thanks to all the staff and crew (many tagged in this post) at the channel who were always so loving and friendly and made me feel like I was one of them 😊.

Was so blessed to give my Duas and to send my Salams to Imam Hussein (a.s) via TV hos Rebecca Mastertonnn, poet of the Ahlulbayt a.s Nouri Sardar and nawhakhwaan Imran Datoo as they left (today) for Kerbala to present LIVE from the Harram of Imam Hussein a.s and Hazrat Abbas (a.s)

Jazakallah khair to all the wonderful Momineen of London, Milton Keynes, Leicester, Manchester and Peterborough who phoned, came to visit me, sent me food, took me out for tasty meals and offered their assistance and to take me sightseeing. I cannot thank you enough for making me feel so loved and cherished!!

Special thanks to nawhakhwaan Adil Ahmed Karim who went out of his way to make arrangements to visit me before he left to conduct azadari for the Toronto jamaat at Jaffari Islamic Centre (9000 Bathurst) May Allah swt give you tawfeeque to evoke the love for Imam Hussein a.s with your beautiful voice and sincere heart ameen

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Do watch the channel to catch a (repeat) broadcast of my LIVE interview at 4 pm today (London time) and to watch my profile and interview on Women's View this week Inshallah.

Fee amanillah and requesting your duas that I may give justice to the task ahead of me to recite Majlise Hussein for the Sweden jamaat

[Oct, 13, 2015; 143 likes]



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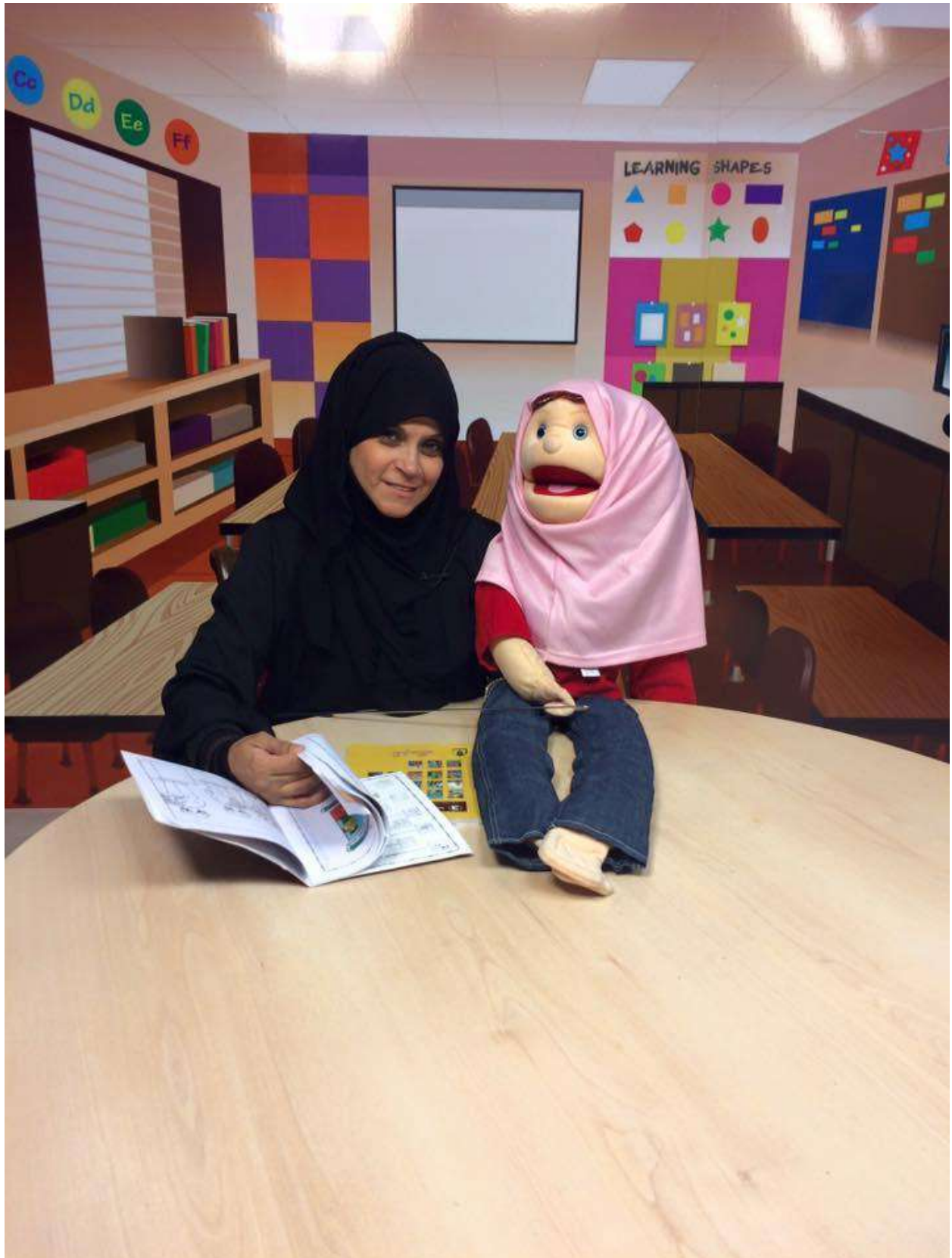
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96. Got some time on your hands? Here are 12 pages of a travel log I wrote exactly 3 years ago today--whilst on a trip across Europe with my husband on what I can safely say was one of the most spectacular experiences of my lifetime.

An excerpt of this blog became that memorable article on celebrating my 20th marriage anniversary that has been read and shared so many times. (*You may find it in the notes section of my facebook page).

I have reflected on nature, my life, my marriage, the existence and Might of God, the journey of life, the amazing cultures of the world, travelling with a spouse and a lot more! Do let me know if you enjoyed reading (and actually read the entire travel blog!!) and if these words inspired you at all.

with duas

Shyrose

We are on a speed train from the middle of the Swiss Alps in Interlaken up to Zurich and then onto Italy, Venice. Subhanallah what an incredible journey it has been. For a person like me to

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say that I have been rendered speechless by the sights, it does say a lot!! The words “oh my God!” are probably the most overused words here amongst us hundreds of tourists. It is actually hilarious to see how those 3 words can mean so many different things to express amazement, shock, happiness, disbelief, total awe, peacefulness and so much more!! Switzerland is absolutely, absolutely breathtaking and all the pictures I have seen of this heavenly place simply do not do it justice.

One thing I have learned from a trip like this is no matter how much progress we make in science and technology, we can never ever recapture what Allah swt has created. Not in words and sculptures, not in pictures or paintings, not in song and poetry or in music. The human eye can pick out the nuances of a scene and give it a 3D view that no picture can ever capture. Even Disney with 4D cannot adequately recapture the sounds, scents, breeze and sheer euphoric sense of incredible heights that one feels when one is actually here.

I have stood at the top of Europe on the highest peak in Switzerland and taken hundreds of pictures and yet not one could do justice to the changing scenery in front of me. Sitting in trains, one cannot look away for a moment as each scene gives way to breathtaking views. My fingers are constantly on my digital camera click button but I still cannot keep up with how fast the scenes are changing in front of me. The scenes move so fast that waiting for a flash to pop up actually causes a delay!!

A journey like this makes u think of God no matter how much of an atheist you may be. You just cannot accept that all this beauty was a random occurrence from a Big Bang. No way. It defies logic. Some One put in a great deal of thinking and planning to put this awesome beauty together—it just couldn’t have come together perfectly like this on its own. It is simply, totally, absolutely INCREDIBLE. I think I may have done countless tasbeehs of subhanallah without realizing—in various ways. To be in awe of God, to say “wow” to sights, to click pictures of what God has created, to reflect and to glorify God in different ways is doing dhikr Allah. This has truly been a spiritual journey.

The weather has been simply glorious. It is Oct 7 2012 today and in the week that we have been through Paris, France and Switzerland we have only had sunny skies and mild, warm weather! We actually had to pack away our coats and jackets. Just layering some thermals under our clothes was sufficient—even during nighttime strolls! Truly this glorious weather has been the blessing of Allah swt as it has made the sightseeing simply spectacular. Today, the rain and clouds as we zoom through the mountains add a romantic, dreamy, misty and panoramic backdrop to our journey.

Times like this, I truly regret not knowing how to paint or draw. Allah swt has blessed me with so many creative talents and it helps me to express what I see around me and feel and dream and wish, but I often feel this huge roadblock in my expression when I cannot pick up a paintbrush and simply paint. I truly doubt such a talent can be cultivated (trust me, even my stick figures are not proportional or even convincing lol) someday, I will take a painting course and maybe Allah swt will miraculously bless me with the ability to draw. Then I will inshallah come back to these mountains and attempt to express the splendour I see around me. I also want to take a

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photography course and come back with a super expensive camera with huge wide lenses and panoramic picture ability.

Today, the fall colours have suddenly emerged!! This has given us a new way of seeing this amazing country. There are tall pine trees with vivid colours of red, fluorescent green, purple, orange. The grass is shocking green, there are brown cows (splashed with white gestalt-type designs) with loud, clanging bells on their necks grazing and in the short distance there are imposing mountains with snowcapped edges; waterfalls flow to the bottom as glaciers melt at the top. It is a yummy scene, as if the chocolate-tinged mountains are topped with creamy ice cream and garnished with sweet white icing!! Wish I was a giant and could lick these giant ice cream waffle cones!!!!

Forgive me if my grammar, metaphors and similes don't add up! I don't have time to spell check, recheck or even reread what I am writing. My words are spilling over just as quickly as the scenery is changing around me. The rain is falling more rapidly but in a gentle, almost rhythmic fashion. Yet everything is clearly visible and sharp. It's a seeming contradiction that can only be understood once you experience this magnificence. Seeing, my friends, is truly believing.

I write this urgently, at the risk of missing all this wonder because I know if I wait until later, there is no way I can conjure up these sights from memory. There is just too much to take in to remember it all.

The top of these high mountains peak out of fluffy clouds that actually look like how half-eaten white cotton candy reluctantly wraps itself around the paper cone. There are bursts of colour in the form of colourful red, white, blue green and yellow houses (is that the evil witch's candy house from Hansel and Gretel??) trains zipping by (painted shockingly bright red, green, yellow) and vividly coloured flower gardens with flowers that almost seem to defy the grey surroundings with their loud sprouting blossoms of colour. The lake today is an incredible turquoise colour!! How is that even possible on a cloudy day? Is it the algae and underwater foliage coming through the water? Or is the green colour of the trees growing on the mountains reflecting off the water? There is no way my camera can capture the subtlety of the essence of this colour—but it definitely is turquoise. I have only seen this hue in the water in the Keys off Florida—but that too only happened during a specific tropical type of weather at a certain time of the year.

What an incredible world Allah swt has made. Seeing the majestic mountains and the overflowing beauty here makes me imagine the Great Allah swt having made this almost nonchalantly in a burst of creative Divine Inspiration. Apparently mountains have been created by ripples on the earth's surface when tectonic plates shifted millions of years ago (must remember to check up on this fact) and when I glance down at the creases of my coat as it bunches up over my elbow and shoulders I get a sense of how truly Great God is. For Him it is a mere ripple on the earth's surface, for us it leaves us gaping up in sheer awe and amazement. I can imagine God easily moving things around, placing a wild water rapids right there, a skinny waterfall just so, a thousand acres of trees over there and a splash of snow like icing on a beautiful cake. The plateaus at the top of the mountain create such a tableau of scenery that it

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defies description. One just cannot say enough about what is in front of them—even describing one small area caught by the glance of the eye is impossible to give justice to.

Trying to understand mountains as pegs that hold the earth down, as mentioned in the Holy Quran, it makes one realize that this must surely be one impossibly vast earth created by an unimaginably Great God. How easily we say “Allaho Akbar” and how much those words convey....

As I look at the clear pools of water at the base of these mountains I am struck by the beauty of these lakes of varied cool depth, deep colour and speed of white water rapids. Such incredible beauty has resulted simply by the melting of tips of glaciers at the top of the mountains. There still remains a huge, enormous quantity of snow and ice at the top and yet water continues to fall in gigantic waterfalls and deep pools of water collect at the bottom. Cruise ships sail on these melted glacier waters. I see this magnificence and cannot help but reflect upon the greats of this world who remain towering above us all, much like these mountains, in brilliance, piety and knowledge. How great must the Ahlul Bayt a.s be that even those who have received just a drop of their knowledge have been able to enlighten, inspire and write volumes of books and leave incredible legacies. The millions who have come into this world over time and are famous and legendary in knowledge in their own place in history are like the deep lakes of melted glaciers--still just minute reflections of the ultimate source of all. Subhanallah, how blessed are we to be of their lovers and followers...

Mohsin and I are completely surrounded by tourists of every nationality imaginable. The conversations we hear around us fill us with sheer awe—we actually cannot discern what some of these languages are. We have heard Cantonese, Japanese, Peshto, Urdu, Hindi, Gujarati, Malyalam, German, French, Italian, Portuguese and then many others that we cannot figure out. Subhanallah what an incredible world He has created!!! How did early man make up these words that became languages? How did we all communicate with each other over the cultures and continents in the ancient eras?

After being immersed in such a cacophony of languages and being inundated with indecipherable German and French signs, we feel almost homesick for the sound of English—any kind of English, even if broken and accented!! The American or Canadian accent makes our ears perk up and we gravitate towards those people as if they are lost family members!! We see many women in hijab (it is almost the only way to ascertain if the couple beside us is Muslim as Middle Eastern men and women can easily pass for French or Swiss folk) but if they don't speak English, all we can say is a delighted “assalam alaikum” and then to look ruefully and longingly at them!!!

I look through newspapers and long to understand what they mean and the 100 or so tv channels we have access to in each hotel room are all in various languages—except CNN. The news channel, therefore, is our default channel and like it or not, we can tell you all about the analysis of the presidential debates, the corruption in Guinea and shootings and bombings in every corner of the world. Do these hotels think we North Americans on vacation crave the news THIS badly??

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There are hundreds of movies on the channels and the latest Hollywood movies are playing in the theatres. What planet have I been living on?? I never knew Indiana Jones could speak such great German or that Jennifer Aniston speaks fluent French!! Sandra Bullock's Italian is to die for and George Clooney speaks amazing French too! Wow!

Washrooms on the train are an interesting experience to write home about lol. Entering an unbelievably cramped "toilet" with the vibrating sound of the zooming train thundering under one's feet and a window showing fast moving scenes instantly took me back to my 6 year old self when my father took mom and all of us 5 children on a train trip across Pakistan and India. I remember being able to see the moving ground and tracks under the train through the hole in the toilet bowl and being jostled around in the tiny space. During the nights we children would settle on the berths above the seats and my sister would play her teeny tiny transistor radio and entertain all the passengers with the sounds of Bollywood oldies crackling through the weak radio waves. Wow, how courageous of him to attempt such a trip with so many children of various ages!! As we enter a tunnel and the washroom goes into total darkness. I am left filling up the water bottle in utter darkness and groping for the sink and feeling for the trickling water while waiting patiently for the tunnel (and claustrophobia) to pass. Despite the cramped quarters, it still feels great to have free access to the facilities as all train stations require payment to use the washroom (and they even have turnstiles to allow in only one person in at a time!!) Change is given but one needs the local currency—the wait, preplanning and suspense can make the trip a bit too exciting than it already is.

Travelling across Europe with my husband of 18 years has sure been an enlightening eye-opener as to how vital it is to select a life partner carefully and how imperative it is to be an easy-going person if you want your marriage to work.

Imam Jaffer Sadiq (a.s) has suggested that if one wants to truly test a friendship, one should travel with that person and what is marriage itself but an incredible journey that reveals layers of complexities in one's spouse over the years. . On a larger scale, life also is a journey with marriage simply being a partnership on that path together with a fellow traveller.

Interestingly within this journey of life in the journey of marriage, married life often sees us taking many, many smaller journeys (for various reasons) over the course of a lifetime together. This journey into Europe has been one such adventure.

Having a vacation together like this, after knowing each other for so long has been so very wonderful. It has actually made me so grateful to us as a couple for sticking it out together for all these years because we are truly able to now reap the rewards of a long marriage. If this had been our honeymoon 18 years ago I doubt we could have enjoyed each others' company so completely. Now that I understand my husband's nature I misunderstand his actions less and know what to anticipate from him in various situations, mishaps and overwhelming moments. Knowing him so well helps me to be able to conceal my reactions or frustrations and to use what I know of him to calm him down, give him space or to bring out the ideas that I know are within him. No longer a new bride, I can let him know when I am hungry, express my wish to visit a certain sightseeing attraction or to ask him to buy me something. He, in turn, knows how long it will take me to dress and knows that I do not travel light.

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These issues are no longer points of contention or shocking revelation. They are simply facts that we have accepted and learned to resignedly smile through or to adjust with. They endear us to each other and have become points of good-natured teasing or mock-bickering. Sometimes all we have to do is shake our head at each other in total resignation and an entire history of past arguments and conflict resolutions goes through our minds in one rapid, amusing moment down memory lane.

I can see that we are enjoying a more deeper sense of companionship that can only come after spending all kinds of thick and thin together. Holding hands is so much more precious because we know how rare a moment we get to be alone. Our eyes twinkle in glee when we talk because we know there won't be a child interrupting us mid-sentence to urgently tell us they are hungry, bored, looking for their gym shorts or for an errant school text book. When we smile at each other there is a familiar bond, a shared history and we both know that we ache for the same difficulties and delight in the same joys of our shared existence.

We often choose a life companion based on how physically attractive they are. And while looks are important and it can be wonderful to have a drop-dead gorgeous spouse holding one's hand, in the bigger scheme of things, I see now, that this doesn't make the journeys we take as spouses together any smoother. For at the end of the day, the partnership of marriage is about how two people can work together to face the challenges of life together and to make them surmountable for each other and easier to cross. A gorgeous spouse may be great to look at but life is so much more than that, isn't it? It is truly the qualities that one's life companion has, which stem from faith based values and beliefs that make negotiation, decision making, planning and navigating the turns of life easier. And it is this that makes all the difference.

When I look back at the hundreds of mundane grocery trips we have taken together and the countless shopping excursions for winter coats or back to school clothes we have made, what has helped us as a couple was not how physically attracted we are to each other, but rather what qualities we each have that make the mundane tasks of life easier. Not even level of education, place of residence or type of family members help in the mundane day to day things one has to do in married life. So many people look for a spouse with the right height or petite figure and totally miss the entire larger picture of what is needed in a companion in the journey of life.

Having a spouse who values peace, forgiveness, acceptance, tolerance, kindness and generosity as taught by our Holy Messenger (s.a.w) are truly what make small things such as sharing just one plate of food together, giving up the warmer blanket or second pillow, going to an art exhibition one is not particularly interested in or even unfairly accepting blame for a missed train or show that much more bearable.

As our travels take us from London to Paris, then on to Switzerland and beyond to Venice, Italy, I have found myself watching my husband and also reflecting upon us as a couple. I realize that when one selects a spouse who shares the same precious values, then the other things that can be potential "deal breakers" can truly be surmounted by simply taking things in stride.

All of us have strong likes and dislikes but it IS possible to overlook these or to swallow one's anger because there are greater gifts to treasure and because one values the preservation of the marriage itself.

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And travelling as a married couple reveals much about us to each other about how sincere, caring and (in) sensitive to each others' needs we can be!

I marvel at my husband's ability to chart our routes through complicated rail and bus networks, book us for hotels, plan our sightseeing itineraries and handle foreign currency and mathematical calculations. His confidence in taking us through strange and unknown lands amidst foreign-speaking people has really impressed me. Even after knowing him so long, I am still impressed with his courage and sense of adventure and his acute sense of direction that enables him to figure out the Qibla no matter where we are! The compass always confirms his hypothesis!!

In this we truly complement each other for I cannot fathom maps and they truly exhaust my brain and ironically confuse me. I was always dismal in Geography and still cannot remember the names of countries and their capitals. So every trip we make finds my husband relishing his cool status as my resident professor and he revels in whipping out maps and showing me the world as we traverse it. This makes it all suddenly very clear and finally understandable for me. Our trips are always wonderful times where we share whatever we know about a nation, its people and its past. We philosophically discuss history, share cultural and anthropological knowledge and are forever linking it all to human Psychology or to the principles of Islam.

Definitely, having an educated spouse makes this all possible but I remember how wordly my father was even though he never studied past grade 10. He loved to travel and would entertain us with historical facts about kings and emperors and explain complicated political things to us children. In a party, people would inevitably gather around him and he could discuss religion, politics, economy, life insurance etc and tell jokes too! Many have knowledge without ever being educated simply because they have a thirst and curiosity for the world around them. When choosing a spouse it is important to look beyond the person's limitations and focus on their potential and their interests.

It is at times like this that I am so very thankful to Allah swt for pairing me up with my husband and to Mohsin's cousin Ruwaida Vakil for having the keen sense to pair us up. My marhoom father was totally correct when he encouraged me to accept Mohsin's proposal despite my hesitation to commit (to any man).

Travelling with a companion entails planning the direction of the journey, organizing crucial details together, often carrying each others' load, walking great distances, deciding on when to eat and what to eat, negotiating how much to spend, where to linger a while longer and often dealing with the disappointment of missing opportunities, irritation at getting lost and regrets at the paths not taken.

This trip has not only brought us closer but reminded both of us how important it is to work as a team. We have not left each other's side for a minute and have truly complemented each others' strengths and known how to circumvent the weaknesses in our natures. In the journey of life we are all leaders of our destiny but one also has to know when to let the other lead. Being an easy-going partner, I was able to let Mohsin hold the reins and this allowed him to truly take charge and navigate efficiently. When I did express my preferences, he knew it meant a lot to me and therefore he did everything to accommodate those things. Knowing I would not complain or

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blame and that I accept his many quirks and ways of doing things truly relaxed him and kept our trip virtually argument free.

Islam has given us a division of labour especially to allow for a smooth journey and if the participants allow it, the theory when put into practice can truly be a wonder to behold!

It was truly a revelation for me. I realized that my style of not worrying and just leaving things to Allah swt is valuable for our marriage. I did what I was good at in terms of packing, planning meal times and picnics etc and just being a very accepting and appreciative person for whatever we saw, ate or did. Being a joyful, delighted tourist made it that much more wonderful for my guide to spend his hard-earned money to impress me. At one point Mohsin even said, “thank God I am not travelling with a wife like such-and-such’s wife or with a woman like such-and-such. She would have been angry or totally unwilling to be so flexible.”

Our trip has been a total adventure, especially because I have been so willing to be flexible. No doubt I was concerned but I knew Allah swt would not leave us without a place to sleep or without food to eat. So, like true nomadic travellers we went through each city, village and town without any idea of what was ahead. Mohsin booked hotels via internet the night before, we simply looked at maps and went where the road took us and we visited the sights fellow travellers recommended to us.

Sometimes we stayed at extremely threadbare hotels with teeny rooms and squeaky taps and worn out carpets. Other times we stayed at 5 star hotels overlooking the Alps!! Often we eat just cheese, crackers and fruits throughout the day and at other times we ate at fancy, shmancy hotels with black tie dress codes. We took it all in stride and enjoyed every little and large experience.

And what a gloriously eventful, colourful and fantastic adventure it has been!! We positively are eligible to be crowned the new Mr and Mrs Ibn Battuta!!! There is so much to share, so much to speak of and so much to show!! Every moment has been so very, very beautiful.

Throughout our journey, I have found myself praising God, praising His creations, thanking Him for life, thanking him for giving me a life partner to see the world with and just being totally grateful for whatever I set my eyes on. Travelling really does that to you. I don’t think a depressed person could see the Swiss Alps and remain depressed. There is just something about the awesome glory of it all that shakes your very inner core.

Much of our trip entailed my following Mohsin as we ran through train stations to chase the next train. Both of us wheeled suitcases and walked and walked and walked. We must have easily walked over 20 miles over the past week (and no, we haven’t lost the corresponding 20 pounds as we have been eating Swiss cheese and chocolates!!) Again and again our journey made me think of the journey of life.

Here we were, desperately holding on to each other as we navigated our way through the ups and downs of life. Sometimes just the sight of Mohsin’s baseball cap amidst hundreds of people was the only thing that gave me hope. He was my guide, my friend, my companion. I could not lose him. I did not bother to carry money, passports or even a map. Yet I felt safe as he was with me. He, in turn, felt more confident having me by his side. He knew where to go but having me there

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encouraging him, supporting him and just simply being beside him gave him an added sense of strength and courage. Having a familiar person to be lost with gives one a sense of reassurance. After all, misery does love company. LOL

In this journey, as in the journey of life, there were ups and downs. Times of great abundance, and times of belt-tightening. And yet it was possible to get through with just a tiny space to sleep in or very little food for a day. For tomorrow would bring perhaps more food, more ease, more delights. We cherished broken plastic forks and spoons and used makeshift pieces of paper and cardboard to stand in for plates. Sometimes we used our fingers to scoop out things, or made spoons out of yogurt foil covers. We made small pieces of food last longer and sipped water carefully (water costs 7 euros in some places LOL) And at other times we sat in fancy hotels where the maître d would actually put the napkin on our laps and practically feed us with his own hands LOL.

Life, too, has such moments. You take the good, endure the bad and deal patiently with the ugly. You can't despair for that just makes you hungrier or more miserable. You ride out the bad times and you don't let go of your companion even if they caused the boat to sway. You realize this too shall pass, and your companion will one day be your best friend who will have more shared history with you than even your own family members.

My thoughts went out to my mother in law Batulbanu Dhala whose husband unexpectedly passed away while they awaited a train at a train station in London. I realized a deeper sense of what it must have felt like for her to find herself totally alone in a new land, totally helpless and afraid with the added fears of the looming future compounding her utter sadness.

In the journey of life one can never know how long a companion will remain with them. Thus it is important to cherish them, keep them always within sight and especially in one's heart and to realize how precious it is to have a companion on this unpredictable path. One must make the moments together as positive as possible for this is all we have. And when one of us messes up, disappoints or plain frustrates us, it is important to be cheerful, forgiving and pragmatic for this makes the journey easier for all of us. The companion is precious and the companionship can end anytime. The couple must learn to accentuate the strengths and overlook the weaknesses or the journey will never be easy.

Armed with maps and with a deep sense of urgency to find the treasures that awaited us, we forged ahead despite aching feet, tired eyes and overheated bodies. We asked fellow travellers, rechecked with other fellow travellers, consulted maps and often retraced our steps. The destination was worth the effort and we would do whatever it took to get there. We were almost propelled forward to keep going, keep going. There was no choice to stop and this was what we had come for wasn't it? And so we enjoyed the journey even if it gave us blisters on our feet. The destination was the gold at the end of the long, never-ending rainbow.

I found myself often thinking of those who have searched the path of Islam and of the Ahlul Bayt a.s They moved forward just as relentlessly for they knew there was a truth to be found. And they did not tire and did not falter despite hitting road blocks, discouraging words or confusing information

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

On this journey of life, may our feet never falter or tire. May we always keep our destination forever in our vision. And let us not leave anyone behind. Especially those who have made the commitment to walk beside us.

[Oct, 6, 2015; 34 likes]

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences



Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences



Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

97. Subhanallah the people we meet in our everyday lives are truly placed there to teach us about how to be the best that a human being can be.

It's been a stressful day as I am preparing my Muharram lectures and am to fly in one day (first stop will be London to complete a hectic schedule of filming for a week at Ahlulbayt TV studios)

So I decided to pick up something to eat at my favourite local halal restaurant. I was feeling guilty about spending money and treating myself this way when a voice beside me said,

"Zakira Shyrose. Would you allow me the honour to treat you to that lunch please?"

I looked up in complete surprise. It was a respected uncle from the community whom I know well as a dear family friend of my parents but haven't seen in at least 15 years.

I told him his gesture had filled my heart with so much joy that I had to say yes. It just felt so wonderful to be pampered even though I had my own money in my hand to pay.

The uncle turned to the cashier and said to her in explanation

"She is a very special person. She deserves the best"

I was overcome with emotion. I told him I was leaving in one day for Sweden to recite majlis for Muharram and he had truly made a Zakira of Imam Hussein very very happy as she leaves her hometown.

He answered,

"And I am leaving in a few days for ziyarat of Imam Hussein a.s for Ashura"

I held up my hands in Dua and said "Ziyarat Kabool uncle. Labayk Ya Hussein "

And as I walked away with my tray of food I thought to myself that this uncle who had named his business after the Panjatan ("Five ways Insurance") had truly been blessed by the Ahlulbayt a.s

Uncle Mahmood Jaffer, nawhakhwaan of the Ahlulbayt a.s, I feel as if your ziyarat has already been accepted.

Our good deeds and sincere actions to please Allah swt, to be good role models, to truly live Islam and to make his believers happy is surely the way to enter heaven and to do LABAYK, and to truly answer the call of our Imam a.s

"Is there anyone to assist me?!"

[Oct, 5, 2015; 78 likes]

98. While in Iran recently, I had the honour of being interviewed by award winning journalists and TV documentary makers husband-wife team Syed Mohtashim Ali Naqvi and Maryam Joumaa.

The two graduate students (who met and married while studying Film in Tehran University in Iran) are truly a very relentless, tenacious and hard-working duo who made sure they got their video interview footage with me no matter how long they had to set up their equipment and wait at my hotel lobby whilst I went to the haram, did shopping and went sightseeing!!

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

Now that kind of perseverance is a recipe for success for sure Inshallah!!

It is no wonder that their one hour English/Farsi documentary film (using footage with interviews on the streets and allowing local citizens to voice their opinions on Iran, the sanctions, struggles with poverty, Nuclear arms etc) went so famous in Iran that it got a Special Award by then President Ahmadinejad himself.

The film also won Best Documentary of the Year Award at the prestigious Ammar Public Film Festival honouring veteran filmmakers in Iran.

The film has been viewed over 200,000 times and has garnered 1000 likes on YouTube and can be viewed at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3kWz7U8vYU>

Currently working on special projects for Hadi TV, the two have teamed up with motion graphics designer Syed Zoraiz Ali to create 313 Group Productions with a vision of making revolutionary, animated programming using Islamic literature from top Iranian scholars in Iran and especially gearing for English speaking and Western audiences.

Originally an aerospace engineering student (from Pakistan) and studying at the prestigious Sharif Engineering University, (the MIT equivalent in Iran), Syed Mohtasham found himself feeling drawn to filmmaking and noticed a need for high quality Shia media (especially with the use of state-of-the-art animation). He met his wife (Lebanon born Maryam) at the University of Tehran, (surprising his family in Pakistan by dramatically changing careers and getting married) and the two are now well on their way, set to change history!! Ameen!

The two already have a 2 and a half yr old son, are in graduate school and working on film projects day and night. Subhanallah what an inspiration!!!

My heartfelt duas for infinite success for these sincere servants of the Ahlulbayt (a.s). I shiver imagining how great their achievements could be with just a little bit of money and an opportunity to work on great projects. Allah swt is Great and I have a wonderful feeling great things are ahead for them inshallah

Please do take a moment to watch some of their 5 minute animated video clips for Hadi Media and to give your feedback and support to them on www.hadimedia.tv

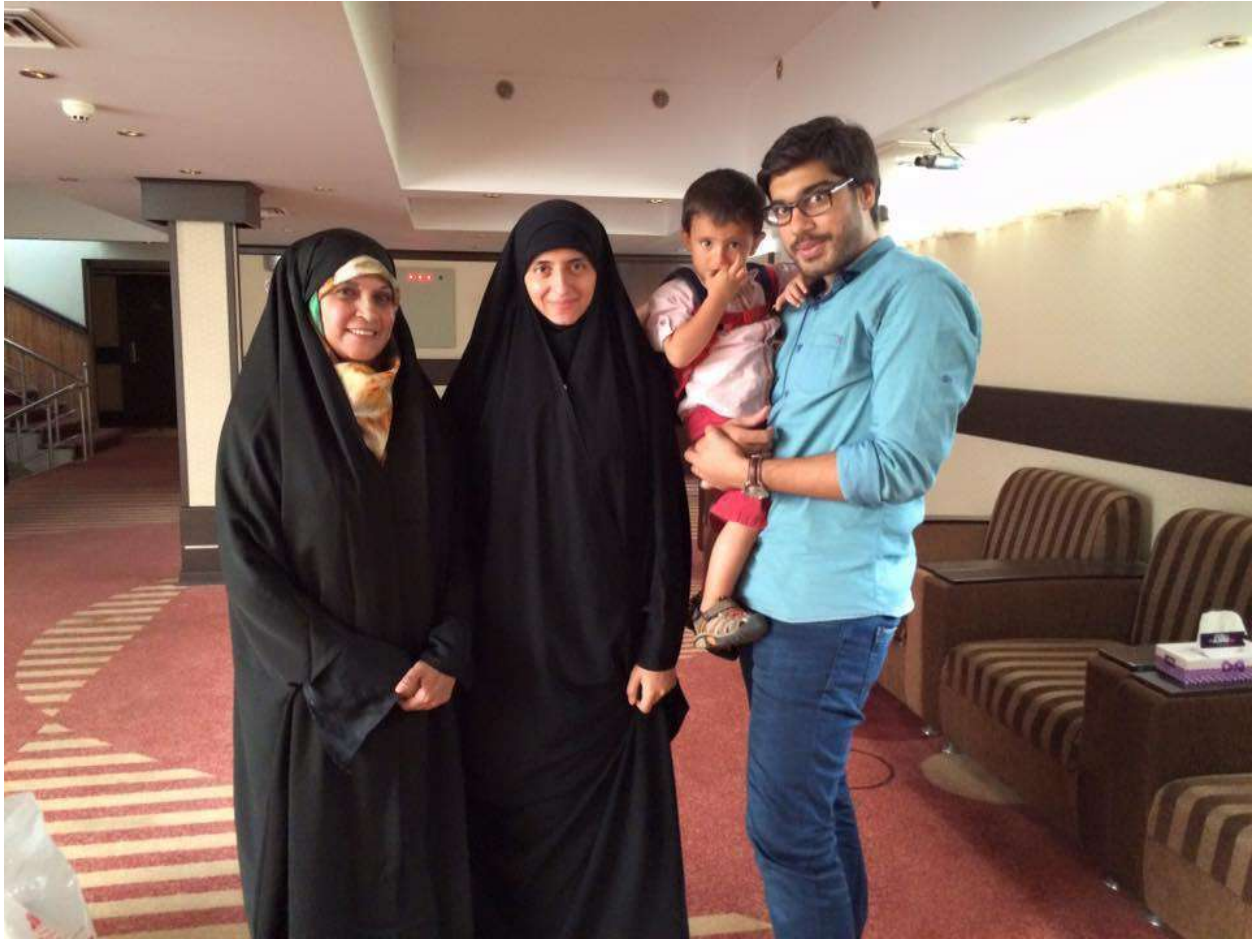
These short clips are PERFECT for teaching ahkam for English-speaking Madressa students) on "Types of Najasat" and "Purifying Najasat" (*based on the rulings of Agha Syed Sistani) and the content goes well beyond what the Madressa curriculum usually covers.

However, the information is presented in such a smooth, visually pleasing and easy-to-understand way that it doesn't feel complicated at all.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9q414Wk8qSQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loEEoqc-AcM>

[Oct, 5, 2015; 192 likes]



99. Jazakallah Khair Ahlulbayt TV for one of the best Gala events you've ever organized. The Toronto community and people around the world were truly inspired by this year's Award of Excellence winners, generous donations, keynote speakers Sh. Usama Al Attar And sis Najjah Bazzy, beautiful video clips from the channel and Nasheed by London's Hussein Virji. The event was attended by 460+ attendees and MashAllah MC Hussein Sajjad Hussein did a fine job keeping the program running efficiently. The Toronto crew lead by Sukeina Bhimji and Mohamed Bhimji was truly efficient and organized.

A big thank you to Toronto's Jaffari Islamic Centre's Executive committee led by President Shabbir Jeraj, Ladies Committee and volunteers (led by my elder sister Chairlady Shabnees Siwjee) and Mukhi and Director of Operations Mehboob Siwjee (my sister's Shabneez's husband) and his JIC volunteer corps.

We pray that this channel, dedicated to spreading the message of the Ahlulbayt a.s will be infinitely successful and that all of us will have an opportunity to be part of the Sawab of bringing the "Holy household to every Household" ameen

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

[Oct, 4, 2015; 128 likes]

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences



Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences



100. My brothers and sisters, with your duas--what an amazing birthday and Eid it was for me this year!! A true blessing (and hat-trick lol) for it to occur on the blessed day of Arafat and on the auspicious night of Eid!!

Your loving birthday wishes, sincere duas and Eid greetings overflowed on my facebook pages, private inbox, emails and Whatsapp.

I spent the day receiving bouquets of roses, cakes, gifts, phone calls from overseas, deliveries of home-made cooking and treats to my favourite restaurants with my family and a candlelight dinner with my husband 😊.

I felt so loved and so happy and I knew it was your Duas and love that had made it such a perfect, beautiful memorable moment in my life.

Please do forgive me for not replying and acknowledging your hundreds of messages. I was so excited to do so but then the news of the terrible tragedy in Mecca came....

And I literally ended up curled up and crying in my bed for the rest of Eid day.

It took me the better part of 3 days to recover from this deep depression. I was truly, completely filled with deep sadness.

Not only grieving but also consumed with guilt for being so happy and lost in festivities while innocent people had lost their lives so so tragically.

I remembered the tragedies being faced by the Syrians, Iraqis and by people of almost every single nation of the world.

It took me a lot of reflection to also realize (among many other things which I will also address in another post) that this tragedy, with all its sadness, has given us all a valuable gift from the Almighty swt.

It has opened our eyes to the fact that whenever we are in any kind of joyfulness, someone in another part of the world may be in deep grief.

And that a true Muslim, even while rejoicing, always remains cognizant of the fact that the world is not only about themselves.

This Eid day was a true lesson to practically put into effect the words of our Holy Prophet (saww)

"The Muslims are like a body, if one part of the body hurts, the rest of the body will also suffer."

No matter how much we may have tried to avoid the terrible news, our hearts still felt so so heavy.

And that was a very reassuring thing to experience.

It helped us to realize we DO have a heart. That our hearts CAN mourn for others even if we do not know them.

It has helped us realize that, Alhamdulillah, we are capable of feeling concern for others and that we are united in our collective grief and concern.

It has helped our voices to suddenly start articulating our sadness and our anger and our confusion , and for our handwritten words to flow onto our Fb and Twitter posts.

It has galvanized us into action and has given us the courage to ask some very bold questions and to demand for action!!

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

And that is an amazing silver lining, indeed, in this dark cloud of grief.

23 years ago my own father (at the age of 56) passed away suddenly, just a day before Eid ul Adha. And despite feeling utter grief, our entire family dressed well, attended Eid prayers and said "Eid Mubarak" with a smile.

Why?

Because these are blessed moments of BARAKAH gifted to us from the Almighty Allah swt. The heavens open up with mercy and blessings.

No matter what we are facing, no matter what tragedy the world is going through, some auspicious days are set aside by Allah swt to rejoice in.

And the heavens too are in a state of festivity.

And there is always hope for those left alive and there is always something for us to be thankful for and to say "shukranlillah"

And those who pass away on such blessed days, no matter how tragically so....they open their eyes to a scene of rejoicing and joyful welcome by the billions and billions of angels into the heavens. There is no longer any pain, any sadness, any regret at leaving the world behind

Thank you Allah swt for the joys and yes, also for the tests and the tragedies.

For You, in your Infinite Wisdom know what urgent lessons we need to learn, even in the midst of the days set aside for JOY by You.

Eid Mubarak my dear brothers and sisters. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your birthday wishes.

And please let us recite a sura Fateha again and again for all our brothers and sisters who returned to Allah swt on such a blessed day, while engaged in such a blessed act.

“And he who gets out of his house migrating toward Allah and His Messenger and then death overtakes him, his reward is indeed with Allah.”

Thank you Allah swt for being So Merciful, So Compassionate, So Generous.

It gives us much solace to know that the dearly departed are receiving their rewards from He who rewards most completely.

Alhamdulillah Rabil Alameen

[Sep, 29, 2015; 240 likes]



101. 23 years ago today, we received a phone call from Dubai in the middle of the night, on the Shahadat of Hazrat Muslim Ibne Aqeel (a.s)...

Our dear father, at the age of only 56 yrs, had passed away in his sleep while on a business trip via Dubai on his way to Dar es Salaam.

Life was never the same after that fateful day. And I still find myself eagerly planning to go home to hug him or to tell him some special news or to ask his advice about something.

Only to realize daddy is not there...

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

2 weeks ago, on my way home from Iran, I stopped in Dubai for two days just to visit daddy at his grave.

As soon as the plane touched down I felt a certain peace. I had come home to daddy.

My dear childhood friend Sukaina Jaffer drove me to the graveyard and as we walked to the grave in the blazing desert heat through the dusty, sandy kabrastan I felt a huge wave of emotions.

So this is what life is, eh? You sacrifice your life for your family, you work hard to earn a living, you stay a few days on earth and then you are laid to rest in a dusty far away corner of the earth.

People pass by your grave, reflect a little and say a little prayer. Your family and friends come by once in a while.

But at the end of the day you are completely alone. With your Lord.

The true relationship was never with these people that you gave your blood, tears, sweat and toil for. For they may remember you occasionally.

The true relationship was and will always be with your Lord. For it is to Him that you return.

And it hit me then with a true realization that my dear father truly had kept that relationship with his Lord as THE most strongest thing in his life.

He was a very moral and ethical man and had left not one salaah or fast pending to his Lord. He had faithfully been a great husband and ensured we all had a beautiful home, the best car and clothes and electronics and the best education and birthdays and weddings.

As a man, he had fulfilled all his obligations towards his wife and family. And had

pleased His Lord in every way possible.

Allah swt didn't give him enough time on this earth to complete his business dealings so there were some business issues to tie up. But he never, ever, ever planned on cheating anyone.

He just ran out of time. And we children have done what is possible to tie up those loose ends.

But it is with the firm knowledge that he was never ever a cheat or a liar or a conman. He was a businessman who passed away suddenly in the middle of completing business transactions.

And to know that my father was an ethical, honest and moral man is the biggest gift he gave to us and the most happiest thing for me and a great source of pride and inner peace.

In that graveyard I felt that truth like a moment of epiphany. My father was a true momin if I have ever met one.

I put my hands on my dear father's grave. I caressed it and wiped the sand off of it. And I wished I had caressed his forehead more when he was alive.

I kissed the grave and I wished I had kissed my father more when he was alive.

I whispered to him at his grave and I wished I had taken the time to speak to him when he was alive.

I told him I loved him and I wished I had taken the time to tell him that more when he was alive.

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

Wow, how lost I was in my own life when I was 22 yrs old. There was only time for what was important for me. Even when he passed away, all I could think of was who would take care of my needs and my future milestones.

"Forgive me daddy," I cried. "I didn't know what a father was when I had you. I didn't understand what your loss meant until the years opened my eyes.

I didn't know what your presence, your wisdom, your gentleness and your complete concern meant until you were forever gone.

As the years go by I realize more and more that I didn't do anything for you when you were alive.

What does a father need from his children? Just a few acts of kindness that show to him that he is acknowledged, respected, cherished. Fathers don't need fancy gifts and showy packages. They just need us to smile at them and to genuinely show respect to them.

Daddy how often did I even warm up a plate of food for you? How often did I iron your shirt or meet you at the front door when you entered? When did I even sit with you and ask you about what your thoughts and dreams were? Did I even show any interest in the things that were your passion...

You left this world a simple man. With just a few shirts and items for us to put away. You asked not a thing from us. And we took that contentment of yours, when you were alive, for granted and didn't go out of our way to really give you anything.

I envy you daddy that you worked on your relationship with God so devotedly. You spent long hours on your musalla--always on time. You would raise your hands high in dua and pray and pray and pray.

Today that is all that is helping you daddy.

We love you and remember you in our prayers but we can't be at your grave every single day, nor can we pray as much as we could because we are all so busy with our lives.

I envy you that you took care of your own akhirat. You didn't depend on human relationships in your lifetime and you still don't need to depend on them after you have passed.

You are free from any need. For your focus was God and only God. And you fulfilled your obligations to all the roles in your life because of your commitment to God.

And for that the reward will come from Him and in the most generous of rewards ameen.

Daddy you are not forgotten in a dusty grave in the hot desert. Your deeds, your legacy and your example guides us and you live forever in the hearts because of that.

I envy you for the simple life you led. I truly admire you for being such a good human being in the short time that God gave you on this earth.

I promise you daddy that I will do everything possible to give dignity to your name that I still carry with mine and to make myself worthy to be called your daughter.

Rest in peace daddy. And thank you for giving us, who are left behind, the peace of knowing that you have pleased your Lord and did all that you did without ever losing sight of your final destination."

My dear brothers and sisters if possible please do recite sura fateha for my dear, precious daddy Marhum Habib Moledina Jaffer

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

[Sep, 22, 2015; 426 likes]



Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

102. Alhamdulillah an unforgettable moment, indeed, when I received my diploma for my short summer course in Qum by Dr Agha Mohamed Shomali.

Inshallah I pray I can enrol for a much longer course when my children have grown up.

So thankful Allah swt provided me with this opportunity and fulfilled a lifelong dream that I have held since I was 22 yrs old.

It has been an amazing summer at the Hawza Jamiyat Al Zahra and has been an incredible opportunity to be part of a small group taught by respected scholar and prolific author Dr Agha Mohammad Ali Shomali (former Deputy of Higher Education for foreign students at the Jamiyat Al Zahra (for girls) and current head of the Hawza and the Islamic Centre of England).

Other guest lecturers (over 12) included Agha Qanbari (head of al-Mustafa Open University) Agha Mualla, Agha Pakdeen, Agha Khoddam and many others.

The intense, high-level course was designed in the classic hawza tradition (and was based on the textbook written by Agha Shomali) and covered:

Mantiq (Logic), Usul al-Fiqh (Principles of Jurisprudence), Fiqh (Jurisprudence), Tafsir al-Qur'an (Qur'an Exegesis), 'Ilm al-Hadith (The Study of Traditions), Tarikh (History). Aqaid / Kalam (Theology), Falsafa (Islamic Philosophy) and 'Irfan (Islamic Mysticism)

Topics included the existence of God, free will/predestination, infallibility, intercession, stages of the hereafter, women in Islam, akhlaq, Islam and civilizations, social ethics, man and the environment, jihad, evolution, Nabuwa, Imamah and much much more.

I know many of you have written to ask how you too can enrol.

Please forward your inquiries directly to the knowledgeable administrators at the following institutions.

For information and to apply for the summer course (for both males and females) in Qum or in the UK visit:

<http://iiis.ir/>

For information and to apply for studies at Jamiat Al Zahra (for females) visit:

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<http://www.jz.ac.ir/>

For information and to apply for studies at Al Mustapha University (for males):

<http://en.miu.ac.ir/>

Jamia tuz Zahra

Tel +98 25 3211 2174

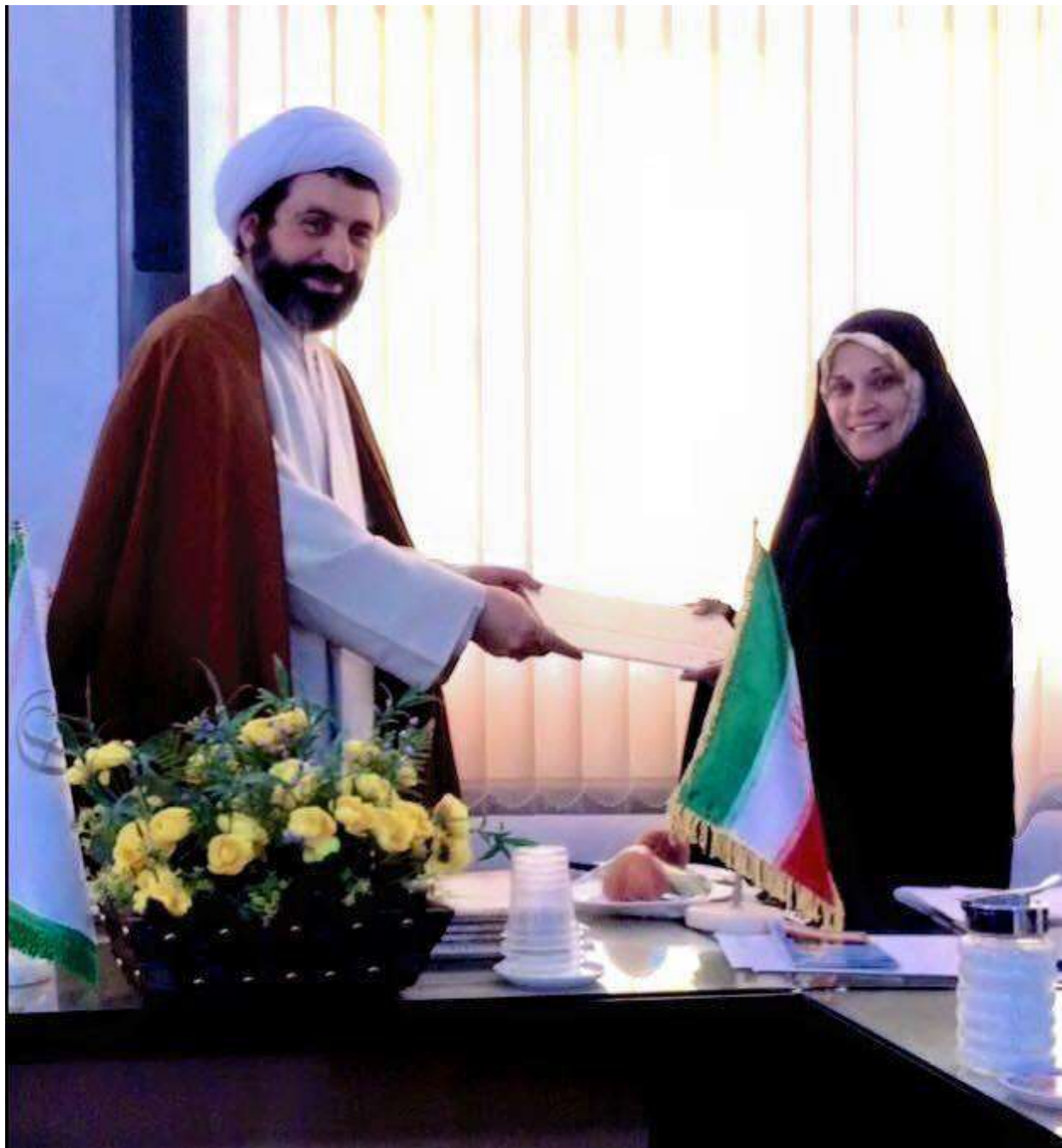
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[Sep, 17, 2015; 353 likes]



103. Someone recently liked my FB post from 2013 and reminded me how relevant the words I wrote still remain--especially after the alarming level of construction and recent tragedy in Mecca.

Hope you will take the time to read this once again...

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

As a world traveller, I have visited the ruins and museums of Turkey, old temples in India, the Taj Mahal, ancient churches and Notre Dame Basilica in Paris, Venice, the ancient Notre Dame Basilica in Montreal etc.

History truly becomes alive, precious and meaningful when we visit the structures of the past.

You get a sense of wonderment, a sense of awe at the visions and ambitions of ancient man.

You marvel at the design and architecture and strength of stone. You feel reverence for the great thinkers, philosophers, dreamers and leaders of the past.

You get inspired to learn more about these historical places and the people who stood there centuries ago.

You feel a connection to their ghosts--you want to ask them what they wish they could tell you as they reflect upon their own lives.

Imam Ali (a.s) in his famous letter 31 to his son Imam Hasan (a.s) expressly advises him to visit the ruins and structures of the past to understand the lessons of life from them.

Truly, the buildings and monuments of the past are precious for many reasons, whether they are religious structures or not.

Nations understand this and you often find buildings being designated as Protected Historic Landmarks--destroying, altering even modifying these structures are punishable and subject to huge fines by law, even imprisonment.

The famous (Khoja) Islamic Centre in London, (in Stanmore) was a hospital years ago. Today, the masjid people cannot make a single change to the structure (which they completely own) because it is a protected historic site (not because it is necessarily historically relevant but simply because it is so old!!!!)

I have seen dilapidated old sheds and schoolhouses being actually removed from a busy area (lifted carefully with Government cranes, funded with our precious tax dollars) so that they can be placed and preserved in a safe (less dusty) part of the city and restored!!!!

In such laws is the respect for the past. And a true acknowledgement of the legacy left behind by those before us.

Reading this article (link below) was an eye-opener and filled me with deep sadness.

And then, today, I saw LIVE footage on Ahlulbayt TV (with Rauf Shokoya) that the mountain where the Holy Prophet (saww) stood and called the people towards ISLAM AND ALLAH (SWT) has been destroyed!!! Construction is going on right now over there!!!

I am still shaking hours later after seeing that. It has given me courage (and I take it as a sign) to post this status (which I actually wrote yesterday but then took down because I worried I was not being cautious in my words).

What else has been destroyed? Here is a quote from the article below:

"Photographs obtained by The Independent reveal how workers with drills and mechanical diggers have started demolishing some Ottoman and Abbasid sections on the eastern side of the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca.

The building, which is also known as the Grand Mosque, is the holiest site in Islam because it contains the Kaaba – the point to which all Muslims face when praying. The columns are the last remaining sections of the mosque which date back more than a few hundred years and form the inner perimeter on the outskirts of the white marble floor surrounding the Kaaba.

The new photos, taken over the last few weeks, have caused alarm among archaeologists and come as Prince Charles – a long-term supporter of preserving architectural heritage – flew into Saudi Arabia yesterday for a visit with the Duchess of Cornwall. The timing of his tour has been criticised by human rights campaigners after the Saudis shot seven men in public earlier this week despite major concerns about their trial and the fact that some of the men were juveniles at the time of their alleged crimes.

Many of the Ottoman and Abbasid columns in Mecca were inscribed with intricate Arabic calligraphy marking the names of the Prophet Muhammad's companions and key moments in his life. One column which is believed to have been ripped down is supposed to mark the spot where Muslims believe Muhammad began his heavenly journey on a winged horse, which took him to Jerusalem and heaven in a single night.

To accommodate the ever increasing number of pilgrims heading to the twin holy cities of Mecca and Medina each year the Saudi authorities have embarked upon a massive expansion project."

And here is a quote from a letter I received from someone at Hajj right now:

"The famous Sakeefa has been replaced by a beautiful garden but many of the homes of Banu Hashem have been destroyed and replaced with toilets"

The Mecca our parents and grandparents saw is no more. Even the Mecca I saw as a 9 yr old little pilgrim is no more. Wish I had paid more attention when we went for Hajj years ago. I was only 9 yrs old. I thought I would be able to see things properly when I would one day return as an adult.....

What is most alarming is that it is the NON-Muslims are concerned that history is being destroyed! When someone like Prince Charles (who has much to lose) has the courage and concern to speak out against this (especially when people criticized him that he didn't speak out against murders), it makes the rest of us wonder what the fuss is about!

Do we have to be archeologists to care about these places being destroyed?

I fear we will one day wander the streets and wonder if anything ancient ever really existed in this Holy Land....

I long for the Medina and the Mecca that the poets have long gushed about. Those urdu sonnets and odes to the streets of Medina where the Holy Prophet (saww) once walked, those beautiful sentiments about touching the walls where he leaned again and smelling his fragrance as if he had just walked by..-

Ya Rasulah I recited those nasheeds hoping I would actually be able to see all those places I had read about and recited about!!!!

[Sep, 14, 2015; 43 likes]

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

I entered the Haram of Imam Raza (a.s) and began reciting the recommended Dhikr with each step.

As I entered the area to the holy burial chamber of Imam a.s my voice and Dhikr of "La ilaha ilallah" was suddenly accompanied with many other voices of people who were exiting the burial area.

I stopped in my tracks and suddenly came face to face with a coffin being carried on the shoulders of a procession of men.

The marhoom's body had just come from the blessing of performing a tawaf around the zareeh!!

The men placed the coffin on the ground. Then they opened it to reveal the shrouded marhoom. And the people opened a green cloth and spread it over the deceased. People did Fateha and did their last farewell.

And then they lifted the coffin up on their shoulders.

I stood in awe and silently marvelled at the incredible fortune of this deceased individual who had been able to visit imam (a.s) even after death and whose soul had this unusual opportunity to do this kind of a farewell Ziyaratul Wida.

I had arrived at the shrine alive doing Dhikr and the marhoom was departing the shrine doing the same Dhikr.

How closely related are life and death...

I prayed for the magfirat of this marhoom and then dedicated a fateha for all those who have been blessed with the honour of passing away during a ziyarat, umrah or Hajj to these blessed areas of heaven on earth.

What a fortune to be cleansed and then to depart in this fashion.

"Jaaney wala waha jaakey jaaye magar

Jaakey wapas na ayey to kya baat hay

Kamli waaley ki chowkhat pay sar ho mera

Aur mujay Mowt ayey to kya baat hay"

May Allah swt bless these fortunate souls with Jannah and truly grant their farewell wish to "not make this the last ziyarat to your shrine" and to allow their souls to circumambulate the holy Kaba and all of the holy shrines again and again till eternity

AMEEN

[Sep, 9, 2015; 109 likes]



105. Surprised my dorm mates this morning by making breakfast for them at the Hawza. It wasn't as easy as I thought it would be but alhamdulillah with the help of Allah swt and Bibi Masumeh Qum (a.s) I managed to cook 34 eggs!!!!

I had previously purchased the 3 dozen eggs, onions and tomatoes and kept them in the fridge. Was waiting for the right moment when the Matron (lovingly referred to as "maader" or mother) would be open to the idea of my cooking the breakfast.

Many of the UK participants left last night and I knew if I didn't grab the opportunity to make breakfast today then the group numbers would really get low.

Woke up early and discreetly began working to chop the onions and tomatoes and then to crack open 34 eggs (I had used up 2 eggs for shireen a few days ago)

The hard part was trying to turn on the huge gas stove. This is when I had to reveal to maader that I was making breakfast and needed her help to light the huge stove with a match stick.

Thank God she was not upset and took the news of me cooking with simply a serious expression and not anger (I knew better than to mess with a woman's kitchen but I just couldn't help myself!)

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

Stirring the pot was a huge task in itself. I asked myself where I get this crazy courage to do things like this and the answer came quickly to me: from my courageous mother.

Subhanallah it has been great to have a role model like mom who has never found any task daunting or impossible.

Just last night she told me on the phone that she had invited 30 people to her home and cooked a humongous pot of a dish which requires a lot of chopping of vegetables and pre-preparation (called "muthiya")

Mom truly is a very, very courageous lady indeed. May Allah swt bless her with continued strength ameen

I was praying throughout my cooking that people would enjoy the food and that nothing wouldn't be wasted. "Ya Bibi Masumeh, please help this be an effort blessed with barakah"

I thought of all the women who do food catering but for a living and did a silent prayer for them. So much time, effort and physical energy goes into even such a simple dish. And how often we compel these hard working women to lower their prices. Truly, they deserve even more for their hard work and effort to earn a halal rizk.

I then recited sura fateha for my marhoom father and father in law (and for all the marhumeen)

By 8 am the breakfast was ready!!!

Alhamdulillah, thanks to the Almighty, the scrambled omelette was a success and everyone was very appreciative of the gesture.

So wonderful to make memories!! Jamiyatuz Zahra, I will miss you with all my heart!!!!

[Sep, 1, 2015; 159 likes]

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences





105. It's been a wonderful experience to be living at the Jamiyat Al Zahra in Qum and to be learning under the supervision of 12 high level scholars (and published authors) including Agha Mohamed Shomali, Aga Mohades, Aga Jahangir, Aga Mualla, Agha Pakdeen, Agha Khoddam and many others.

Agha Mohamed Shomali is former principal of the Jamiyat Al Zahra (for girls) and we were also blessed to be taught by the current Principal of Jamia Mustapha (for boys).

Alhamdulillah I was given an opportunity to present and to share my teaching strategies with the class students (many of whom are veteran Madressa coordinators and experienced teachers themselves)

But THE best moment was when our class was held INSIDE the Harram of Imam Raza (a.s) in one of the lecture halls.

It was truly a special feeling to know that we were literally under the shelter of Imam Raza (a.s) and receiving knowledge as a gift from him which would be blessed and increased by his barakah inshallah.

May this knowledge benefit us and all of those who come into contact with us and become the cause of our intercession and salvation ameen

Zakira Shyrose

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Praying that Imam a.s calls me back soon to learn more and more in this blessed city of Bibi Masume e Qum (a.s) ameen

[Sep, 1, 2015; 76 likes]

Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences





106. Alhamdulillah had an incredible, once in a lifetime opportunity of being in the third row and watching and hearing the Supreme and Spiritual Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (former President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Leader of the Islamic Revolution as well as a Marja e taqleed) address an audience of us selected Delegates from around the world.

At the end of the speech, after passing through the crowds of male dignitaries, he walked past our receiving line and smiled kindly towards all of us ladies. It was so generous of him to glance towards us and to acknowledge us in this way. I was close enough to have reached out and touched him (but I didn't, of course).

His dignity, his knowledge and his high status was so very apparent and there truly was an aura about him that was both completely serene and yet so very electrifying and awe inspiring. It reminded me of how I have felt whenever in the presence of Syed Agha Sistani in Najaf.

It was truly amazing to watch how enthusiastically the crowd (mostly people from foreign countries) received him when he arrived and to hear all the lively slogans (original slogans chanted in different groups by men and women) and the poetry that was spontaneously recited loudly by audience members.

The poetry consisted of praise and allegiance for the Ahlulbayt a.s and the 12th imam (ajtfs) as well as for the courageous leaders of the nation.

Zakira Shyrose

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This lively welcome went on for a good 10 minutes and Ayatullah Khamenei turned slightly towards each poet (male and female) and listened patiently and attentively.

The atmosphere was a compellingly heart-pounding and immensely emotional experience and people were openly sobbing.

Wherever you turned, you could see both men and women (from UK, America, Canada, Australia, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iraq etc) with tears streaming down their faces and reciting Takbir and salawat. Many held up handwritten signs saying "Labayk Ya Khomeini" and one lady beside me held up a sign saying "Mexico loves you"

I have met a few Prime Ministers and high ranking politicians, senators, Governors etc both in Canada and America but have never witnessed so much adulation, love and outward show of respect for a leader such as this. It was fascinating to watch.

It was a very high security event and it took a very long time before we were able to enter the hall. We were physically frisked over 6 times and no one was allowed cell phones, purses, cameras etc

The locals told us that speeches by Agha are rare and it was a great blessing and a very huge opportunity for us to meet him in such a small gathering.

The audience members were all seated on the floor (except for those who couldn't due to physical ailments). The crowd consisted of:

- Members of the course by Resalat Institute at Jamiyat Al Zahra that I am currently enrolled for in Qum (25 people)
- approx 300 members of the Islamic Radio and Television Union (IRTVU)
- members of the Ahlul-Bayt World Assembly (approx 600 people)
- selected and invited mothers of Martyrs
- great scholars and important politicians

A short presentation was made for Agha by two representatives of the 2 main groups in the audience appraising him of what their conference had accomplished and the specific recommendations made by the Ahlulbayt Assembly World Forum and the Media Broadcasters.

The event was broadcast LIVE and I also had the opportunity of being interviewed by the local TV for 5 minutes (to appear with Farsi subtitles)

Subhanallah a few people in Iran texted me on the same day to tell me they had seen me on TV. Even one of the Jamia khadima who works in the kitchen came to tell me excitedly that she saw me on TV 😊.

(The speech and interviews were also broadcast and repeated several times that day and it seems the entire nation had tuned in to watch as his appearances are rare)

Here are the main points that I mentioned in my short interview:

- we feel very blessed to have had the opportunity to be guests of the Islamic Republic of Iran and are so very impressed by the level of sophistication, state of the art facilities and advanced technology in Mashad, Qum, Nishabour, Shiraz, Esfahan and across Iran.

Zakira Shyrose

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-it is truly an indication of how hard the leaders of this great nation have worked, with the help of Allah swt, to provide resources and to remain so advanced despite the difficulty of doing trade with other countries

-Mashallah all the roads are so clean and the city so well organized and the hospitality of the Irani people is unmatched by any other county.

-we pray for Iran and for our great leaders that Allah swt gives them continued success and a long life to continue to work and to also promote development and to also work hard to bring all the nations of the world together AMEEN

[Aug, 28, 2015; 176 likes]



107. Subhanallah!! Allah swt has truly blessed the Holy land of Imam Raza (a.s) with an abundance of colours, sights, scents and incredible natural beauty.

I have yet to eat a piece of any fruit here that is NOT overflowing with sweetness.

Zakira Shyrose

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And the variety of fresh fruit in the bazaars makes it seem as if all kind of fruits are in season at the same time!!

The vegetables are tasty and full of flavour and bright, strong colour.

The grapes are so sweet that they are almost too sweet to eat.

The dizzying array of nuts and dried fruits is just mind boggling!!! Shops are overflowing with every colour, texture and taste.

There are also shops carrying an amazing range of freshly ground powdered masalas of every type. There are so many types of just turmeric powder that I was completely astounded.

The shops are full of beautiful handmade Iranian handicrafts and silk Persian carpets.

And one can't help but be in complete awe of the classic and incredible Iranian architecture everywhere. The blue and white designs on the archways and doorways of mosques and holy shrines is simply spellbinding.

Shops selling attar (Middle Eastern fragrances made from oils of flowers, wood and roses) provide a dizzying range of colourful bottles of every size filled with a variety of scents.

And subhanallah there are colourful fragrant flowers of every type in every shrine, every roundabout, every hotel lobby and on all the streets and in gardens.

It's such a wonderful sight to behold!!

And fountains of sparkling, dancing water with coloured lights seem to be at every roundabout.

At night the city comes alive with blinking, colourful lights and families come out to shop. The roads are full of cars and motorbikes and the atmosphere is positively festive.

The cool breeze at night makes it truly feel heavenly and reminds one that this is a piece of heaven.

Everywhere you turn are shops full of colourful gems of every grade, clarity and precious quality.

It's like being in a wonderland of colours and abundance and the bounties and favours of Allah swt are evident everywhere.

Even the beautiful, radiant faces of the Iranian people and the large families that visit the shrines are fascinating to watch.

The children are blonde haired and blue eyed and the men and women are so beautiful that it is difficult not to stare at their awesome beauty.

Allah swt truly has smiled upon this land and it is no wonder.

For one of His Noor, the light from the Holy Prophet (saww) himself is here, the Sultan of Sultans, King of Khorasan, Imam Raza (a.s)

[AUG, 23, 2015; 184 likes]







108. Alhamdulillah I am now settled in at the dormitory for my summer course at the Hawza in Qum.

Shireen is with me and doing her Quran classes for recitation, hifz and tafseer.

Our classes have started (a hectic timetable from 9 am to 8.30 pm with a break for salat and lunch) and are extremely intense. The material is very complicated and quite philosophical in nature and we are expected to read the text book on our own and have our own discussion groups during the evenings to discuss the concepts.

Our professors are (Dr.) Sheikh Muhadis as well as (Dr.) Sheikh Shomali and many others.

They help us with an overview of a topic and we are expected to do self study and research to expand the topic for ourselves.

MashAllah the Jamiatuz Zahra (university for ladies) in Qum is so very humongous with huge lecture halls with state of the art technology, gymnasiums, swimming pool, libraries, sprawling gardens, cobblestone walkways, large splashing fountains and many, many floors of air-conditioned dormitories.

We wash our clothes by hand and hang them up to dry and our rooms are sparse with just beds and a small square locker for valuables and a hook to hang our chadors.

Washroom and shower facilities are on each floor (a few feet from our rooms) and meals are held at large halls and we get plenty of time to bond with the other classmates over meals.

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Nights are so beautiful with the campus lit up with lampposts and the sounds of crickets everywhere.

The students are women and men of all ages primarily from UK, Canada, Australia and USA and come from various backgrounds (Pakistani, Lebanese, Iraqi, Tunisian, Bosnian, East African etc)

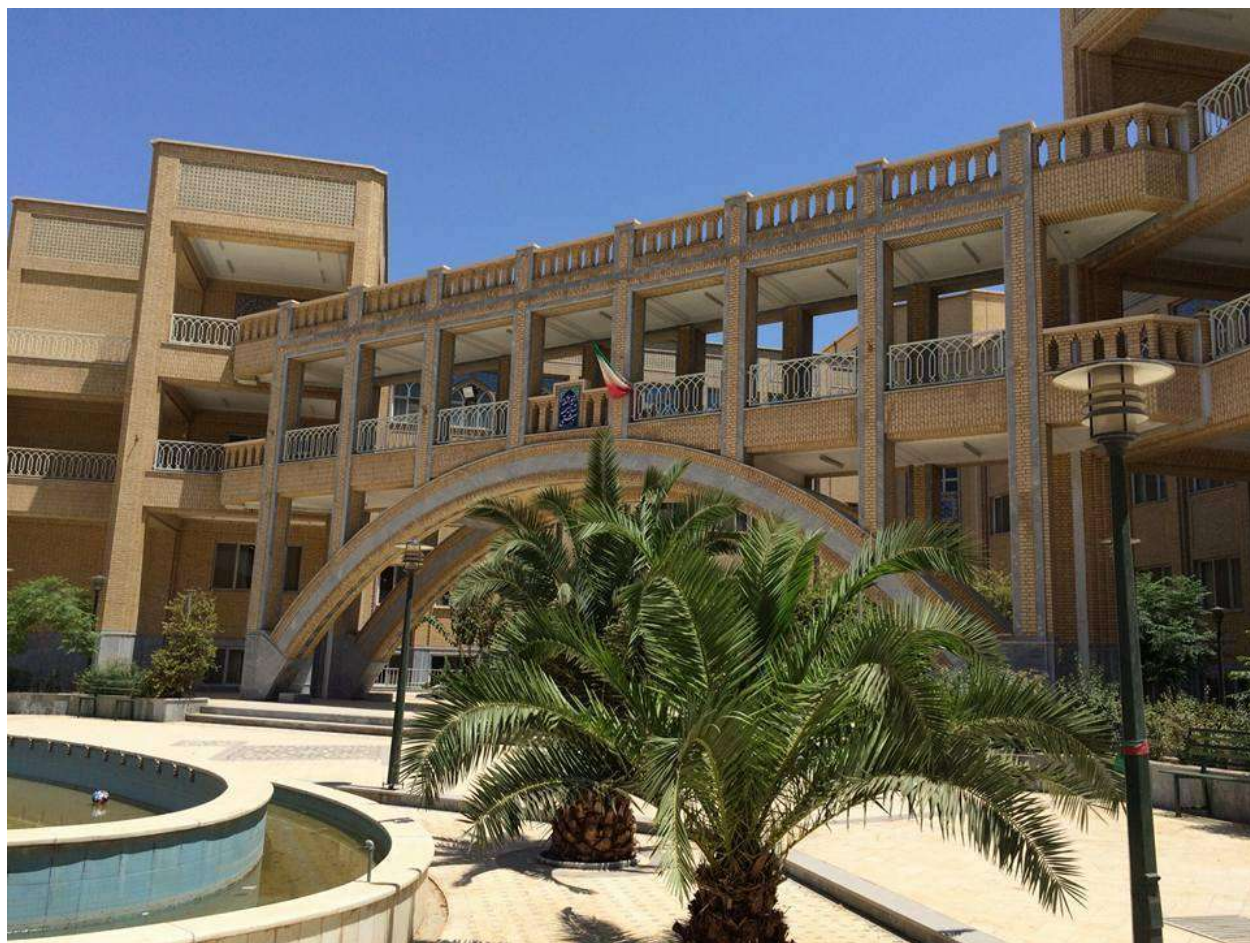
We visit the holy shrine of Bibi Masume Qum (a.s) just before Fajr each morning and it is truly a special and peaceful experience.

It's been an experience of a lifetime. I am enjoying reading Islamic books and engaging in Ibadat and just focusing on learning about Islam. Wish I could stay here forever

[Aug, 18, 2015; 341 likes]

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108. Despite 5 days in Mashad my heart still felt a deep thirst to be back in the haram of Imam Raza (a.s)

"Call me again before I leave for home, Ya Imam" I begged as we departed the Holy city and travelled hours and hours away.

It was an impossible dua as our schedule is completely packed.

And suddenly yesterday my husband tells me he has paid extra to have us fly for just ONE night more in Mashad!!!

And here I am sitting just a few minutes walk from my beloved Maula!!

I simply cannot believe how beautifully imam a.s responds to his devotees!!

I have so many stories of amazing moments to share with you.

But most of all, I am blown away by all the people who have written in private messages to tell me that the Hajaat and Duas they had asked me to pray for have been FULFILLED!!!

Visas for spouses to reunite have been granted, sick people are reporting feeling better and good exam results and so much more!!

Imam a.s has heard your requests and accepted your Salaams.

When I enter the shrine, I stand at the door and I knock and tell Imam a.s "ya Imam I have brought thousands of Salaams from your loved ones across the world. Ya imam they love you so

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much they crave to be here. Ya imam fulfil their Hajaat and give them ease Ya imam don't send me back empty handed"

I have been praying for my cousin Mustafa Shivji To receive his heart transplant and for Nadeem bokhari to receive his liver transplant and for all those who need a miracle.

And I feel a peace and a deep sense of contentment that gives me a reassurance that he has heard and interceded and taken our requests to Allah swt

Am headed to imam a.s now. Am planning to lay my head on the marble floor and close my eyes and experience peace. Just lose myself in a feeling of complete love and acceptance.

Please keep sending me your requests and your

Salams for imam a.s.

I am honestly thinking of your names as I hold on to the silver grill of his zareeh.

Click on like to register your Salams.

Let those clicks reach a thousand and more. Please have faith. Imam a.s is here for us and loves us all

With Duas for the acceptance of your hajat and your magjfirat

Ameen

[Aug, 11, 2015; 363 likes]

109. Subhanallah we are seeing Iran in a completely new way on this trip. Our family is part of a delegation of over 600 people (doctors and professionals in the medical field with their accompanying families) for the 8th annual conference for Imamia Muslim Medics (IMI)

All of us conference attendees (from North America, Europe, Pakistan and Africa) are official visitors of the Islamic Republic of Iran and we are receiving the well-known red carpet hospitality that is a trademark of the Iranian people.

A large group of designated men and women with walky talkies along with a security detail follow us and serve us efficiently (from the moment we stepped off the plane).

We have been given tours of the Medical University of Mashad and the hospital and have attended lectures in magnificent lecture halls inside the harram of Imam Raza (a.s) and at other venues. High level dignitaries, politicians and Islamic scholars-- including the Head of Congress, Minister of Health and Tourism and others have welcomed us with speeches and luncheons.

The conference expenses have also been heavily subsidized by the government and we are enjoying the best rates for hotels, air-conditioned buses, meals and tours.

The hospitality of the Iranian people is truly something to write home about!! Each of us (Men, women and children) has been welcomed at the airport with a red rose each, huge banners welcoming and greeting us and this same style (roses, banners, red carpets etc) has been repeated at conferences too.

There are huge bouquets of fresh flowers everywhere on stages and at events and colourful fruit baskets and gifts for participants (books etc)

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We feel so overwhelmed with love and are touched by this lovely hospitality.

Truly we have already experienced wonderful moments and know that these will soon become memories that we will cherish for a long time to come.

This entire trip has been a gift from Shahe Khorasan Imam Raza (a.s) to those who love him from around the world.

Haven't had enough of this beautiful city of Mashad!!! Heading on Sunday to Nishabour, Shiraz, Isfahan, Tehran and Qum soon inshallah

[Jul, 31, 2015; 197 likes]



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110. Salams and greetings from Mashad, a piece of heaven on earth!! What an emotional experience to be here once again on this sacred ground. I can't believe imam a.s has allowed me to return once again!!

Subhanallah it was Thursday night and the haram was absolutely overflowing with thousands (if not millions) of followers from all over the world.

It was almost impossible to stay with one's group and after Maghrib Isha prayers the beautiful sounds of Dua Komail could be heard from loud speakers across the miles of courtyards of the haram of Imam Raza a.s

I arrived at the haram and looked at that sparkling golden dome and I just couldn't stop my tears. I expressed my love for imam and told him "Ya Imam I come bringing so many messages from your sincere followers. Ya imam hundreds of people have sent you their love, their salaam, their tears and their heartfelt requests. Ya Imam do not disappoint them!"

Every moment spent in just the sahan (courtyard) of the beautiful haram were so, so precious. I felt like never going home again.

I felt like a small, tiny bird in a huge, magnificent palace. And I was absolutely content to be just a small creature in a tiny corner of this enormous heavenly place.

I looked around at the thousands and thousands of devoted lovers of imam a.s around me and I felt completely humble and insignificant. What was I, compared to these very loyal lovers of imam? A small speck in a sea of love.

It has been an extremely tiring and exhausting day but I am wide awake with all the wonderful memories and sights that have filled my senses so completely.

I can't believe I get to go again tomorrow and experience it all over again!! Ya Allah let me open my eyes in the morning and be alive...give me life so that I can visit my imam once again and express my love again and again and feel that deep joy and inexplicable peace once again.

Ameen

[Jul, 30, 2015; 514 likes]

111. Over 80 men and women from the Christian, Jewish, Hindu and other faiths were invited for an Interfaith Iftaar at Toronto's Jaffari Islamic Centre (9000 Bathurst

Attendees included many well-known local politicians, electoral candidates, Christian and Catholic clergy and community leaders:

-Mayor of the town of Richmond, Dave Barrow

-Reverend Claire Goodrich Dyer

-Deb Schulte, former Vaugan Councillor and current official liberal candidate for King-Vaughan

-Leona Alleslev Liberal party candidate (Aurora-Oakridge-Richmond Hill riding)

-Majid Jowhari, candidate for Federal Liberal Party of Team Trudeau

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-Sylvia Sikakane, church leader and children's advocate

-Fran Isaacs of Mosaic Interfaith

-Natalie Doucet St. Luke's parish

and many, many others

The guests were first welcomed at our boardroom by Jamaat executive members, President and Chairlady, ladies committee, the Resident Alim Maulana Syed Muhammad Rizvi, Tabligh leaders and speakers from the community.

They were then escorted to join the main congregation and heard a heart-lifting speech by a former Christian who became a Shia after becoming inspired by the teachings of Maula Ali (a.s).

Maulana Syed Rizvi's sermon explained the similarities between Islam and other faiths and explained many key items in great detail.

The guests were thrilled to watch the jamaat salaah and later enjoyed the Iftaar meal with the congregation.

In the evening, the female guests were invited to a ladies program (organized by the youth girls) on hijab demonstration and were each given a scarf to take home as a gift. Many volunteered to be models for the hijab demo and were delighted to wear the hijab

[Jul, 9, 2015; 323 likes]



112. RAIN--A MERCY AND REHMA FROM ALLAH (SWT)

"Rain Rain Go Away" the children's nursery rhyme goes.

Human beings can truly be thankless and can often see the bounties that Allah swt showers upon us as inconveniences that interfere with our daily schedule.

In our myopic view of the world, we are only concerned about our own needs being met. We pray for it not to rain on our weddings, parades and barbeques. And yet, when it suits us, we crave for rain and even pray for it.

We forget that this immense beauty surrounding us in the Kingdom of Allah swt literally blossoms under these rain showers. The rivers remain full, animals drink to their fill and roam comfortably and human beings enjoy reprieve from the hot, sunny days of the summer.

It is rare for us to appreciate this Mercy from the heaven until droughts come, or, as we have recently seen in Pakistan, humans suffer the tragic effects of heat waves.

What we fail to understand is that the Mercy of Allah swt is precious and is often triggered by the good deeds and worship of His creatures. And that when it rains, it means Allah swt is smiling upon His creatures with Benevolence and Compassion. This is why there are countless hadith that encourage us to ask for our hajaat especially when it rains for it means that the heavens have opened up with Mercy.

And often times, as is illustrated in the story below, this Mercy can be withheld by Allah swt due to the ingratitude and oppression shown by His sinful creatures.

This event has been narrated by the 6th Imam Jaffer Sadiq (a.s)

The Ant Who Prayed For Rain

Once there was a big famine in Palestine. It was during the time of the Prophet, Prophet Sulaiman (a.s) (King Solomon).

He came out with his people and proceeded to an open place in the desert to pray for the rains to come.

Suddenly, he saw an ant standing on its two legs, raising its hands up towards the sky and saying, "Oh Allah! We are but very small among all Thy creatures. We cannot survive without Thy grace. Please bestow upon us Thy sustenance and do not punish us because of the sins of human beings.

Please send down the rains so that trees can grow, farms become green and grains become available and we have our food to eat."

Prophet Sulaiman knew the language of all animals. He told his people,

"Let us go home. The prayer of this ant is enough."

In another variation of this hadith, the 6th Imam (a.s) explains that Sulayman told his companions,

"Let us go back, somebody else's intercession has been accepted for you."

According to another report he (a.s) said, "You have got rain due to the bounty of others."

It then rained heavily and all the land became green and productive.

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Perhaps these moments of severe drought and famine should serve us human beings with a stark reminder that our sins, cruelty, murder, mayhem, war, oppression, ethnic cleansing and genocide may be resulting in the holding back of ne'mat by Allah swt.

May He swt Guide us and have Mercy on us.

May He swt forgive us those sins that prevent His Mercy to shower upon us.

May He swt bestow the ultimate Mercy upon mankind and hasten the reappearance of our eagerly Awaited One (ajtf) ameen

[Jun, 25, 2015; 44 likes]

113. It happens pretty much every single morning:

Mummy calls me early (often at 9 am) and tells me she has already cooked for the day!! And she begs me to please come and eat the fresh, hot pilao, curries, samosas, bhajias etc LOL

And we play our usual game with me explaining how busy I am and how it is impossible for me to come and her promising she won't keep me long.

She only lives a 15 minute drive away but I am always too caught up in my busy life.

I always feel so guilty. Allah swt has blessed us children with the presence of mom in our lives. He has given mummy a new lease on life (after her cancer diagnosis and mastectomy) and yet I cannot find more time to spend with her.

Almost losing mom has opened my eyes but what has truly given me a new way of treating her better has been becoming a mother to my two teenagers (Hassan and Zaynab, aged 18 and 16 yrs)

Suddenly I have realized what happens when a child becomes busy and occupied with their own life. I have begun to understand how much a mom craves to just see her beautiful children's faces and longs to hear their voices even if all they say is the love-inducing word "mummy". I catch myself watching their young, strong bodies and that bounce in their footsteps in awe and I marvel at how Great God is for shaping them so beautifully.

I watch them silently and I see my husband's youth in my son's bushy hair and my once own youthful self in my daughter's slim form.

I find myself being grateful when they sit still long enough for me to enjoy and to really savour looking at them.

They have no idea how much joy it gives me to just look at them.

So this morning when mom called, I answered "okay I am coming mummy"

She was stunned and so thrilled.

When I finally did arrive a couple of hours later (after completing my housework) I found her sitting and waiting for me on the swing outside, with the Holy Quran open on her lap. She had fallen asleep reciting.

The sound of my footsteps woke her up and her face broke into a joyful smile of welcome.

She took me to the kitchen and began her work of making hot, fresh roti.

I watched her efficient hands in fascination just as I used to watch her when I was a 6 year old.

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Mom's hands were still the same beautiful hands I was accustomed to watching. Her gold bangles twinkled melodiously as she rolled the dough and her face had that same look of serenity and joy that she always had when she cooked for us.

As usual, she was dressed like a Bollywood actress and had jewellery and make-up on.

And like they always did, her rotis rose and filled with air and she joked her usual joke by remarking "look, I made a football for you."

I reminded her how I used to always ask for extra ghee on my roti when I was a child. And now we always beg her to skip the ghee altogether 😊.😊.

In between making the fresh rotis, mom filled me a plate of curried okra and Romano beans and I had to beg her not to add the other curries she had made.

As usual, she insisted I continue to eat as she put newly made rotis on my plate.

As usual, I begged her to come sit and eat with me. And as usual she insisted she wanted me to get fresh rotis.

This exchange of words, these fragrances and sights of mom's kitchen and her hands gave me an eerie sense of déjà vu.

It felt like I was a 6 yr old once again and mom was again that slim, beautiful 40 year old beauty in a saree that I grew up watching in the kitchen.

But mom is now 79 years old. And yet she continues to cook, garden, lift heavy things and clean the house

I ate as mom worked. We chatted and giggled. She gave me compliments and advice. She reassured me about the future. She told me to be thankful and reminded me how Merciful Allah swt is. She cautioned me if my words were negative about anything. She told me to forgive people. She encouraged me to do something good I had been neglecting to do.

Then, when I finished eating she made me tea. She watched me drink and smiled as if her own stomach was full.

And by the time I was rushing out to pick up the kids from school, mom was asleep on the couch. She looked exhausted and yet very fulfilled.

I kissed her sleeping eyes. And she opened them dreamily and smiled at me.

"Thank you for coming Shyrose" she said with slurred speech.

And then instead of dozing again, she got up from the couch and walked me out.

And the last vision I had of her was of her waving at me as I drove away and became a small dot in the distance

I could see her in my rear view mirror watching my car.

And the tears filled my eyes so much that I couldn't see anymore.

Thank you Allah swt for giving me my mom's fragrance, her soft hug, her food, her love, her Duas for my safety.

Thank you my facebook friends for your Duas for her life.

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I am indebted to you all for making this miracle of her life possible.

May Allah swt fulfill all your Hajaat and keep your mothers safe. And reward them with magfirat and Jannah ameen.

[Jun, 16, 2015; 647 likes]

Zakira Shyrose

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114. KERBALA ON 15 SHABAAN

It was a few days after Arbacen. We were standing at the river Furat in Kerbala and the young Iraqi brothers who befriended us on our memorable walk on Arbacen from Najaf to Kerbala had purchased shawarma and drinks for us with their hard-earned money.

We ate the food hungrily and watched the many zaireen who lingered at the Furat and cupped the water in their hands and poured it over their own faces and heads.

The young men with us were full of excitement as they told us about this very site when the auspicious eve of 15 SHABAAN occurs in Kerbala.

"Aunty, you have seen how we grieve, now come back to Iraq again in SHABAAN and see how we Iraqis celebrate!!" said Mustafa Alzuhaire, his eyes full of delight.

"The streets are decorated and everyone is in a good mood" explained Saif AlSaadawi as Mustafa translated.

Saif continued, "Everyone is celebrating! There is happiness everywhere!!! People give gifts. And the best place??!! Right here, at this river Furaat where this mosque is, the place where Imam Zamana ajtf comes when he visits Kerbala.

"Aunty this is the place of Hajaat, to send the areedha" said Mustafa. "Everyone lights candles and does "nadhr" and they make it float in the water. Little children hold candles everywhere!!"

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Standing beside Mustafa, Hussein Amuslimawi and Ameer simply beamed with joy, silently trying to speak with their eyes--something they always did whenever language became a barrier between us .

"This whole river it sparkles with lights and candles and everyone stands here and watches the candles float," said Mustafa. "I will send you the pictures of last year's 15 Shabaan.

It is so beautiful. You must come and see it with your own eyes" he exclaimed.

And today they told me in urgent Whatsapp messages that Iraq is in great danger. People are staying indoors as there is slaughter and mayhem and shooting and military everywhere.

"People are being slaughtered from knee to neck" came the message on my phone screen.

And for the first time the fear I felt was real for the people of Iraq. It was not just sympathy or a moral conviction. It was gut-wrenching and heartbreaking. As if my own children, my own brothers were in a war zone.

Suddenly these were not numbers and faceless names in newspaper reports and strangers in tv footage. These were real people to me now.

I have eaten with them. Walked with them for days. Talked for hours and listened to their life stories and dreams and fears. They have tended to my wounds and blisters with their own hands and protected me with their own bodies on the streets of Najaf and Kerbala. Their faces and their identifies are etched in my mind and in my heart forever.

"Be careful Mustafa." I wrote. "Please don't go outside."

And my heart cried for these young men who have so many dreams and so little to live on. I felt so so helpless.

It seemed a real possibility that these young men would actually take up arms and go to defend the shrines--just as they had promised me they would do if the need ever arose. Their eager faces with their sincere wishes to die for Imam (a.s) practically written all over their innocent visages came in front of my eyes.

What a loss for the world if anything happened to them!! They are so brilliant, so loving, so beautiful, so full of life and witty and humorous and full of endless chatter! Their young bodies are healthy, strong and muscular and their whole lives are ahead of them!!! They are unique and each with an amazing personality!!

But then so are the millions of others in the land of Iraq!!

So many who we don't know personally but who are precious in their own right!!

Who could save them? What mighty power on earth can stop this madness but ALLAH swt and His appointed, Awaited one!!

There was nothing more to do but to raise my hands in prayer and beg my Imam (ajtf) to please please come immediately.

Come now! Help! Help! Help!!

Al ajal al ajal al ajal !!!!

Iraq is burning and it is as if our our hearts are smouldering in the ashes!!!

[Jun, 13, 2014; 183 likes]

115. Shukranlilah Walhamdulillah!!!

Thank you Allah swt for giving my dear mother the precious gift of life. Of more time on this earth and time to be with her children and grandchildren.

Every minute, every day that mom is with us reminds us of Your ehsaan, Ya Rab, and of the ehsaan of these hundreds of generous people--many who didn't even know her personally-- who have sincerely prayed for her health on their prayer mats, during tawaf, at the holy shrines and with tears in their eyes.

How can we ever repay you all dear brothers and sisters?!!

You have touched us with your letters, your Duas, your gifts, and an endless flow of flowers and visits.

Mom has blossomed with all this love and was on her feet in record time after her mastectomy.

Visitors always found her fresh and dressed beautifully. She stayed with me for 2 and a half months and would not sit still--she insisted on cooking and being active!!

This was truly a result of your prayers.

And now just 5 months after her cancer was diagnosed, the Oncologist has informed us (a few days ago) that scans show NO CANCER!!!

Subhanallah! There truly is miraculous power in prayers!!

You all are forever in our Duas for all this love you have sent our way. May Allah swt reward you and fulfill your Hajaat Ameen

Mummy was able to attend Grandparents Day at my daughter's school and I felt like crying in happiness as I watched. I couldn't believe mom was alive and here to celebrate with her grandchild!

Shireen Fatema's class had an agenda for all visiting grandparents. First she recited some Hadith to her nanima and then asked her some questions about her childhood and life.

Then she proudly showed her the masjid she had made (complete with a mimbar, place for tasbeeh and sajdagah, a separate section for ladies and men and racks for shoes!!) So adorable.

Mom was so happy to be there and was soon surrounded like a celebrity with well-wishers who came to ask her about her health!!! Everyone was telling her how much they had prayed and how overjoyed they were to see her looking so fresh.

It really made me so grateful that Allah swt has not left us alone in this world. He has truly blessed us and arranged for us to be born into communities. To have brothers and sisters who watch us grow up, share in our joys and our grief, attend our weddings, send gifts when we have children, pray for our health when we are ill and do us the final ehsaan by carrying us on their shoulders when we die and by burying us in our final resting place.

"And which of the favours of your Lord will you deny?"

(Sura Rehman 55:13)

[Apr, 19, 2015; 264 likes]



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116. Feeling so blessed to have the rare opportunity to teach Jewish youth about Islam at a Hebrew Academy and high school on the Lebovic Campus (on Monday, April 20)

I spent the morning as a special invited guest at the school today and was given a tour of the sprawling campus and a very warm welcome by the Rabbi, Principal, Vice Principal, staff and students.

It was inspiring to see how efficiently a community with a vision can channel their resources and build such a magnificent state of the art facility to provide their children with education as well as religious training within a culturally appropriate atmosphere.

It truly impressed upon me the urgent need for the Shia communities across the world to invest and do the same for our upcoming generations.

We need not only more Islamic high schools in accessible areas but a university too.

This particular school was built 7 years ago and has almost 600 students. It is equipped with windows that darken as the sunlight increases in the day and has heat sensors that adjust temperatures in unused classrooms. All classrooms, libraries, seminar rooms, gymnasiums and science labs are equipped with audio/video resources and there is even a film studio with a green screen where students film programs and movies.

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The campus was so huge that my iPhone couldn't capture it all in one picture without using the panoramic feature. There were many other buildings and parking lots adjacent to the school and I had to drive through secure and gated areas and walk through security and speak into intercoms to be allowed access.

The school is having this outreach and interfaith event so that representatives of various faiths can speak about what religion and spirituality means to each of us.

The goal is to understand that we all have a shared love for the Almighty and to understand that faith can have different forms and paths but that all ultimately lead to one shared goal: pleasing our Creator.

We pray that efforts to educate the youth in this way can help promote a sense of understanding, love and sympathy across the faiths so that our future generations can value other human beings and feel motivated to make a better world where all can live in peace and harmony. Ameen
[Apr, 14, 2015; 234 likes]

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117. Nomination of Zakira Shyrose Jaffer Dhalla, Canada, by Br. Kazim Rahemtulla, Switzerland.

I have been following Zakira Shyrose Jaffer Dhalla's work for many years now on social media. One of the most inspiring things that Zakira Shyrose has done, in addition to her lectures, writing, puppet shows and her other amazing projects is her great work on NASIMCO as an Executive Councillor. Over the years she has fought for women's rights to vote in their jamaats and given speeches on this topic to all the voting delegates (who were mostly males).

In 2014, she successfully managed to propose and pass a constitutional amendment that all existing and new member jamaats in North America (under NASIMCO) must have a written bylaw according women their own personal vote and the eligibility to stand for any position in jamaat elections.

This is a huge achievement for women's rights and will surely inspire other jamaats around the world to do the same.

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As a youth and a male I admire her efforts to make our community a better place for the upcoming generations. It feels so encouraging to know that our daughters will grow up in an empowered community and can be the leaders of tomorrow inshAllah.
Ameen

Subhanallah was so pleasantly surprised and overjoyed to see myself nominated for the 'Fatima (sa) Inspires' campaign - "an initiative to recognize the successes and achievements of the women in our community - in honour of the Lady of Light, Sayyida Fatima Zahra (sa)"
Jazakamullah khairun to brother Kazim Rahemtulla and The World Federation of KSIMC and to all those who have shown support and clicked on 'like'
Truly this is the most precious of gifts to receive on the birthday of the Lady of Light Bibi Fatema Zahra (a.s) I feel so touched and delighted 😊
Feeling so grateful to Allah swt for the blessings of being part of such an incredible and loving community. May Allah swt fulfill all your wishes and make this wiladat day of celebration truly mubarak and blessed for all of you AMEEN
[Apr, 9, 2015; 81 likes]



118. This time last year, my family and I were in the city of the Holy Prophet (saww) in Medina e Munawara.

It was the day of the martyrdom of the most beloved and the one and only daughter of the Prophet of Islam, Lady Fatema Zahra (a.s)

And yet, it was eerily silent.

There were no signs of mourning.

Not in the city, nor in the Masjid e Nabawi...

No one allowed at her holy grave.

No one allowed to stand in groups and to tearfully send salaam to this most exemplary of women.

For those who were unaware of the significance of the Islamic date, it was a day spent like any other day.

Watching the people flock by heedlessly past Jannat ul Baqi made me flinch at the disrespect of it all.

It was a heartbreaking sight. And it made our tears flow even more profusely.

Oh most respected Bibi (a.s). How oppressed you still continue to be. And we, your lovers and your followers, could do nothing but stand helplessly with our heads bowed.

It was as if our hands were tied and it was Kerbala once again, where the family of the Ahlulbayt (a.s) were denied the right to shed tears on their martyred ones.

Bibi (a.s) felt the sting of this hurt even in her lifetime when the people of Medina expressed exasperation and irritation at the tears she shed at her father's holy grave.

She spent the last painful days before her death saying farewell to her family, knowing that soon no one in the city would be able to complain that the tears of Zahra (a.s) were not giving the people of the city any peace.

"Aaj rukhsat ho rahi hay tumsay Zahra ya Ali
Kya kahu dil may khayal aatey he kya kya Ya Ali

haa Medina waalo ko tha mera rona laa gawa
Aaj say hoga na ye logo ko shikwa Ya Ali"

أعظم الله أجورنا و أجوركم بمصابنا الزهراء سلام الله عليها

May Allah swt reward you for your grief over the troubles that befell Fatema Zahra (a.s) ameen
[March, 20 ,2017; 56 likes]

119. Had such a wonderful time with Toronto's Jaffari Islamicyouth at Snow Valley. Mashallah the event was attended by almost 100 girls and boys (15 yrs and older) on a sunny and thankfully not-so-cold day of snowboarding, skiing, and tubing.

Hijab was mandatory and mashallah it was quite a sight seeing so many girls in hijab proudly and skillfully skiing and snowboarding on the slopes 😊:)

For myself, spending a day with all these energetic (and courageous!!) young people was not only inspiring but also such a heartwarming experience.

I was so impressed by how polite, kind, generous and respectful these young people were.

I was so touched that many youth made polite small talk with me and throughout the day would

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ask me if I was enjoying myself or needed any help. Many took selfies with me and happily posed for group pictures with me 😊:)

They also cheered for me and praised me when I shared my little accomplishments (such as making it down the very steep "Family Hill" and not falling once all day!!!!)

At the end of the event, so many youth came to thank me for coming along and the youth committee leaders also took the time to express their appreciation. It truly showed what great manners and etiquette these young people have been taught subhanallah

It is no easy task to manage so many young people (we filled 2 yellow school buses to almost maximum capacity) on a 1 hour journey to the ski slopes and back home again but mashallah the male and female youth committee leaders were completely efficient, organized and very much in control. Mashallah seeing last year's former male youth chairperson joining the event and helping out was also very good to witness.

The attendees, on their part, obeyed instructions readily and were so well-behaved and mature. I couldn't help but smile like a proud parent as I watched it all from my vantage point as a chaperone and invited guest speaker.

It was so reassuring to see our future generation at work.

Alhamdulillah the future of our community is in good hands 😊:)

The morning actually started at 5 am when my daughter Zaynab and I prayed Fajr salaah and then got dressed for what the weather forecast said would be -21 degrees Celsius weather.

We layered ourselves so much that we were unable to bend our elbows or even bend our knees to pick up something from the ground. LOL

We wore multiple layers of socks, shirts and pants and even wore 2 pairs of gloves and woollen hats. We then wore our waterproof jackets and snow-pants on TOP of all this 😊:)

We arrived at the mosque by 6:30 am for registration.

The parking lot of the mosque was filled with cars of families--parents with sleepy eyes driving like zombies while their eager, excited kids chattered in the backseat.

Registration was completed efficiently by youth leaders who collected money and health card information, expertly organized charts of groups of 10 youth each and categorized who would be skiing, snowtubing or snowboarding and taking lessons on the slopes.

Attendance roll calls were taken constantly and every few hours throughout the trip.

It was truly a massive undertaking--mashallah a great turn out (even though many registered people didn't show up because of the foreboding weather forecast)

Last year there were over 130 youth in attendance.

I gave a short lecture and subhanallah the youth listened with rapt attention even though it was 7:15 am!!!

My topic was "Living a balanced life of moderation" and I spoke about the importance of all youth ensuring that their lives have a healthy dose of Islam, family, friendships, education and recreation.

I had to bear in mind that it was early in the morning and everyone was in the mood to have fun so I kept it light but reminded us all that Islam is a religion of moderation and allows us to enjoy ourselves in a halaal way (like skiing for example) and also greatly encourages us to spend time with community and friends.

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We must ensure that our focus in life is not only on education or only on recreation but that we also take time to give all the other facets in our life, such as Allah swt, our family, our community and other issues our equal attention. The key is to infuse spirituality in everything that we do.

I reflected on the fact that our day of skiing would definitely mean that throughout the day we would be crying out for help from Allah swt. Such moments will make us realize that without God on our side, we are truly helpless. We need Him (swt) to smile upon us and to Help us when we are desperate.

However, we must ensure that our relationship with God in our lives is a daily connection. A constant relationship where we connect with Him (swt) at all times throughout the day to reflect, to express our love and to seek answers--that we do not reach out to him not only when we need Him to urgently fix what is broken in our lives.

I spoke about the importance of attending youth events because they help us to make life-long friendships with people who we will be seeing all our lives at the mosque. Having even one good friend at mosque makes attending less daunting and alienating in such a huge community. So make it a point to make at least one new friend today.

I shared my own memories of being an attendee myself at youth events when I was growing up in Toronto and the positive influence it had on my life in making friends and becoming a Youth Chairperson when I was 21 years old. (I vividly remember how hard it was to take a busload of 50 youth girls for skiing in the days of no cell phones and dealing with one poor young girl breaking her ankle)

By 7:45 our two yellow school buses of excited youth (one for boys, one for girls) was on its way to the ski slopes!!!

Even at such an early hour, everyone was talking, laughing, sharing jokes and passing around snacks. It was sometimes difficult to make an announcement--everyone was in such great spirits!!!

I smiled at their youthfulness, their carefree laughter, their joy and enthusiasm and zest for life. Mashallah they had their whole lives ahead of them and so much to look forward to.

I looked around at their beautiful, laughing faces and my heart prayed for these young men and women.

I thought of young 17 yr old Farhan who passed away a few days ago--every young boy I saw reminded me of him. And I wished that all these young people could cherish the gift of life that has been bestowed upon them and that they make good decisions in life ameen.

May they make their parents proud and be a source of pride for their religion, ameen.

Hearing and watching the youth have so much fun with their own community members was truly a joyful thing to behold. So often young people become disillusioned with their community because of what we parents speak about others at the dinner table. So often these young people feel too awkward and shy to make friendships. Attending mosque barely gives enough time to connect with others and there is always a rush on weeknights to head home and to prepare for the next school day.

It is so important that parents encourage their children to attend youth events. There is so much benefit in these. When I was a teenager, it was events like these where hijab was mandatory that actually taught me to learn to wear hijab in public places without feeling shy and nervous.

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I tried Snow tubing too and it was quite an experience!!! We were taken so high up that I was almost terrified to go down!!! I was encouraged by a 13 yr old youth who kept telling me it would be okay!!! We were made to hold on to each other's tubes and then were pushed down this snowy mountain at such breathtaking speed that it brought tears to our eyes (from the chilly wind). It was a lot of fun 😊:)

By afternoon, we all met at 12:30 pm in the Chalet to pray salaah and to have lunch. Doing wudhu (and removing all those layers) and then praying in the cold while others watched takes a lot of courage but these youth all made the effort to do so. A select few young people did need some encouraging and reminding (and cajoling) and it was so sweet to see friends forcing friends to "come on man, just do your salaah already!!!"
Phew! Doing sajdah with all those layers on was no small feat!!!! Bending was almost impossible lol.

At lunch everyone had exhilarating and horrifying ski stories to share. Many of the scary stories were about spectacular falls and flips people had survived and lived to tell. Everyone was full of excitement and it was clear to see that adrenaline was flowing in their veins!!!

Everyone was boasting about which particular ski slope that they had manage to conquer. Each slope has a name that helps identify how challenging it is. When a person casually mentions that they went on the "Black Diamond" slope or "The Moghuls" you can see everyone's eyes widen in amazement.

That's when I heard the funniest lines of the day from one of the youth committee members Roshaneh Fatema Jaffer. She asked me (with a serious expression) to come with her to the "Pony Express" (one of the least challenging slopes meant for children). I was surprised and asked why she would want to do that when she had gone on the some of the most difficult slopes.

Roshan pointed to a steep slope in the distance.

"Sister Shyrose, after going on that one, I have become completely traumatized. That slope should be called "Amaal City". I was screaming so hard that I prayed every single dua and surah I know. Duas that I didn't even KNOW I knew by heart, suddenly came to my lips!!! I was almost doing Amaal e Ashura up there!!! NO way!! I am NOT doing that again!!! I couldn't believe it!!! I ran out of duas to recite and in my panic, I automatically started to recite the Dua e Iftitah that I had memorized in the month of Ramadhan!!!"

LOL that was a classic! Thanks for making me laugh so hard Roshan!!!

Jazakamullah Khairun Jaffari Youth for a great event and for honouring me with the opportunity to have so much fun with you all!!! My duas are with you all!!
Congratulations on a great event!!!

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[Mar, 3, 2015; 128 likes]



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120. Inalilahi wa ina ilaihi rajeeoon. إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

17 yr old Farhan Vakil just passed away a few minutes ago in Vancouver, Canada.

**Like this post to indicate that you have recited a sura fateha for Farhan Vakil--may Allah swt bless you ameen

Farhan had spent the last 6 weeks (since Dec 28) in a medically induced coma while doctors frantically tried to diagnose and prevent repeated seizures.

On his 17th birthday on Jan 6, he lay in a coma--every time doctors attempted to revive him, he would go into repeated violent seizures.

He passed away naturally while doctors attempted to slowly reduce medication so that he could come out of the coma.

Heaven truly has gained an angel from earth today.

This 6 foot 3" gentle giant was truly a beautiful soul.

Exactly a year ago (Dec 2013) Farhan walked 90km beside me from Najaf to Kerbala and he would pet every animal he saw along the way.

He would whisper to the camels and the goats and sheep and shed tears for them. He would carry children on his back. He would carry my jacket and my backpack and treated me like his own mother.

We teased him and he would just smile good-naturedly.

He truly could never even hurt a fly.

He would carry the flag of Islam--there he is in that picture carrying the flag jubilantly beside post 313. How much we had all rejoiced to come across that number; our small group of young people wished and prayed at that moment that Imam Zamana (ajtf) would consider us his soldiers.... ameen.

In Mashad, Farhan gave me a card and a little gift.

At the airport in Montreal he begged me with tears flowing from his eyes to please always keep in touch.

Farhan, the entire world prayed for you. And Allah swt in His Infinite Wisdom and Mercy Decided that your time on this earth was complete. You were cleansed and pure. You had earned your jannah and it was time to return to your Lord.

Farhan I am so proud of you. You have taught us all so much. I doubt I will ever meet a gentle, pure-hearted human being such as you. You were one in a million. Untainted, untarnished, unspoiled.

I will always remember you as the perfect young man you were. And you left the world like that. subhanallah.

We will continue to pray for your soul to be free and to attain the most beautiful place in jannah ameen. We will remember your mother, your father and your brothers and ask Allah swt to give them strength and increased faith and the trust to have faith in the Decree of Allah swt ameen.

Our group of zaireen will never forget you Farhan. Every time we go to Kerbala, Samarah, Mashad, Najaf, Qum we will see you and remember you.

Go in peace my son. Go with our love and our kisses and our hugs dear child. Go with our duas.

Love you forever dear son Farhan
[Feb, 15, 2015; 1.1k likes]





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121. Amazed at the wonderful, loving people that Allah swt has blessed my life with. Bhai Anver Hemraj you truly have a heart of gold!! I am forever indebted to you for going out of your way and opening your restaurant Klassic Kitchen on a day when it was supposed to be closed just so that my mummy could enjoy her favourite kebabs, bhajia and grilled BBQ mishkaki and ribs.

Your hospitality and warmth and generosity was so overflowing--and I cannot forget your beautiful words "of course we will do anything for the mother of a Zakira of Imam Hussein a.s" Shireen was so happy with her candies and she lovingly drew your restaurant logo to show how much she loves coming here.

(Because she gets such royal treatment of course!!)

Thank you so much for your kindness--and for working so hard on a day when your partner (and precious other half) Shehnaz Hemraj was not there to work beside you.

It was when I saw you keep the "closed" sign on and when I saw you turn away so many customers who came to your door that I truly believed that you really did open the restaurant just for us!!!!

Unbelievable!! I thought you were joking!!!

Now that was a Klassy act for sure!!

Praying for your success always!!

You made us and especially my mother so happy--and a mother's Duas are very powerful.

GEO mere bhai!!! Khuda aapko hamesha Salamat aur khush rakhey AMEEN

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[Dec, 28, 2014; 105 likes]



122. I have kidnapped my mom and compelled her to stay at my place even though she has a lot of things to do at her own home--and a lot of other children who want to spend time with her. I smile gleefully at any sibling who complains at my greediness and I say, "marey paas MA hay!!!! She is all MINE. I am not sharing her."

And being the youngest of 5 siblings sort of makes me get away with that kind of childishness 😊 ;)

My mother's presence in my home for the last few days has opened my eyes in many ways. And each realization is truly a gift from my precious mother and from Allah swt.

I once heard a hadith in a majlis that our Holy Prophet (saww) has said that when Allah swt wants to forgive and elevate a human being, He (swt) makes their parents mohtaj (in need of assistance).

Alhamdulillah my mom is able to fend for herself (and she is cooking full gourmet meals at my place and feeding my grown children with her own hands and cleaning the house too) but she is also allowing me to baby her anyway. And I am so grateful for this opportunity in my life.

I need this precious sawaab and she is letting me earn them.

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I help her to the washroom, I fill the water for her in the jug, I get her ready for her bath, I even put all her pills for her into her mouth, I put her seatbelt on for her, I comb her hair, I do her make-up. I tuck her in at night and kiss her goodnight. And I go up and down the stairs many times even if it is to find a trivial thing that she cannot find.

It is both so thrilling and still a great test.

It reminds me of how when my children were small and how eagerly I worked hard to take care of them. I loved them so dearly that nothing I did for them seemed like an ordeal. And yet I used to be exhausted and secretly wishing they would give me a break. And no matter how irritated their many demands made me, just seeing their faces light up with joy would make all the hard work completely worth it. Their smiles would fill me with this overwhelming love and it would make me work even harder for another smile.

I would watch them make their irrational demands, see them express their strange stubbornness and patiently tolerate their unreasonable disappointment when things weren't exactly the way they liked it and I would reason, "It is not their fault. They are children."

And now I have to compel myself to feel the same way about someone who until just recently was completely intelligent, completely efficient and completely in charge of my own well-being.

I look at my mom's face and notice that she has aged. That she has become distracted and worried. That she doesn't laugh so easily like she used to--at every little funny thing around her. She has become serious and subdued.

She is contemplating her advancing age and coming to terms with her limited abilities. She forgets things, she confuses two stories and argues that her version is correct, she cannot hear things and compensates her own words to hear a completely different sentence than was intended. She is no longer alert and suddenly needs explanation of a story. She gets up energetically to do something and suddenly realizes her legs are weak or she reaches out to carry something only to realize her arms are no longer so strong.

And when she sits back down, there is great disappointment on her face. A sadness that her body no longer is cooperating with her eager intentions.

Her taste buds have changed. Suddenly her favourite foods don't appeal to her. And she doesn't like new tastes either. She leaves her plate untouched even though she is starving. And she doesn't enjoy her favourite tv programs anymore.

When we take her somewhere that she wanted to go so badly, she suddenly puts on her coat after a few minutes and says, "I want to go home now."

And it is hard not to take her inability to enjoy herself as a personal affront. It is hard not to take it personally and to feel that WE are not able to give her joy. It is hard to see things from her new perspective because she was never like this before.

Mom has never been judgemental, never been difficult to please, never negative.

Now suddenly she voices her opinions and there is no longer a filter as to what is appropriate and what should remain unsaid.

She has surely earned her right to say what she feels. But mom was always the most diplomatic and pleasant woman I have ever known in my life. She always knew how to package her opinion in such a way that it was palatable.

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And I have to get reacquainted with this new woman that is not the perfect vision I have become accustomed to.

So it had to happen that I would, despite my best of intentions, say something in a harsh voice to her.

I had cooked all her favourite dishes and worked all day in the kitchen. I filled the table with dishes and dishes. But she took one look at the food and remarked that it wasn't the way she liked it. She didn't even taste it. And then she proceeded to eat cookies and even RAW GRAINS OF RICE from my kitchen cupboards.

And then she remarked that I should organize my cupboards and fridge in a better way.

This really broke my heart and I told her I was happy with the way I had organized it. I don't know what I said or how I said it but I do know that I hurt her feelings.

Mom's face became sad and forlorn and she said, "I am your mother and I have a right to correct you if you are not perfect. If I don't tell you, who will?"

And this instantly made me quiet.

She surely had a point. I had acted the way my teenage kids behave when I go to their room and tell them to rearrange it.....

But I didn't realize my children had heard and seen this exchange.

An hour later, my 8 year old Shireen Fatema quietly came and sat beside me when I was alone. And she looked into my eyes and said, "Mummy, nanima has become very delicate now. We have to treat her gently. We should not hurt her feelings. And you know what? We should not feel bad if she says anything bad to US. She is old now, you know? She doesn't know what she is saying."

And I looked at my baby girl and I said, "Shireen thank you for reminding me. I had seriously forgotten for a moment. I needed someone to tell me."

That night, my 17 yr old son Hassan asked me why I was so sad. I said to him, "I am doing so much for my mom mom but I made a terrible mistake. And now I am afraid she will only remember how mean I was to her today. All my work, all my effort, all the money I have spent to please her will be wasted because she will only focus on that one moment when I was cruel and stupid."

And he took me into his arms and said,

"Mummy ask yourself why you are doing this. Are you doing it for recognition or because YOU love your mom? Because when you love someone, what you do has to be unconditional. It has to be just because it is right to do. Not for anything in return. It doesn't matter what she says or what she remembers. It matters that you do what you should."

And I put my head on his chest and I said, "How did I forget such an important thing? thank you for reminding me."

And I wondered when my kids had become so intelligent and I hadn't even noticed.

And as I went to bed that night I realized that no matter how hard I try to do things for my mom because I want nothing in return, it can never really ever be like that. Because serving her will

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always bring me a reward. From God, from her smile, and even from the great admiration of others or the sense of satisfaction I get from doing what I should.

Serving my mom can never be a selfless act for every effort is earning me something or another.

And you know what is even more priceless?

Serving my mother is teaching MY children what a child should do and how they should act towards their own mother.

Mummy, through your helplessness, and through your hurt and your troubles, you are giving me the precious gift of being an example to my own children.

Maa, tujhay mera salaam. Peace be upon you mummy. May your eyes never shed tears, may your heart never be sad, may you never ever feel disappointed with anything in this world.

And may I never be the cause of any of that in your life

ameen.....

[Dec, 27, 2014; 209 likes]

123. LOL there is never a dull moment with mom and her quick wit and sense of humour.

The doctor asked to see her bracelet (with her name and file number on it) but mom showed him her gold bracelets instead and said "this is our traditional gold type"

😂.😂.😂.😂.

He laughed a lot and said "Very nice but we need to see the paper one too"

The nurses are funny too. One gave mom a glass of water to drink and when mom asked if it had any medicine added to it she answered,

"Just a shot of vodka Mrs Jaffer"

😂.😂.😂.😂.

The young technician testing her heart looked at her chart and said,

"Oh wow it was your birthday a few days ago!! Happy belated birthday!! And as your special birthday gift, here is a free heart test paid for by the government"

lol free but paid for by tax dollars 😂.

Watching mom's heartbeat on the monitor right now and praying that Allah swt keeps this heart beating strongly and healthily for many many years to come AMEEN

[Dec, 22, 2014;184 likes]

124. Alhamdulillah we are blessed to have access to the best health care system in the world.

All the staff and nurses are so sweet, kind, patient and efficient. Everything is super clean and there is no smell of disinfectant or any medicine in the air.

The latest technology means we get a pager that flashes when it is our turn to enter room. Doors open with a wave of our hand (don't even have to press a button)

Mummy's diagnosis is that it is a confirmed cancer.

She is getting crucial tests done today to ensure that her heart is strong enough for her surgery to remove her right breast (scheduled for January 6 inshallah).

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She gets breathless and suffers chest pain when she walks and surgery could prove dangerous for her heart.

We need your prayers that she can get clearance for surgery--each day that goes by means that the cancer gets to spread.

She is feeling shooting pain inside.

Mom is such a sweetheart. The cardiology technician explained the procedures to her and asked if she had any questions. Mom said:

"No, But I just want to say that I am so proud of you that you are so intelligent"

LOL mummy!!

We were entering the testing room when we saw this sign with the name of the donor family who had given money to build the facility. And we smiled and laughed in joy at the fact that the name seemed so perfect for us shianey Ali:

"Mattamy Nuclear Medicine Centre"



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[Dec, 22, 2014; 284 likes]

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125. Ever since Imam Raza (a.s) came into my heart and my soul and guided me, I have noticed one incredible thing:

Whether it is his day of shahadat or the date of his blessed birth--I am always on a mimbar somewhere in the world reciting majlis!!!

Am headed right now to recite majlis at a home....feeling so blessed, and so strong that my Imam (a.s) always sends me a signal that he will always find a place for me to preach, no matter what obstacles appear in front of me.

And when I am not heading to recite majlis on the significant days of his life and martyrdom--then he calls me to his shrine.

Last year this time, I was inside the haram of Imam Raza (a.s) with my daughter Zaynab. And as we shed tears of mourning, our faces were strangely lit up with uncontrollable smiles as well. How can one cry and laugh at the same time?

The answer is easy.

When you have Imam (a.s) with you, you can laugh with joy at your great kismet, even while you shed tears at the tragedies and difficulties that you face in this world.

"If Allah is your helper none can overcome you, and if He withdraw His help from you, who is there who can help you after Him? In Allah let believers put their trust".

Holy Quran 3:160

[Dec, 21, 2014; 199 likes]

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125. My mother has cancer....and yet I feel so blessed right now. My heart is sincerely saying "Shukrlillah" again and again for who gets such precious, unforgettable moments with their mother? Only the most fortunate ones.

These are not just precious moments--they are meaningful ones. We have always been best friends but when you know that these are bonus days from Allah swt, you make each moment with your best friend count.

And it makes each of those moments so intense, so filled with feeling and emotion.

How wonderful it is for a child to get a warning sign from Allah swt and to be alert and aware that their mother may not be with them for too long.

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The tears I am crying as I write this are not of sadness. They are of happiness because I feel so very, very lucky to have had these last few incredible days with my mother.

Ya Imam Hussein (a.s) how do I thank you for making this trip to Paris (and recently Madagascar) possible? You knew we needed time to make wonderful memories and that I needed a chance to pamper mom, to take care of her, to give her a shopping spree and to have long, uninterrupted chats with her.

I will never forget this ehsaan Ya Allah, Ya imam.....

These are the days of mourning--and I watch my dear mother from the mimbar while I recite majlis and I can't describe the emotions I feel as I watch her doing what she lives for--to lament over the tragedy of Kerbala and to watch her youngest child recite majlis as hundreds of women cry.

The peacefulness in her at being able to mourn, the pride in seeing her child speak, the satisfied look on her face is priceless.

Yes these are the days of mourning but I know with all my heart, they are a gift from Imam Hussein (a.s) to give my mother all the happiness that I can before she goes for surgery.

The day after we land at the airport, we will be all be in the surgeon's office to hear about the extent of her cancer.

I know I take absolutely nothing away from the sacredness of the ayamay aza and Chehlum of my beloved Imam Hussein (a.s) by showing my mother the city and letting her eat her favourite foods.

We may be seeing the city but we are not sight-seeing or vacationing like carefree tourists.

There is a longing in mom's eyes. It is as if she is trying to memorize the world before she leaves it.

She eats food and she closes her eyes and savours the tastes.

She gleefully looks out the window on the subway and says, "can we stay on this train all day? would they charge us more? I love watching all these busy people and enjoying how fast this train is!! I feel like how I felt when I was a child"

Mom has always been full of life like this but she has definitely changed over the last few days.

I don't think she has given up hope. She really wants to get well because she has a great zest for life.

It's more beautiful than that.

She is coming to terms with the fact that she may have to leave this world very soon. After all she is 77 yrs old. And it is a blessing to see that in her because perhaps she had been in too much denial of her advanced age for too long.

And we should all be thinking of death as if it is truly imminent. But we don't.

And whether she survives this cancer or not, it is a gift from Allah swt to get to be able to mentally and emotionally prepare for a death that will inevitably come--whether ill or healthy, young or old.

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Blessed is that person who is given this feeling--so that they can understand their mortality and do astagfar and start detaching themselves from all that they must leave behind.

For the rest who are caught unawares and are too in love with what we have in this temporary world, it could very well be a wrenching experience and an ordeal.

Watching the world from mom's eyes over the last few days is a gift that I cherish right now. For she is like a child, enchanted at all the Christmas lights, smiling happily with the rush that she feels when the subway car moves at a breathtaking speed.

She is feeling so loved and pampered by all the ladies and youth who are showering her with gifts, love, duas and utmost respect. People hold her hand, escort her wherever she wants to go and are going out of their way to fulfil her wishes to see certain landmarks or shop for certain things.

This kind of attention happens to her every year when she travels with me and I sincerely pray for all these people around the world who take the respect one should accord an elderly person, and that too the mother of a Zakira, as an act of obedience to God and as reverence for Imam Hussein a.s.

How wonderful and healing it is to see mom surrounded with so much care, love and generosity. People go out of their way and at great financial expense to make her happy.

And it makes the world a happy place for her at a time when her heart inwardly churns with sadness and worry.

This moment in time is a beautiful one. Believe me.

For we do not know for sure what the biopsy results are. We do not know if she is truly dying. And this ignorance, right now, of not knowing how bad things really could be is so very blissful.

I want to be in this limbo forever. I want time to stop. I want these beautiful days of assuming mom is healthy to last just a little bit longer.

And whether our moms are 20 or 80, whether they are perfectly healthy or truly dying, we need to really, really consider the fact that they could die any day.

We need to be kind to them, we need to speak gently with them, we need to cater to them like babies even if they are totally strong and independent and able to fend for themselves. We need to lower the wings of humility when we speak to them and make our voices soft--as soft and gentle as the one they used when we were babies just waking up from sleep.

Please don't be rude. Don't say cruel things. Don't break their hearts.

I feel as if I am the luckiest person on earth right now.

I have my mom all to myself--no siblings here to have to share her with 😊;)

And subhanallah, the Paris jamaat has been so very, very gracious and eager to give my mother all the comfort possible in her condition, that they generously put us in a spacious, hotel apartment. We have a kitchen, a living room and ample space so that I can work at night at my computer and print material and not disturb mom.

I cannot describe to you what a utopia mom and I are in right now.

We are on the 7th floor, and the view from our huge balcony is a breathtaking scene of the city sparkling with lights and there in the distance is the Eiffel Tower, all lit up and glittering.

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We eat wonderful meals that ladies cook and deliver to us, we enjoy uninterrupted time to chat, to watch youtube videos together.

Every night I take time to thoroughly put her medicated cream all over her body and I notice all the painful areas from her psoriasis that she has been suffering so quietly for so many years.

I cut her nails and give her a manicure.

I blow-dry her hair and comb it lovingly.

I decorate the table and make her chai exactly like she loves it and then she and I sit across from each other, and we eat and talk about everything under the sun.

Mom and I have always enjoyed this easy camaraderie. We never argue. I cannot ever say something unkind to her without spending all night racked with guilt for hurting her.

I take her 20 pills in my palm (so many colours and sizes--for her heart, her diabetes and the myriad of illnesses that she miraculously lives through) and she opens her mouth and I put them in. Then I give her water and I watch her as she swallows.

I tuck her in, prop her pillows, dim the lights the way she likes it and keep various lights on so that she can find her way to the washroom at night.

I stroke her hair exactly the way she likes it and I listen to her snoring and I thank Allah for each breath. The noise helps me to sleep.

She stops snoring and I wake up with a start, afraid that she is not breathing.

I now understand how my mom must have watched over me when I slept as a baby.

How blessed I am to have had this chance in my life.

Ya Allah Ya Imam how do I thank you?

We sleep in bed together, smiling and looking into each others' eyes and we talk candidly.

I notice how beautiful she is right now. It is as if there is a new noor on her face that I have never noticed before. Her eyes have become a shade of grey!!!

How come I haven't looked so deeply into my mother's eyes all these years?

I notice the lines on her face and stroke her cheek and I wish there was a photographic memory for touch, smell and sight.

I ask her if she is ready for what is to come. I tell her that she has to be strong for whatever that God has in store for her. I tell her encouraging stories about the tests that Prophets and Imams underwent and about corresponding ayaats of Quran and she looks at me intently and listens patiently even though she already knows all these stories and facts.

I tell her, "mummy, Allah loves you so much. Who gets to say goodbye, to divide their assets, to receive love and tears from well-wishers, to get to see the world, to have their sins washed off with illness, to get a wake-up call instead of a sudden death?"

And mom says seriously, "I love Allah so much Shyrose. He has given me such a wonderful life and so much happiness. I need nothing more. I am ready to go back Shyrose"

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And I smile and tell her how proud I am of her. I tell her even if the doctors tell her she has been cured, her age would still be getting higher. We need to face the inevitable death that all of us must taste.

And then she says,

"I am so happy. God gave me the most beautiful gift of my life. He gave me YOU Shyrose. He gave me a daughter who is a servant of Imam Hussein!!!"

And that is when she finally begins to cry.

"I am the luckiest mother on earth. I am so proud. All my children are religious and successful. But you are the child that has made me the most proud. I see you on that mimbar and I cry throughout the majlis because I am thanking God, thanking God, thanking God. People stare at me but I can't help it. My daughter loves Imam Hussein so much!!! My daughter is a Zakira!!! How did I become a millionaire like this?"

And believe me, she then closed her eyes like a baby and fell asleep.

And I turned off the lights and snuggled close to her warm body, and I lifted her arm and put it around me. Then I put my head on her chest like a baby and I listened to her strong heartbeat and her calm breathing.

And as the tears finally came, I swear to you that they were still of thankfulness. I thanked Allah for allowing me to hold my mother and to enjoy her. I thanked Him for such a long and fantastic journey with the most incredible woman I have known in my life.

And then I realized that much as Allah swt has given my mom time to gracefully detach herself from this world and her loved ones, He has also given me and my siblings time to let go of her equally as gracefully.

And then my tears turned to an intense sadness and each drop that fell felt like a drop of attachment that I was allowing to leave my soul. And it hurt to cry but I knew it was necessary because there were a lot of tears that would have to be shed to truly let go. And despite the pain, it felt strangely satisfying to release her and to let Him have what is His. If that is what He Wills....

[Dec, 11, 2014; 325 likes]

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Zakira Shyrose

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126. UNDERSTANDING THE ACTS OF OTHERS DURING THE DAYS OF SHARED MOURNING

If there is one thing I have learned about sadness, it is that grief has many forms and shows itself in many ways.

Watch family members at a funeral and it soon becomes obvious that despite shared genes, shared loss and shared pain—each one of them mourns differently.

The fallacy we all fall victim to is that we often judge someone's inner pain based on how it exhibits on their face.

We watch the hysterical, sobbing daughter who clings to her father's janaza and exclaim to ourselves, "she truly loved her father so very much."

We glance at the sister who faints at her brother's funeral and assume she feels more pain than the marhoom's own wife who sits quietly and stoic, with not one teardrop falling from her eyes.

We notice the son who calmly talks to the relatives and efficiently deals with funeral arrangements and deduce that he is completely detached and is totally cold and unaffected by the entire tragedy of the experience.

A few months later, watch these same family members laughing or at a picnic and an uncensored thought quickly comes to the mind, unbidden:

"What hypocrites!! They have forgotten their marhoom father so easily."

But personally experience the death of a truly loved one and suddenly it all makes sense. Grief truly is a very complex human reaction indeed. Deep depression can mask itself and make you sleep all day. A phase of extreme irritatedness, bitterness and downright cruelty can take over. Recklessness and uncharacteristic, deviant behaviour can become the norm. Sometimes complete sadness can make one numb and look almost robotic as they go through the motions of living. Sometimes those who laugh easily and who look like they have effortlessly moved on and forgotten the deceased are especially the ones who are completely broken inside and sob loudly when no one is there to watch.

Sadness is a mysterious phenomenon indeed. And sometimes it can remain unresolved for a long time and suddenly appear psychosomatically as a physical illness or as a delayed nervous breakdown in the form of post-traumatic disorder.

One thing is certain. No matter how it is exhibited, grief is definitely there, in its hidden forms, whenever and wherever, a tragedy is witnessed. It exists. It is inescapable. It is a necessary function of human experience.

There are recommended ways of grieving, accepted forms of grieving and even social expectations of grieving to give the deceased a dignified and decent due respect.

But no matter how differently people express grief, it cannot, it must not, be ever judged. For no one knows what is in the heart or the intention of another.

In these days of azadari, it is easy to fall into the deadly trap of judging the level of love or grief in others over the tragedy that befell the Holy Household of the Holy Prophet (saww) based on our own personal standards, our own accepted form of expression, our own cultural norms or our faulty assumptions of how humans look or behave when they are sad.

And our Holy Imams (a.s) never judged anyone's level of devotion. Nor did they challenge that our grief will only be accepted by Allah swt if we mourn in a certain way or if we refrain from mourning a certain way.

This is because Allah swt and the 14 Masumeen (a.s) knew the human psychology inherent in the complicated expression of love and grief. They took into consideration the cultural norms and traditions that human societies and systems often hold sacred.

Thus, they left the expression of grief and its myriad of forms upon the individual to select from so long as sincerity, inner devotion and sadness was inherent in the intention in whatever act one chooses to engage in.

And Allah swt remains the Supreme and Best Judge to discern how deeply someone grieves and how sincere they are in their love for the Holy Household (a.s)

So in these days of ayamay aza, let us refrain from being the Judge, the Jury and the Executioner for only Allah swt can hold those positions in matters of faith.

And let us let people grieve in whatever way they feel they personally need to in order to express their own deep pain and love.

Whether some choose to sob loudly or others simply bow their heads in sadness and are unable to shed even one drop.

Whether some hit their chests hard and remove their shirts or others quietly tap their chests solemnly or even just choose to make no action but to listen attentively to the latmiyya.

Whether some choose to bleed or others choose to share their blood.

Whether some wear black while others wear any colour.

Whether others look numb or detached from grief or others smile broadly during daily affairs when not in the masjid.

Whether some choose to eat only simple foods while others do not feel there is any sin or hypocrisy in eating as they normally would.

Whether some serve copious amounts of niyaz and tabaruk and others choose to give money to charity.

Whether some slap their own faces and hit their own heads and strike their own laps or others choose to stand reverentially to the side and just shed silent tears.

Whether some attend the masjid in congregation or others prefer to stay at home and listen to lectures on their ipod on the way to work on the subway.

Whether some sit on the floor or others sit on chairs.

Whether some solemnly face each other in lines during matam or others make a closed circle, link arms and move in a circular pattern.

One thing is certain.

Every lover of the Ahlulbayt a.s does and will always carry a deep love and respect for the tragedies that befell the Holy Family (a.s). For this is a heat in the heart of a believer that never, ever dies.

And when the fathers, brothers and sons of one's most precious family is brutally killed, the brothers and sisters of faith and ummah come together and grieve together. They do not get divided over the very act of grieving!!! They do not hurt those who are already hurting. They do not point fingers at each other, use abusive language, scold each other and proudly claim that their own love and grief is more sincere, more acceptable, more powerful and more palpable.

They can discuss but at the end of the discussion, there must be room and respect for each believer to express the fluid emotion of pain in their own, distinct way.

Zakira Shyrose

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Let the people of the world grieve in their own ways.

Let the nations across the entire globe claim Hussain Ibn Ali (a.s) as their very own and lament for him in their own unique ways.

Let the skies rain blood.

Let the birds sing their melancholy elegies.

Let the oceans roar and the tsunamis of grief overflow the shores.

Let the windy, torrential storms go across the land to signify the tragedy of it all.

Let the desert sands erupt in a frenzy of sandstorms.

Let each and every being and creation grieve openly and then let us step back and marvel at the beauty of it all.

Let us set the pain free.

Let us let every mourner mourn freely in the name of those who were not allowed to openly grieve.

Let Zaynab and Sayyede Sajjad find release through us.

And let us quench the thirst that has remained in their broken hearts over these many centuries.

And let this grief never, ever, ever die....

[Dec, 8, 2014; 84 likes]

127. BIBI SAKINA DAY--Mohammadi Imambargah, Paris, France

Subhanallah the children of the Paris community outdid themselves and shone like little stars today!!! I had requested the chairlady to make it an event completely hosted and recited by the children and led with a julioos--and even though it seemed an impossible task with not enough time to do it all, the children completely rose to the occasion.

Incredible speeches were given in Bibi Sakina (a.s)'s name. Young girls spoke passionately about Islam and the sacrifice of this little martyr. They recited marsiya, nawha and narrated the tragedies that befell this great-grand-daughter of the Holy Prophet (saww) of Islam.

The crowd of women of all ages sobbed openly.

It was a sight to behold.

All these young, French-speaking young children--reciting fluently in their preserved mother-tongue Gujarati. Bravely speaking out in the large crowd, carrying out and leading the azadari.

And then, they all entered the hall with a julioos (procession) that made our hearts melt with tears and pride. Every young child held a flag of Islam, an 'alam", a little replica of the shrine where bibi (a.s) is buried, and huge banners with her name on it.

The children chanted "Ya Sakina" and beat their chests. When I spoke as they walked by, I said aloud to Bibi Sakina (a.s):

"Look dear Sakina, the flag of your uncle Abbas has not been left on the ground. Look it is still being held up high till today and look who is carrying it Bibi, little girls like you who are the Sakinas of our community"

Every mother cried and begged Allah swt to keep the innocent girls of our community on the straight path. We asked Allah swt to reward these little angels for their efforts and their brave acts. mashallah!!

Zakira Shyrose

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The youth had also made a replica of the tragic scene outside the palace of Yazeed the accursed, and depicted the ladies of the caravan of prisoners. A beautiful explanation was given by a young lady and the crowd was in tears once again.

The event was completed with a majlis recited by myself. Subhanallah, I was incredibly impressed with the tears shed by the ladies of Paris jamaat. There was so much grief expressed, so many red-eyes and sobbing voices--I felt as if I was in Shaam, witnessing the lamenting at the shrine of Bibi (a.s) herself.

Efficiently, mats were rolled out and niyaaz was served. In minutes the place was cleaned up in record time to prepare for the night majlis for men and women.

May Allah swt reward this community for their efforts. The mosque was recently damaged extensively due to a fire during renovations--thus, every single flag, every single prayer mat, books and equipment had to be removed from the rented hall and loaded back into cars. Tomorrow, we will be at a different hall and all these items will have to be brought back to the venue.

What a hardworking, sincere and faithful community.

Be witness Maula....your azadaars are all over the world and will never forget you and your sacrifice!!! LABAYK YA HUSSEIN!!!!

[Dec, 7, 2014. 119 likes]



Zakira Shyrose

Facebook Posts-Book Compilation-Personal Experiences

128. Merci Beaucoup Paris Jamaat pour cette belle experience!!! It was awesome to taste--for the first time in my life--such authentic, fine gourmet, halaal French Cuisine!!! Every dish was a piece of art and presented with a flourish and a viola! by the finely dressed professional staff. And oh la la the dessert was vraiment tres bien (Tiramisu presented in a flying saucer with layers of real whipped cream and chocolat).

I doubt I would have been adventurous enough to ever try such fancy food on my own.

I was so thrilled to meet 20 brilliant ladies of all ages who could fluently speak Francais, Anglais, Gujarati, Katchi and Urdu!!! Subhanallah!!

Jazakallah for your warm hospitality--it truly made us forget how freezing cold it was outside. I look forward to spending the next precious days in your beautiful company and together we can strengthen our bonds of sisterhood as we strive to take sincere steps towards attaining the Pleasure of Allah swt

May Bibi Zaynab (a.s) bless you for your generosity and love towards these kaneezaney Fatema (a.s) who have travelled far from home and family to serve the Ahlulbayt a.s AMEEN

[Dec, 5, 2014; 151 likes]



129. This time last year I was in Najaf on my mother's 77th birthday on Dec 18, begging Imam Ali (a.s) to ask Allah swt to grant her more time on this earth even though she wasn't ill.

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I told Imam (a.s) that I know I have had my mother longer than others have. I know she is tired and ill with many on-going ailments. I know Allah swt wants such a beautiful angel in his heavens now for she has done enough good work on earth--but could He please share her with us for a bit longer?

Today, I am begging Allah swt again for we have received some difficult news about my mother.

My mother (popularly known by her maiden name Shirin SS) has always been my role model, my guide and my companion throughout my journey as a nawkhakhwaan and as a Zakiranay Ahley Bait (a.s)

Over the years, she has not missed even one majlis of mine--and she travels (at her own expense) to join me wherever I recite majlis around the world. Today we leave for Paris together where I will recite Ashra Zainabiyya majalises.

At every tv interview I give, at every puppet show I do, mom sits behind the cameraman and watches with a proud smile.

When I sit on the mimbar, she instructs me to sit at an angle so that she can see my face from her faraway place in the seniors section.

And I always do 😊:)

This past month, when I was reciting majlis in Antananarivo, Madagascar, mummy discovered something alarming.

She found that a lump on the right side of her chest had grown tremendously.

As soon as we returned from our trip last week, a mammogram was done.

And then a biopsy (where they remove the fluid to test it for cancer cells)

The surgeon spoke to my mom immediately after the biopsy.

He told her he felt it was cancer.

That he didn't want to wait for the complete biopsy results on Dec 19 (a day after her 78th birthday).

He gave her a date for January to remove the right side of her chest.

Alhamdulillah mom's deep sense of faith has left her still smiling after this devastating news. She loves Allah swt and has a great, strong belief in the afterlife. She is being very brave and good-natured but I can see that she is truly shaken up and yes, very scared.

She said to me, "I did cry in the doctor's office. Shyrose, I don't want to die. I don't want to leave all of you."

I asked her if she wanted to keep this news a secret. And she said,

"What is the shame in hiding that Allah swt has chosen me for this test? This is the chance for me to receive so many duas from people. It is okay. You can go ahead and tell."

My sisters, my brother and I immediately discussed the news as a family and right away decided that we would take this as an opportunity to show Allah swt how much we love Him, how much we are willing to accept any test He has for us and how much we are eternally grateful for the gift of mummy in our lives.

We decided when the days of mourning are over, for Eid e Zehra we will have a huge majlis and call the entire community. And we will celebrate mummy's life, show a slideshow of pictures, speak about her and let her feel the immense love that people feel for her. (Mom is actually a

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very famous woman in her own right--say her name, Shirin SS, in any Khoja mosque in the world and someone is sure to know her mashallah)

Mom has always been famous for her huge "dawats" or invitations for meals. She loves to feed people and to give guests the royal treatment.

The day after her diagnosis, she cooked an entire meal for my family at my place!!!!

Mom--you are truly an inspiration.

Mom is also well-known for her sweet, charming style of talking and her quick-wit and amazing sense of humour. She is also always well-dressed and her shoes, purse and jewellery are always, always colour coordinated lol. If there is one vice about mom--it is her weakness for clothes and jewellery. But she sure carries it well so we often indulge her and turn a reluctant blind eye to her shopping sprees 😊:)

We ask Allah swt to grant us time so that we can celebrate mom's life with her many family and friends. ameen

Let us recite a sura fateha in honour of ALL the moms who have left this world.

And for the ones who are alive, who make our lives so very special, who show us what is true love, who give us a lap to sleep on and a shoulder to cry on, whose smiles light up our lives and our hearts, let us say a heartfelt prayer for their health, their safety and their long lives. AMEEN

My dear fb friends, I know your hearts are full of love and duas this very minute. I know there are tears in your eyes.

And why not--the very word, "MA" makes the heart all soft and mushy and melted 😊:)

I thank you for your duas in advance--because I know how incredible my fb friends are subhanallah.

Do click on "like" to show me you have read this and are praying for my mummy and are praying for my family to be able to successfully prove to Allah swt that we love Him and accept His Decree and welcome His tests....

Those who are leaving for Najaf and Kerbala--please give our heartfelt salaams to Imam Ali (a.s) Imam Hussein (a.s) and all the shuhada e Kerbala and if possible do remember my dear mummy in your duas--and ask for her to have strength and forbearance ameen

[Dec, 4, 2014; 876 likes]



130. ALHAMDULILAH--I am flying to Paris in a few hours (with my dear, precious mother) to recite majalises for Ashra Zainabiyya at the Mohammadi Imambargah.

How do I thank you, Ya Allah, for granting me this incredible opportunity to continue the legacy of the Caravan of Bibi Zaynab (a.s) and to help carry the flag of Hazrat Abbas (a.s) to so many faraway parts of the world??

It is hard to believe that my mother and I returned just a few day ago after reciting Muharram Majalises in Antananarivo, Madagascar and the Comoros Islands and here I am leaving my home again, called to be of service to the Ahlulbayt (a.s) and to Islam.

Much as this work has its sacrifices and challenges, I do not feel, even for a moment, as if I am doing a favour or an ehsaan. If anything, I feel an immense sense of gratitude at being given a reason to live. For there is a deep thirst within me--to speak about my Lord, to glorify Him, to narrate about His Holy Prophet (saww) and his progeny (a.s) and to immerse myself in the remembrance of Kerbala.

Every majlis, every lecture and every opportunity to speak gives me an overwhelming sense of elation and deep satisfaction. If only I could explain what an out of body experience it is. It is as if I am sitting amidst angels and they are eagerly listening to every word I speak. When I on the mimbar, I feel as if I am truly alive. As if I am living the true reason for my existence.

Zakira Shyrose

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I am so indebted to my spouse, my children, my mother in law, my sisters, my brother and my entire extended family--and my community, for being a part of this service for Islam and for supporting me in this cause. To everyone who sends food to my home, helps dress my children, offers support and love--and even watches over my children at the mosque (and puts food for them in their plates) please know that Allah swt is a witness to all that you do. And He swt will surely reward you for your priceless efforts. ameen

Subhanallah the community in Paris is truly inspiring. Despite the difficulty in carrying out azadari openly and the legal restrictions placed on Muslim women to freely dress in hijab at work or university, the congregation continues to worship in very large numbers and with an astounding amount of enthusiasm and spirit.

I had the good fortune to speak at their beautiful imambargah last year when I recited majlis there for the Muharram flag raising ceremony (when I was enroute to Reunion Island to recite Muharram majalis there).

What an amazing experience it was!!! The pictures of the mosque are from that day.

Since then, the imambargah has undergone an extensive and very huge renovation. But a recent terrible tragedy occurred during the last finishing touches--a fire broke out and burned down most of the beautiful masjid.

But this community has NOT become disheartened. They have vowed to rebuild and have been renting out massive halls, still inviting zakireen and painstakingly and laboriously taking items to various halls to carry out the azadari with the same fervour as before.

MASHALLAH!!! May Allah swt give them courage and strength to continue in their endeavours.

My topic for this Ashra Zainabiyya will be on the beautiful Treatise of Rights (Risalat e Huquq) written by our 4th Imam Zainul Abedine (a.s). Each of the 10 days will be devoted to an in-depth analysis of the various rights and responsibilities that are incumbent on all believers towards God, towards their selves, their family, their community, Islam and towards wider society.

During his sermon on the streets of Kufa, Imam Zainul Abedin (a.s) spoke so movingly that it reduced grown men to tears.

One of them said: "What an evil thing we have done! We have annihilated ourselves".

Another replied: "But what can we do now?"

Imam (a.s) answered:

"May Allah bless those, who accept my advice and put into practice my recommendations about their duty to Allah, the Prophet of Allah and the Progeny of the Prophet, for it is incumbent upon us to follow the Prophet of Allah".

May Allah swt accept our efforts to please our Imam (a.s) and to understand what his advice meant and may He swt give us tawfiq to put into practice, the beautiful recommendations that came from an Imam (a.s) who was instrumental in raising Islam high, and in its true form out of the burning ashes of the plains of Kerbala.

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[Dec, 14, 2014; 145 likes]



131. My dear Pakistan--the adopted land where I grew up until I was 6 yrs old...What has happened to you? I cry thinking about the danger that must be prevalent on the streets of my dear homeland, today, on this day of Ashura.

Until I was a 6 year old in Karachi (and then we moved to Dubai) I remember seeing this marsiya on the TV--on the one and only channel of the land--on the day of Ashura.

There was nothing else to watch on TV on the day of Ashura but majalises.

The streets were filled with people flocking to majalises. Juloos were everywhere.

Not just Shia but also most of the Sunni would join us to pay respects to the Holy Family (a.s) at Masjid Shahe Khorasan, Mehfil Murtaza, Soldier Bazaar and other places.

The day of Ashura was a truly solemn day throughout Pakistan and was commemorated by ALL Muslims--Sunni, Shia and otherwise.

The tv stations carried marsiya all day and true Islam was recognized:

It was understood that the family of Ahlulbayt (a.s) should be respected and loved by ALL Muslims and the tragedies that befell them touched all of us because we ALL loved the Holy Prophet (saww) and felt his pain for he loved his family so very much--and so of course, did Allah swt

In those days--just 30 years ago, not only was the life of Imam Hussein (a.s) considered precious but the life of every HUMAN BEING was considered sacred. It was a crime to kill anyone.

I cover my ears and my eyes with the thought of the streets of Karachi today. The juloos of Shia are carried out with fears of bombs and gunfire and are met head-on by large large processions of fellow Muslims dancing to loud music with booming drums--with all of them carrying huge odd models of mockery complete with sparkling lights and symbols of festivity.

My dear land of Pakistan what has happened to you?

My dear religion of Islam, what has been done to you?

[Nov, 4, 2014; 83 likes]

132. Truly an experience of a lifetime to be reciting majalis here for the (south Asian) Khoja community in Antananarivo, Madagascar. Subhanallah what a loving community!! My inbox is already full with beautiful letters of feedback from the ladies here and it is difficult to walk through the enormous masjid without being surrounded by very loving, excited women, youth and seniors who are eager to say "salaam".

Many youth are already translating my majalis in French each day and the jamaat's radio station airs my majalis LIVE daily at 4 pm Antananarivo time at the following internet link:

<http://tunein.com/radio/Radio-RVS-s124940/>

Inshallah hoping to get some better pictures (sorry for some of the blurry ones--there are only a few seconds to take pictures as the day is filled with events)

An incredible experience to recite Muharram majalis and to spend time with a vibrant and extremely loving community of over 2000 members that has an Islamic day school, madressa of over 600 students, a very successful tabligh mission geared towards the local Malagasy population and a very prolific Radio and Television station (Madagascar RVS). The ladies

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section has an enormous "zareeh" complete with a replica of the traditional silver and golden grill that surrounds the graves of our Imams (a.s). It is still in the early days of the first ashra of Mahe Muharram and mashallah, attendance in the ladies section is already up to 500 ladies (according to catering orders for the daily fateha).

I recite 2 majalis a day--one in the morning at a home and one in the afternoon at the masjid. I also visit the children's program and do presentations there.

My majalis are aired LIVE everyday at 4:00 pm Antananarivo time on Madagascar's RVS radio and can also be accessed via internet from anywhere in the world

[Oct, 28, 2014; 81 likes]





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133. I saw this sign while on a walk with my husband and it sent chills down my spine. How terrified we get when we know that taking a road could dangerously trap us forever and keep us lost and forever blocked from our destination.

POINT OF NO RETURN???!!!

Ya Allah!! Let's not go further!! Let's run far away from this foreboding turn on the road!!

!

But how often life puts us at similar junctures and crossroads and how often one wrong seemingly benign immoral decision can forever put us on a path towards complete doom. Take

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the first step and then it's a free fall of slipping down a path of moral degradation from which there is NO RETURN.

How often we ignore the internal signs that cry out "STOP! Turn back!! Danger!!" and we move forward anyway, intoxicated and heedless, our steps fuelled by our desires, our greed, our impulsive need for gratification.

Looking back on life, so many tell us of such crucial moments in their life when they took the road of no return:

The day they had that first puff of a cigarette just to try it

The day they had that first sip of alcohol just to impress friends

The day they took that first joint of marijuana just to feel that first high

The day they decided to secretly meet up with that na-mehram woman or man--just to feed that infatuation

The day they first tried gambling--just for fun

The day they watched a dirty movie or looked at bad pictures--just out of curiosity.

The day they slapped their wife--just to teach her a lesson

The day they stole someone's valuable watch or electronic device--because it gave them such a rush.

And suddenly there was no turning back.

It got less and less difficult to do something so wrong.

It gave more and more peace and pleasure.

It became more and more a habit

It became more and more impossible to stop.

The point of no return.

It starts with just one step.

And all because we chose to walk past that warning sign.

[Oct, 9, 2014; 68 likes]



134. THE TIME IS NOW....

There something that is in the way.

An obstacle that stands between us and Allah swt.

A Devil that wont let us pass.

Each of us knows what it is.

We all know what our personal Devil is.

Whether that shaitan is an addiction, a haraam relationship, our neglect of salaah, our habit of lying or stealing, our inability to cover ourselves with hijab or even our inability to let go of bitterness and hatred.

Or whether that shaitan is our inability to truly rely on Allah swt, relentlessly making a particular hajat our only goal, our only peace.

Or our shaitan may be that unattainable woman, that young man who wont marry us, that promotion, that baby that just wont be conceived, that huge mansion or sports car we must have.

Whatever our personal devil is, we all know it is there.

And it has become a huge boulder in our path. It blocks the way.

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And yet we push forward, hoping we can find peace, inner happiness and a deeper connection with Allah swt.

But we can never truly move forward as long as this Devil is in our way.

For there can never be peace and happiness and connection until we, ourselves, recognize and then let go of what is holding us back.

The Day of Arafah is upon us. One of the most sacred days of the Islamic calendar. A day when forgiveness is given on a silver platter and the beseecher is rewarded with what he seeks.

But before we seek, let us do an internal inventory....

Where is that shaitan inside us that doesn't allow us to rest? Find him. There he is--lurking in the shadows. So hidden inside us and yet so, so conspicuous in everything that we do.

Let us confront this shaitan. Let us have a deep discussion with this greed, this need, this evil thing that makes us so, so obsessed and let us decide once and for all, that we will make him LEAVE.

With him taking up all this emotional, mental, spiritual space within us, we can never, ever be happy.

He needs to go.

He needs to go NOW.

So today is the day to shed this dead weight.

Today is the day to forever say no to that glass of alcohol.

Today is the day to forever say no to that drug that we crave.

Today is the day to forever say no to compulsive shopping.

No to gambling.

No to lying.

No to stealing.

No to lust, No to that non-marital affair.

No to dirty books and movies.

No to tight, revealing clothes.

No to staying away from the prayer mat, fasting, khums, zakat, Hajj and all that remains undone in our relationship with Allah swt.

No to perpetual discontentment and that continuous, repetitious begging Him for that which we feel will complete us, that which He (swt) in His Infinite Wisdom has Decided to hold back.

Today let us say NO TO THAT DEVIL.

LET US KICK HIM OUT.

And then when he is out, let us breathe a huge sigh of relief.

And then adorn the clothes of obedience.

And go into our first, real submissive sajdah.

And say "Do with me what You will, my Lord. I have given up my addictions, my desires, my everything for YOU. I give you the reins of my life and I will do as YOU say, not what I want.

Today I will let you be my teacher and let YOU tell me what is good for me. I will ask for what I

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wish, but I will know that YOU KNOW BEST if you don't give it to me. For You are my Lord, You are the One who is my Guide, my Teacher, my Salvation, my everything"

And then the day of Arafah will take on an incredible, miraculous glow which will permeate through our entire being and our entire life. Sins will fall off of us, and that which we desperately begged for will suddenly come to us as reward for this huge step we just took.

Because we have let go of our devil.

And then we will truly be ready for a fresh new year.

We will begin the month of Muharram cleansed and with new resolutions for a better US.

And then, the tears we will shed for the tragedy of Kerbala will completely purify us, solidify our path and will seal our fate towards Jannah.

Ameen

Today is that day.

Right now is the moment.

Make that pledge and then take that FIRST STEP.

LABAYK ALLAHUMMA LABAYK!!!!!!

[Oct, 3, 2014; 76 likes]

135. HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE A CHILD IN A WAR ZONE?

I was a tiny 2 and a half yr old child in Karachi, Pakistani when the war broke out against Pakistan and India during the Bangladesh liberation war.

I was too young to understand what it all meant.

I had just learned to walk and I still drank from a baby bottle.

But I can vividly remember and hear the sounds of those days. And the panic and fear that ensued.

Even though I was just a baby, I can still recognize the sound of those awful sirens that always echoed throughout the city before the bombs came.

The sound of that siren still makes my hair crawl.

(I heard it in the Quds day rally and it made me stop in my tracks like a scared rabbit--it was being emitted from the Israeli protestors side of the protest to illustrate the sirens they hear everyday)

Those sirens, when I was a child, meant we all had to run, run, run.

Our family of 5 children and 2 parents would frantically run down the 3 flights of stairs down from our apartment building in pitch darkness.

All lights of the city had to be turned off by law so that our city couldn't be seen by the military planes overhead.

We would run to the mattress shop downstairs and the owner would push us all to the back to hide between the mattresses.

We all stayed there huddled with neighbours and other strangers.

It gave us a false sense of security.

Besides, it was always better to be on low ground in case the building was hit.

But what about being buried underneath it all?

No one dared to ask this question.

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There was no whispering allowed.
No singing of songs to soothe us, no telling of stories to distract us.
We held each other tightly and my older siblings stroked my hair to keep me quiet.
One day, in the mad rush to go downstairs, I was somehow forgotten!!!
My family was in panic when they realized I was not with them.
What if I had wandered off into the streets? What if I was crying and lost on the stairwell?
What if someone had abducted me?
Those moments of anguish were so very hard on my parents and my siblings and I know they must have had to be held back from running out.
When the all clear sign was given to go back to our home, my frantic family found me hidden under the bed, cowering and shivering.
I had covered my ears to drown out the sound of the bang, bang, bang. I had shut my eyes tightly to avoid the pitch darkness of our apartment.
I had cried softly so that no one would hear me.
But I had cried.
And I can still remember how it felt, even though I was just a baby.
How is this possible?
Maybe I am just the kind of person who remembers things too vividly?
Or maybe the sounds of war just leave a deep, deep impression upon the soul, upon the psyche, upon the brain, upon the heart, upon the mind.
It doesn't matter who is bombing.
It doesn't matter who bombed first.
It doesn't matter how important the bombing is.
It doesn't matter who is defending, and who is defended.
It doesn't matter how small or short-lived the war is.
War scares a child. War wounds a child. War kills a child. War orphans a child. War violates a child. War takes away the innocence of a child. War leaves a horrible memory for a child. War makes the tears fall for a child. War is WAR for a child.
My brothers and sisters around the world, in Iraq, in Palestine, in Syria, in Pakistan, in Bahrain, in Afghanistan, in Nigeria, in any place on earth.
Please, please leave our children alone. Let them have a childhood. Let them experience peace in their lifetimes. Let them live. Let their families live. Let their homes be a safe haven for them. Let their school be a place of learning. Let their hospitals be a place of healing.
Please don't confuse them. Don't ruin their entire understanding of what the world is about. Let them know love, and safety and kindness and generosity.
Let them know their parents and their siblings.
Give them a chance to live.
Please we beg you, give them a chance to live.
Today, the city of Gaza is in utter darkness.
The power plant has been hit.
No lights to be able to see.
No water to put out the fires or to drink.
No sewage systems to be able to get rid of waste properly and to pump waste out.

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No hospitals standing.
No schools to learn in.
No home to go back to.
No parents to rush to for safety.
No legs to run on.
No arms to reach out to beg with.
Soon there will be no people left to kill.
Will we be "done" then?
This is 2014. And this is how our modern civilization has evolved.
We kill our children.
And we rejoice in these victories.
[Jul, 31, 2014; 106 likes]

136. Quds day 2014 spent with over 15 thousand concerned citizens from all faiths, ethnic backgrounds and countries was an inspiring, moving and eye-opening experience. I marvelled at the vision of Imam Khomeini (ra) who understood the importance of galvanizing the entire Muslim ummah to take to the streets for this important cause.
Chanting slogans and pledging our support to the oppressed and displaced people of Gaza and Palestine moved our hearts, sometimes bringing tears to our eyes.
We realized how much these oppressed people need our voices to speak for them.
Seeing the sheer number of people was so motivating and inspired strength within us.
There were exhilarating moments--seeing children leading the chants and slogans and a young man climbing high up onto a traffic light and flying a Palestinian flag from the top of the traffic light.
Moving scenes of frail elderly struggling to walk, babies sleeping in strollers and youth with flags painted on their faces and many wearing shirts with thought-provoking slogans.
The scary moment was when Israeli protestors (over a thousand) confronted our rally and people were shouting back and forth (some were hurt). The police stood as a barrier to protect us all and for a moment it felt like utter chaos could ensue if people got trampled or punches were thrown.. Alhamdulillah none of that happened and Allah swt protected us all.
Our Duas are with the oppressed people of Palestine as well as Iraq, Syria, Bahrain, Pakistan.
[Jul, 27, 2014; 181 likes]

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137. It is 3 am and I am sitting on my prayer mat (with this laptop on my lap!!!) remembering all the wonderful people who have given me so much love over the years.

Subhanallah I have truly been blessed to have had the opportunity to travel the world to recite majalises and to meet so many people. So many of these amazing people have gone out of their way to host me in their homes, taken me to restaurants, cooked elaborate meals for me, taken me sightseeing and shopping, driven me to the airport and to lectures and shown great love and courtesy to me, my mother and to my mother in law.

So many have given me valuable gifts, beautiful things for my children, cash gifts, treats to beautiful places and so much more etc.

Many, many of these are people that I have simply met on facebook--and who have invited me to their homes or to go sightseeing when they have heard that I would be visiting their city.

All of these lovely people have done these things not because of me, but because of the fact that I recite the names of Allah swt and our 14 Masumeen (a.s) They respect me and honour me and go out of their way to keep me happy when I am a traveller because of the fact that I am an ambassador of Islam.

And their sincerity in doing these selfless deeds is apparent.

90% of these individuals have never heard back from me--many simply follow me on facebook or send me salaams (and more gifts!!) with visiting relatives. It simply isn't possible to keep in

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touch with all the hundreds of people I meet and with the busy life that I lead and yet the love from them just flows and flows towards me!!

Subhanallah what incredible people Allah swt has created!!

I may not keep in touch, but remember them I surely do.

For these individuals have no idea how much I raise my hands high and regularly remember them in my duas--how much I express my gratitude to Allah swt about these blessed souls and beg Him to reward them amply for their huge hearts.

I can't remember their names and honestly wouldn't be able to recognize their faces--but I truly think of them with deep love and gratitude and ask Allah swt to fill their lives with happiness ameen

I remember their marhoomeen in my salat ul layl and ask Allah swt to grant them jannah, I think of their children, their homes, the struggles they have shared with me...I bring each city to mind and the memories of the people I met come to mind and I tell Allah (swt) that He knows their name, He knows who they are, He knows that incredible kindness they did to me, so please please Bless them.

There are certain shop keepers I remember who gave me free gifts, strangers who helped me on the road, wonderful people I have met on airplanes etc whom I have never met again but I do remember the joy they have given to me and how much they have enhanced my life experiences. I reflect on these lovely human beings often when I sit on the prayer mat and meditate.

Remembering such good people becomes an act of ibadat for it reminds me of how wonderful human beings are. The cruel acts of a limited number of people should never be allowed to make us bitter. We have to focus on the lovely people out there.

When I went to Umrah in March, I did a tawaf for the sawaab of all those who have hosted me in their homes. All of those who have fed me, who have made a traveller feel so loved and cherished.

And when I did, I had tears in my eyes for all those wonderful people who will never even know how much I remembered them but will inshallah suddenly feel their lives changing for the better ameen

Why do I write this?

To remind ourselves that a good deed is never wasted. Love is never wasted. Somewhere someone out there IS grateful for what you have done for them, even if you may feel that they have simply used you and forgotten about you. Someone, somewhere out there IS cherishing the beautiful memories you have given them and is wishing that they could fill your life with beautiful presents too.

Someone, somewhere out there IS praying for you.

For goodness is an energy that is never wasted. It bounces back and comes back to touch our own lives for Allah swt has promised that even an atom worth of goodness will be rewarded.

If a human being can remember a small gesture we have made and forever appreciates it with gratitude and love, imagine how much Allah swt takes account of each kindness we do.

Let us never stop being the caring, loving people that Allah swt asks us to be.

Our actions DO make the world a better place.

May Allah swt give us the tawfiq to continue the good things we do and to love and to increase our efforts to serve His creations, ameen

[Jul, 24, 2014; 124 likes]

138. Spent a wonderful afternoon teaching non-Muslim children (aged 5-12 yrs old) and their teachers about the Holy Month of Ramadhan and Hijab.

The children enjoyed the puppet show and an English nasheed about the month of Ramadhan and had lots of opportunities to ask the puppets (and me!) some very thought-provoking questions.

Despite their young age, the children were able to easily grasp the fact that fasting makes us more aware of the difficulties faced by the less fortunate, that this holy month is a month of giving charity and the month in which our holy book was revealed.

I could easily see that this was an experience that they will remember for a long time to come.

They were very interested to understand about why women wear hijab, who is Allah (swt), what is the name of the Holy book, what is a lunar calendar and what do Muslims do in this month.

We discussed the importance of treating others with respect, about asking questions to understand why people of different faiths do things differently and about living together in harmony despite our differences.

Many children were very intrigued and thrilled to meet the puppets and promised to check out our programs from Ahlulbayt tv and Zamana tv etc on youtube 😊:)

Zakira Shyrose

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[Jun; 8, 2014; 126 likes]



139. Councilor Shyrose Jaffer Dhalla presented the women's needs report. She pointed out that there is a glass ceiling that women still face and that there is a need to remove such barriers which would lead to greater women involvement in the decision making process

Zakira Shyrose

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[[Jun, 9, 2014; 6 likes]





139. SUBHANALLAH!! We were blessed with beautiful weather, gorgeous sunshine and clear skies on our sightseeing tour of the downtown core and an incredible walk through a rainforest, over treetops (!!!) and across the Capilano Suspension Bridge (which is almost as high above the water and trees as the Statue of Liberty!!!)

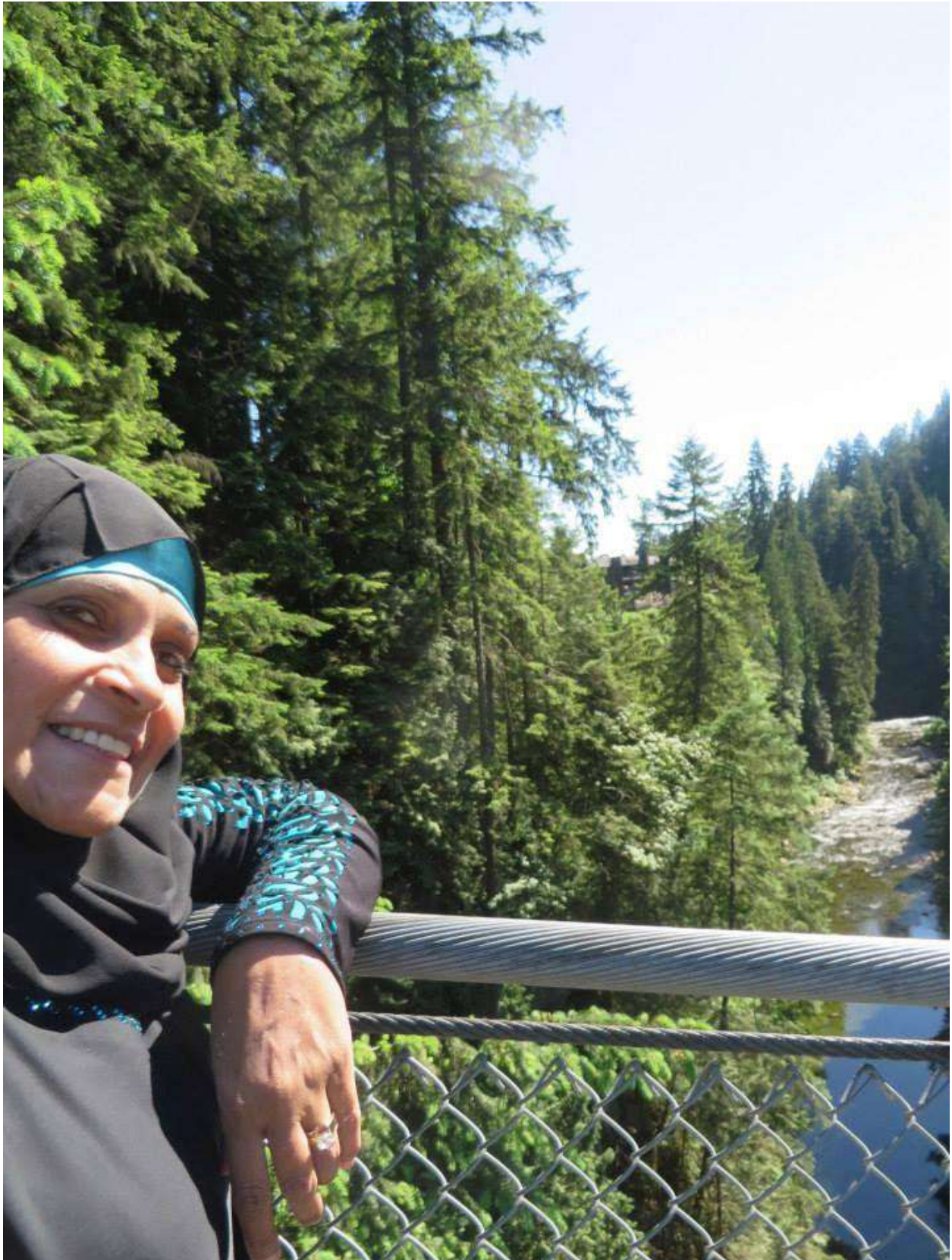
A beautiful day with the President of NASIMCO [Gulamabbas Najafi](#) and his wife Kaneez aunty, Secretary General Habib M Habib and Minnesota delegates Sadiq Datto and his wife Shabneez. We walked miles and miles and yet we didn't want the day to end--every moment was breathtaking and full of splendour, leaving us often speechless and sometimes exclaiming with astonishment and delight.

I have decided to share the entire album as every picture I took is worthy of being a screensaver!! Breathtaking brooks, extremely tall thousand year trees, rock formations and meandering paths with rare birds, animals, insects and types of vegetation. Allahu Akbar!!! What an amazing world you have created Ya Allah (swt)!!! You truly are the Greatest!!!

[Jun, 9, 2014; 94 likes]

Zakira Shyrose

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140. Alhamdulillah! with your duas a great accomplishment and victory for women following my speech on "Women's Political Participation and Leadership" at the 34th Annual NASIMCO Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia in Canada.

The voting delegates reviewed and APPROVED the recommendation that all existing NASIMCO member jamaats must accord women the constitutional right to cast their own votes and hold position in any capacity in the organization.

Inshallah will provide more details in my next post on what this historic and landmark decision means for the rights of women in our Shia communities across North America.

The conference was extremely well-attended with delegates, scholars, past jamaat leaders, invitees and guest observers from across North America.

I was also very honoured to recite a majlis and milad for the ladies seniors group in commemoration of the three recent Wiladats of the 3rd and 4th Imams (a.s) and Hazrat Abbas (a.s)

The host jamaat of Az-Zahraa Islamic Centre of Vancouver did a superb job in making us all feel honoured, welcomed and very well-taken care of. Jazakallah khair to the amazing group of volunteers, youth groups, ladies committee members and jamaat executives.

[Jun, 9, 2014; 122 likes]

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141. Heading to Vancouver, Canada to present a report on "Enhancing Women's Political Participation and Leadership" at the annual NASIMCO conference (North American Shia Ithnasheri Muslim Organizations).

I serve as an Executive Councillor on the board and represent all Tier 5 jamaats which have over 3000 members (for example Toronto jamaat) and am the North American liaison for World Federation's Women's Needs Assessment initiative.

Alhamdulillah NASIMCO has made great progress to empower the women of our community by passing a recent historic resolution requiring any new member jamaats to have voting rights for women and eligibility to hold any position (ie president) written and enshrined in their constitution.

In this meeting we hope, as part of my report, to pass a resolution that all existing members also comply with this landmark resolution.

This would empower our women and allow for their voices to be a part of the crucial decision making that takes place across our communities in North America (and inshallah, as a future goal, around the world)

It may be a challenge to accomplish this ambitious goal but remember that Duas are the weapon of a believer!!

Please do pray that I can present a convincing case and am able to encourage the voting delegates to pass the resolution!! AMEEN

[Jun 5, 2014; 195 likes]



142. So grateful to the San Francisco community for the fantastic hospitality and love they gave to my mother and myself. I can never forget the precious moments I spent with these lovely women who opened their homes and hearts to us.

Mashallah! What an amazing masjid (including an Islamic day school, library, bookstore, vast lecture halls for majalises in Urdu, Persian etc), huge kitchens and huge parking lots and so much more!!

Subhanallah, was so surprised to see such a huge community! The entire hall was FULL with over 500 ladies in attendance during the majlis (the picture of the empty hall still doesn't capture

Zakira Shyrose

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the vastness of the place--the other equally huge half which is not in the picture, is where the niyaaz was served).

The azadari to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Zainul Abedin (a.s) as well as the taste of the niyaaz (haleem) took me back to the my childhood days in Karachi.

The youth lecture was also very well-attended and it was great to see so much enthusiasm by the young ladies--many wrote long letters to me afterwards--and it really indicated that these young women are truly pondering and eager to learn more and more mashallah. It gave me much hope to see so much faith and respect for Islam in their eyes.

*My sincere apologies for not posting these pictures in March when I visited the Saba Centre to commemorate the shahadat of our 4th Imam (a.s)

(thank you to all who have written to request and remind me to post these--believe me it wasn't because I didn't enjoy my stay there--just got too busy with all my subsequent travels!!)

I cannot thank enough the loving ladies who took time afterwards to give me a tour of San Francisco (the Golden Gate bridge, chocolate factory, colourful sloping and steep (and sometimes crooked) streets, unique shaped houses, tasty dinner etc) despite my very packed schedule of majalises and lectures.

I am so very grateful to Allah swt for allowing me to meet with so many communities around the world and for the opportunity to visit such beautiful Islamic Centres. The San Jose community especially touched me when I witnessed how graciously the various cultures shared the space. The love of Imam Hussein (a.s) truly is an incredible bond that brings hearts together!!!!

May Allah (swt) keep these bonds united forever and strengthen our brotherhood (across the cultures, languages, customs, food preferences etc) and keep our faith forever shining AMEEN
[Jun, 4, 2014; 138 likes]





143. Often when we travel together and she sleeps beside me, I listen to my mother's breathing and just savour each sound that indicates that she is still alive. I swear to you, in those moments I thank Allah swt for each breath. And I beg Him (swt) to please let her breathe again, please let her stay here on this earth one more moment. Please let me feel this safe, this content, this loved some more, Ya Allah. Please share her with me on this earth for some more time even though she is Yours and it may be time to let her tired soul return to You

[May, 27, 2014; 197 likes]

144. My mom is truly an amazing and very brave lady!!! When she found out I was leaving for Edmonton for a very busy weekend of lectures--she was insistent that she join me!!! We tried to talk her out of it as her health is now quite fragile (and the ticket price had been extremely exorbitant at this last minute).

Why sit through such a long airplane ride and pay so much for just 2 nights?! But mom was not to be convinced to change her mind.

Her ticket was purchased a few hours before the flight and mom attended each and every event I spoke at!!!

Every morning she was up and dressed before anyone in the house even woke up. And at the end of the day, she would not agree to be dropped home early no matter how much people would

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offer!!

Subhanallah! Despite her weakness, her health issues and her advanced age, mom showed strength and resilience even when I was drooping with exhaustion!!!

As I recited majlis and saw her watching me from across the room, I saw her lips moving and moving and moving.

And I realized, suddenly, that every single word uttered out of MY mouth was powerful and perfect!! Where was this inspiration, this power, this ease of words coming from???!!! And I looked at my mother and understood. It was because she was praying for me every single moment and every step of the way.

Maa tujhe laakho salaam. Maa khuda tujay lambhi zindagi day!!! Bas ye dua kerday kay ham poori zindagi tere inhi kadmo pay bitaday. Kyu kay jannat wahee miljayegi. AMEEN
LOVE YOU MUMMY!!!!!!

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[May, 27, 2014; 391 likes]

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145. So grateful and very touched by the wonderful hospitality and enthusiasm shown by the entire Edmonton (Canada) Jamaat, Al Mahdi Madrasah, Resident Alim Sheikh Usama Al-Attar, Jamaat President and executive committee, Ladies Council, Madrasah Principal sr. [Kaniz Mavani](#), and my generous hosts br. Abbas and Farhana Mohamed.

The weekend would not have been this productive and immensely jam-packed with activities without the participation of the very enthusiastic members of this very loving community. Subhanallah, the turn-out of participants was full-capacity whether it was for the teacher training seminar, the Baligha mother/daughter workshop, girls youth discussion, madressa students lecture, children's puppet show and ladies majlis commemorating the shahadat of Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s)

In the midst of so much activity, loving community members generously treated my mother and I to tasty dinners, a sightseeing trip to the West Edmonton Mall, visits to family members and so many wonderful presents.

A very heartfelt thank you to Sheikh Dr. Usama Al-Attar for his warm welcome, hospitality and friendship. And I am especially grateful to him for the deep respect and sincere love that he gave to my mother.

The children, ladies and seniors of the community gave us such an amazing send-off and a chorus of voices requested us to please come back very soon!!! Our car drove off with a sea of waving hands and smiling faces wishing us a safe farewell.

We truly felt as if we had left our hearts in Edmonton!!!

I have returned home with a rejuvenated heart and a very joyous spirit! Even the airport personnel, aircraft crew and residents of Edmonton were so very, very friendly and kind that my mother and I were completely astounded!! The small town feeling in such a bustling, busy and vast city was an amazing thing to experience.

May Allah swt bless the growing community of Edmonton jamaat and give them the tawfiq to always seek and earn His Pleasure ameen

[May, 27, 2014; 139 likes]

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146. 10 TIPS ON WHAT TO WRITE IN YOUR MOTHER'S DAY LETTER

Here are some sentence starters to get the emotions flowing:

- 1) Mom, now that I am a parent myself I have a whole new appreciation for....
- 2) Mom, I am sorry that when I was young I....
- 3) My best memories from my childhood are...
(here are some ideas)
 - bedtime rituals,
 - stories you told me when you would put me to sleep
 - special song you made for me
 - special cuddle and tickle you did with me
 - the way you let me put my head on your lap
 - special games we played
 - the best holidays we had
 - the wonderful birthday you gave me
- 4) My favourite food that you make is...
- 5) One of the best parenting tips I have picked up from you...

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6) I want to thank you for all the times you

(here are some ideas on what to list)

- always helping me with my homework
- driving me to soccer, drama rehearsals, birthday parties (etc)
- having the best birthday parties
- coming to my school events
- making me great meals when I was always so hungry as a teenager
- helping me clean my room
- always folding my laundry and keeping my clothes organized for me
- packing me the best lunches in the world
- standing up for me when I was bullied
- believing in me when I failed

7) Mom I love you because:

(here are some ideas)

- you have the gentlest voice in the world
- you always hug me when I need it the most
- you always smell so fragrant!!
- you always have a smile on your face,even when things are not going well
- you are always positive
- you love me even when the entire world is against me
- you are the best role model
- you know exactly what to say
- you are always encouraging
- you are always THERE
- you help me when I need help the most
- you have such a forgiving heart
- you always bring the family together

8) Mom, I want you to know that it meant a lot to me when you.....

9) Mom, you might think I haven't been listening but I have learned some of the best lessons of life from you. You taught me that.....

10) Thank you mom for not.....

(here are some ideas:)

- not giving up on me,
- not telling me "I told you so" when I
- not leaving me when I made a certain choice,
- not telling my secret,
- not ever saying 'no' when I need you,
- not giving up on our family
- not criticizing me when I
- not judging me when I ...

Dear friends, hoping these will help us write that long over-due letter that our moms so very much deserve!

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Please feel free to share this post --even if it may even help make just ONE mom's day be the best one of her life)

And if possible--do share some memories of your mother here with us (comments section) so that we can all celebrate our wonderful mothers and be inspired by the great mothers around us with duas

[May, 10, 2014; 71 likes]

147. MOTHER'S DAY ON SUNDAY MAY 11 NORTH AMERICA

A few days ago I was visiting my 77 yr old mother and she sent me to her room to get her medicines. As I rummaged through her cupboards and drawers I found a folded piece of paper. It was a handmade card I had written to her when I was 15 yrs old.

Considering the fact that my own daughter is now 15 yrs old--that card was an old vintage piece of writing that belonged in the Archive section of the library lol

I read that card and I marvelled at the heartfelt words--for they still rang true after all these years. I apologized to mom for not being the daughter that she deserved. I wrote of the many times I had hurt her, been rude to her and disobeyed her. I lamented the fact that I had made her cry and caused her so much pain.

I wrote about how precious she was to me. How I wished I could buy her diamonds and gold and rubies but I couldn't even afford to buy her a real card. I promised that one day when I earned money I would shower her with cash so that she could buy all the things she dreamed about. I begged her to never leave me. To never die. To forgive me. To love me no matter how unloveable I became. She was the best and if God had asked me to choose, I would still choose her as my mom as there could be no one better.

Reading those heartfelt words from the teenage me, touched me. I felt so touched that mom had saved that card (and I found others I had written to her over the years in that cupboard too)

But more than anything, I cried a tear for the mother my mom has been. I wish I could be even 10% of the mother she has been to me, to my own children. I wish I could be as forgiving, as unconditionally loving, as patient, hardworking and as generous and selfless as mom has been to each of her children.

Those words I wrote could still be written today by me. I still continue to hurt her without planning to, still get impatient, still neglect her. And she continues to forgive and forgive.

That's how mothers are.

God has given mothers a forgiving, loving heart and a patient heart that waits and waits for us to return to them apologetic and remorseful.

But reading that card also made me envy my mother. I envied her for the fact that she had such letters and cards written to her from her children.

The art of writing has become lost....no one writes by hand anymore. No one even writes! Emails and texts are one liners. Send someone a long note and they write back "K"

How lucky is the mother who has children who can express their love so deeply and so clearly.

That card I had written to her was GOLD. So were the others in that drawer. No wonder she had saved them. Each card was filled with words and words and words. Sometimes I wrote even on

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the back page and over the price tag and the other fine print!!! Sometimes I would even cry my own fresh tears on those cards and give them to her as proof.

And I realized even if I had bought her rubies and diamonds and pearls, she would not have cherished them so carefully like she had cherished those heartfelt words from her child.

This mother's day, let us write a long letter to our mothers. It's the best gift we could ever give them!!!

And let us tell them in detail why they are special, what we love about them, what we are sorry about, what we wish, what our promises are to her etc etc. Let us update them on our lives, on our children's lives and our upcoming plans for the future.

Let us not spend hours looking for the "perfect" card with the "perfect" poem and the "perfect" picture on the front and then simply sign our names at the bottom.

That's not personal. That's not heartfelt. That's not something a mother craves to see.

A mother wants to see her child's handwriting, their feelings and the connection that her child feels to her.

Include a picture from an old family album. Or a toy or something from the past. Or write about a special memory you had with her that always reminds you how wonderful she is.

Even if your mother is not alive, it can still be great therapy to write about her and share with your children as the legacy she left behind.

CONSIDER THIS HOMEWORK MY DEAR FB FRIENDS 😊;) BETTER START NOW

And if you wish, I would be honoured to have you share your letters on my wall here for others to be inspired by and for others to reflect upon how special a mother is, and how precious THEIR mother is.

Let us celebrate our mothers!! And enjoy every moment Allah swt shares them with us on this earth!!

May Allah swt preserve our mothers and if they are no longer on this earth, may He (swt) grant them jannah ameen

[May, 5, 2014; 153 likes]

148. I always cherish the opportunity to speak at youth events. There is something just so inspiring to see young people involved in furthering the cause of Allah swt and the Ahlulbayt (a.s)

Nothing gives me more hope in the future than to see young people independently organizing events, inviting people, decorating the hall, choosing speakers, making the agenda, welcoming guests and setting up the food etc

We often lament at the loss of our young people and how misled so many have become; but we miss focusing on the diligent ones who DO care about Islam, who DO want to learn more, who ARE making a difference and ARE trying to improve themselves.

These are the forgotten youth who regularly need a much-deserved pat on the back. They are like the well-mannered middle child in the family--ignored because they simply don't need discipline or to be kept on track.

But attention should not always be negative!

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Everyone needs to be told, "you are awesome!! keep it up!! I am noticing the efforts you always make"

And it is CRUCIAL that we support our youth by attending their events. Young people are full of unbelievable zeal and energy and enthusiasm--but they are also very easily demotivated, discouraged and disheartened.

I served as a youth chairperson when I was a youth and prior to that position served as a treasurer and for two years I was a social events coordinator. I remember how hard we worked and how much passion we put into those events. We painted huge banners, carried heavy equipment, set up games, did advertising, (even dressed up as clowns for one event) and made phone calls to rent bouncing castles and cotton candy machines.

And how fantastic it felt when people enjoyed themselves. And how disappointed we felt when our fellow youth didn't show up 😞:(All that effort gone to waste. All that food that we had paid for with our hard-earned budget left uneaten.

How sad we felt when our friends were too busy to make the time to at least show up for one hour to fill our event with their colourful presence.

How embarrassed we felt when the important, well-known speakers we had managed to book for our event had to speak to a meagre crowd of 15 youth.

We as adults, as parents of youth, as members of the community must encourage young people to attend youth events. It is our responsibility to ensure that these events continue to occur and that our children participate every time.

It is a good idea for us parents to have the website or facebook page of the youth committee (in our jamaat) so that we can be aware of what events they are having. This way we can remind our teenagers to block that time off on their calendar and to help make arrangements for their ride to the event.

Youth need our guidance and we parents have to be intelligent in how we guide them to what is best for them. Empowering ourselves with knowledge of upcoming events is a great way to start.

Much of what I have learned, much of what I have been inspired by has been at youth events when I was a teenager myself. It's a great opportunity to have an Islamic speaker right there to answer one's burning questions, to hear about new topics one had never reflected upon, to be inspired by other youth who are more religiously-inclined and to make new, sometimes life-long friends.

Yesterday I had another wonderful opportunity to be with the youth of [Myg Mahdieh](#) under the leadership of one of the many directors, [Zohreh EI](#) and her amazing team of hard-working youth. It was just so heartwarming to see the efforts and enthusiasm with which they had put together the entire event. Mashallah! So impressive!!

The youth had put together a beautiful stage, decorated the place and had chairs and tables for all the guests to sit at. There were tasty refreshments before the program, during the program and after the program!!! The food was beautifully decorated on trays and sweets and cakes were arranged so perfectly. The youth had made cakes, cookies, jello of every colour, there was a huge cake, tasty salads and sandwiches etc etc. There was so much thought and effort put into everything. Things weren't served haphazardly, they were "presented" with love and flourish 😊:)

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Announcements were made professionally, the guests always appreciated every nasheed and speech with loud salawat and cheering and clapping. There were smiles and happy, well-dressed girls everywhere 😊:)

All the guests were treated to portrait pictures (complete with a studio background screen) and there were prizes for answering questions correctly, free henna designs for all guests and a beautiful pink, red or yellow rose for each young lady as she left the hall!!!!

What a lovely way to celebrate the life of bibi Fatema Zahra (a.s) BRAVO girls!!! So proud of you!! And mashallah, all the young ladies who recited did it in the most beautiful way with the best pronunciation. Subhanallah!

I had such a fantastic time! and so did my daughters (Shireen Fatema even won a prize for answering a question--she was over the moon in joy!)

Thank you to all these exemplary young women who each had the perfect akhlaq to thank me on stage (and personally off-stage), present me with flowers and gifts, take group pictures with me and carried my bags and helped me load my car too!!. I was treated me with so much respect and love and the duas flowed from my heart for these lovely young ladies.

So delighted that our daughters are so wonderful!!!!

I especially want to thank all the young ladies who were so sporty and willing to volunteer to be in my short drama. Thanks for wearing all the costumes without any argument (!) and for showing such great talent and confidence in front of all the ladies!! GOOD JOB!!!

It was a wonderful evening and definitely time well-spent. Thank you Bibi Fatema (a.s) for being such a perfect role model to our young ladies!! May Allah swt bless our youth and grant them success and the courage to walk on the straight path with modesty, piety and with steady, firm steps ameen

[May, 5, 2014; 41 likes]

149. HOW TO BE A VERY SMART MOM

LOL my 15yr old daughter Zaynab just brought over a gang of 6 of her high school friends and after greeting them all I said,

"I have a GREAT idea!! Instead of watching a movie or just lazing around why don't you guys COOK together?!! It will be soooo much fun!!"

The girls were in shock.

So I quickly steered them into the kitchen.

And before they could say [#crazy](#) mom, I gave them all chopping boards, knives, pots, stirring spoons, olive oil

and

all sorts of vegetables (mushrooms, celery, onions, broccoli, carrots etc)

and

stir fry sauces (Szechuan, orange/ginger, sweet and sour)

Plus crushed pepper and crushed ginger.

I also gave them noodles to choose from and to boil and told them to divide up the tasks (wash vegetables, chop, stir fry etc)

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And now my kitchen is full of giggling girls and soon DINNER for the entire family will be ready

BWAHAHAHAH!! *evil laughter

The best part? I just overheard one of the girls saying,
"I LOVE your mom Zaynab!! She's soooo cool!"

(I can hear the sound of my teenager's eyes rolling all the way from here in my room ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!)

[Mar, 27, 2014; 155 likes]



150. THE 3 ANGELS THAT I MET ON MY UMRA TRIP

I expected to feel the presence of angels when in Mecca and Medina, but I never expected to SEE them.

But subhanallah! Allah swt blessed me with the opportunity to meet 3 incredible individuals that came like angels into my life and made our entire trip completely more special and memorable.

ANGEL #1 [Yasmin Khoja](#)

The night before we left for our trip, I received a lovely email from sister Yasmin, a facebook friend whom I have never met.

She told me she lived in Jeddah and asked if we were coming there at all--and would we be able to come over for dinner?!!!

I wrote back and told her we were a family of SIX PEOPLE (that's a lot mashallah) and were only landing at Jeddah airport in the early morning and then driving immediately to Medina (approx 5 hours away)

Sister Yasmin's invitation was so welcoming though! It would be so nice to rest after such a long flight....And soon, at her very kind insistence we, complete strangers to her, were at her door!!

Sister Yasmin met us at her door with a fantastic smile and she and her mom gave us such a welcome that we felt as if we had come home after many years away!!

Her beautiful home was decorated so tastefully and each and every item was carefully selected to match. And subhanallah! what a spread she had cooked for us!!

The entire dinner table was brimming with food. It was morning so she had made us a fantastic breakfast with many vegetable omelettes, a huge stack of pancakes, fresh roti, curry, homemade muffins, juice, tea, coffee and so much food that I couldn't even sample every thing!!

We ate and chatted like old friends and spoke to her husband who was at work but was so very kind and welcoming to us. Sister Yasmin even had towels for our showers and had bedrooms prepared for us to rest in!!

My son, thrilled to see the swimming pool, was able to go swimming and fulfill his dream of swimming under the hot Arabian sun.

Meeting her lovely mom was a true highlight and I recited marsiya for her and recited a short majlis of bibi Zaynab (a.s)

We reluctantly left her home and marvelled at the hospitality of lovely angels like her who open their homes and hearts to strangers so welcomingly!! It was such a wonderful way to begin our umrah trip and I know that it truly had an effect on my children who were amazed that hospitality can be this warm--even to complete strangers!!

Throughout our time in Masjid un Nabawi and at the Holy Kaba, I remembered her and her family, and her marhoom father in my salat ul layl, my tawafs and in my duas. It was impossible to forget such love and true kindness...

And sister Yasmin sent me an email each day to inquire if we were okay and needed any assistance!!!

The Holy Quran repeatedly commands us to be kind and giving to travellers (wayfarers), promising great rewards to those who obey.

"And give to the near of kin his due and (to) the needy and the wayfarer..."(17:26)

Sister Yasmin showed us why it is so important to be kind to travellers. When one is away from one's own comfort zone, it can truly bring a very very deep satisfaction and relief to be treated kindly and gently and so lovingly. To be in a home, eat a home-cooked meal and to be surrounded with kind faces is a priceless thing and no money or air-miles can buy that. Nothing can.

Sister Yasmin, you are a true momin and showed us that the Holy Quran is not only to be read but must be acted upon. May He swt reward you abundantly for what you did for us. You have no idea how much joy and happiness you gave to us. We will never ever forget you!!! You are in our hearts forever!!!

ANGEL #2

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This angel was actually a cook at the Intercontinental hotel!!! Brother Feroz had the job of making omelettes at the huge buffet and he was surprised to see that I could speak Urdu (he said he thought I was a local Saudi woman)

We spoke a little and I was simply kind and respectful to him and showed a little bit of interest in him. I praised his cooking and thanked him and basically acknowledged his presence, that's all. And that was all it took for him to become our forever faithful host and brother.

Every day, he would keep aside special treats for us and bring them to our table. He would ensure an entire huge tray of pizza (which would usually finish fast at the buffet) was kept aside for our family only!!!

He would go to the kitchen and find us fruits that were not necessarily being served that day!! He would remember exactly what we liked to eat and prepare our food without being told to!!

Soon, he had arranged for a complimentary washing and folding of our clothes!! He gave us his mobile number to call us at anytime if we needed anything.

The amazing moment occurred when he arranged for complimentary room service at 4 am (when we were heading out to pray) with a huge tray of fruits, breads, tea, drinks etc.

And no matter what we did, he would NOT accept a tip from us!!! Not a penny!!! He told us we were his family and he wanted to host his family in the best way possible!!!

On our last day in Medina, as we were preparing for a 6 hour bus journey to Mecca, brother Feroz waited 2 hours for us--on his day off--outside the hotel (afraid that we may check out and not meet him)

When he saw us, he brought us 6 boxes of fried chicken and fries, fruits, breads, drinks and snacks!!! We were completely shocked!!

And when we offered him money, he got tears in his eyes and asked,

"You think I did all this for money? I just want you to remember me in your duas. When you think of Medina, think also of me that's all. Remember that you have a brother here. All I ask is that you pray for me to get a wife and a family. I am so lonely"

And with that, he waved us goodbye and walked away, turning back ever so often!!

A true angel who will never ever be forgotten. May Allah swt never let him be hungry, may He swt bless him with all that his heart desires ameen

ANGEL #3 brother [Nadeem Sheikh](#)

This angel was not even a facebook friend, but rather a follower (whom I couldn't add as the page was full).

His email came offering any assistance while we were in Mecca. When he wrote a few times, I thanked him for his kindness and asked him to come and meet us in our hotel lobby.

As soon as we saw him, it felt as if we had been reunited with our own long-lost brother!!!

Brother Nadeem was actually from Manchester and teaching English in Mecca. A father of 3 lovely children and husband to sister [Romeila Sheikh](#), he had been in Saudi Arabia for 10 years now!!

Brother Nadeem insisted we spend the next day with him so that he could show us the beautiful city of Jeddah. Boy are we glad we took him up on his offer!!

We took a taxi (1 hour drive) from Jeddah to Mecca and asked him to take us shopping 😊)

Brother Nadeem gave us a lovely tour of the entire city, the amazing shops, the mind-boggling

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array of popular American restaurants, the seaside, the tall buildings, the shopping malls.

We bought some beautiful abayas at great prices!!!

And then he took us to the corniche where the children played on the swings and we all were able to dip our feet into the warm waters and walk barefeet on the beach.

Next, he took us for dinner and treated us to a lovely meal!! we ate barbecued chicken, seekh kebab, chicken karahi, meat karahi and much more!!

We then went to his home where he made us tea and was the perfect host!!

It truly felt as if we had known him forever!!! My kids, my husband, my mother-in-law all truly appreciated his friendliness and he was so generous and kind that we couldn't believe such wonderful people could exist in this world!!!

Brother Nadeem, when we left you, we all felt choked up with emotions. We felt like crying to say goodbye to you as it felt as if you were our own blood brother.

We pray we can see you again! You taught our children what generosity and hospitality is. They will never forget you. And neither will we.

Our duas are with you.

All these wonderful human beings made us, the zair of Medina and the pilgrims of Mecca feel a wonderful connection and attachment to the holy land. We received a fantastic welcome, enjoyed a lovely stay and then had a wonderful send off!!! We can never think of Saudi Arabia without thinking of them!! They are forever in our duas and always in our thoughts.

And we pray that Allah swt gives us the opportunity to host them and treat them too and to show them our city inshallah. May Allah swt forever keep them and their families happy and grant them success in the here and in the hereafter ameen!!

We cannot ever repay you for what you did for us--but we ask Allah swt to reward you and to fulfill all your hajaat ameen

with love

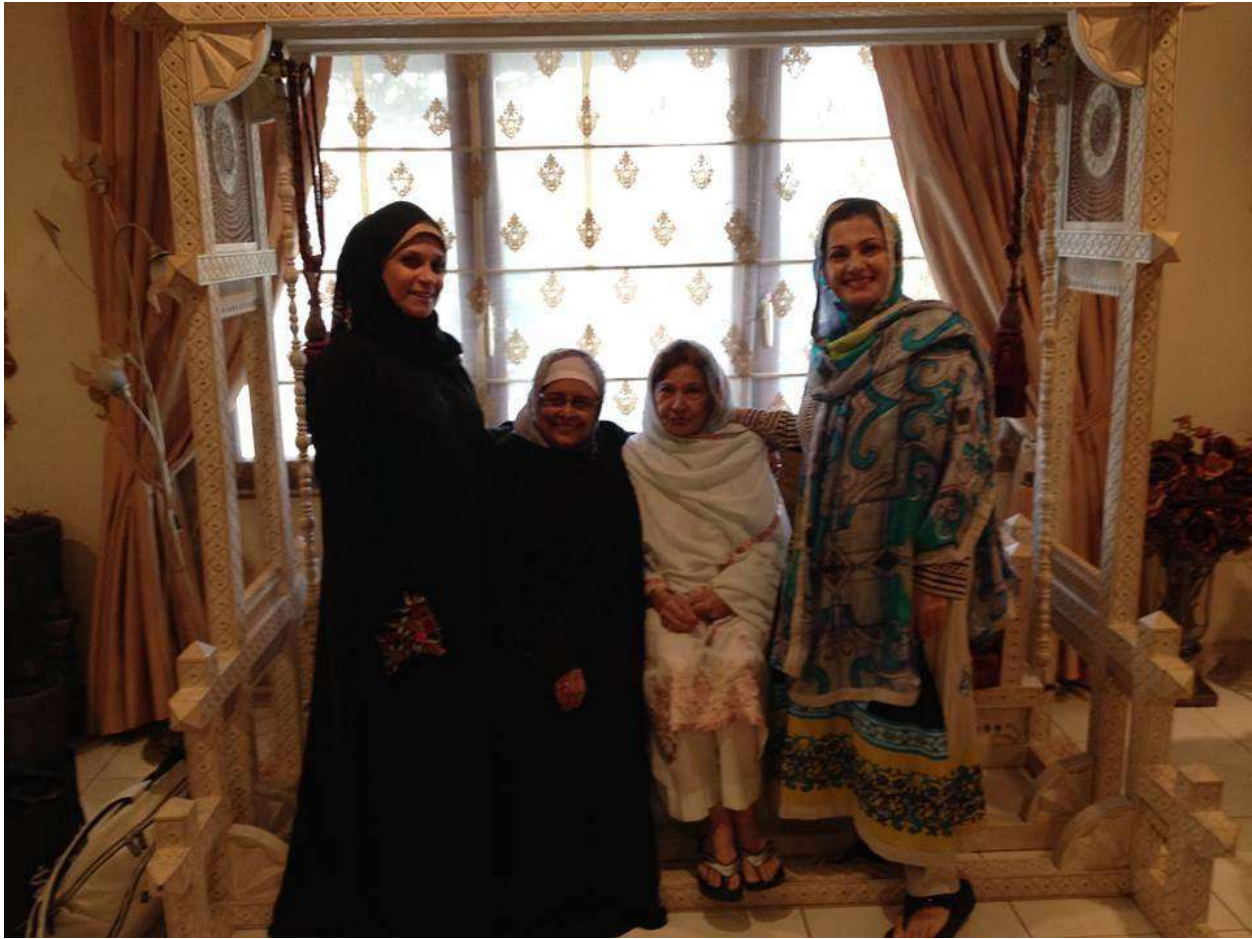
Dhalla family

[Mar, 25, 2014; 98 likes]

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151. Subhanallah! The recent random meeting of sister [Sayeda Mohades Yakubovich](#) at her shop (and having her recognize me as a facebook friend) reminded me of a similar beautiful story from my ziyarat trip (dec 2013) to Najaf.

We went to meet Syed Agha Seestani and were told to wait on the streets around his home. I entered a shop and as I was browsing I regretted not finding time to eat breakfast at the hotel. I was suddenly so hungry!! I turned around and saw the young Iraqi shopkeeper take out a warm piece of roti, fresh cream and hot cup of Iraqi chai.

Our eyes met for a second and in true Iraqi polite manners and akhlaq--

He immediately gestured as if to offer me!!!!

I couldn't say no!!! Allah swt had instantly fulfilled my wish--right outside the haram of Imam Ali (a.s) near the home of my marja-e-taqleed Syed Agha Seestani!!

The young man and I began to share our meal. The counter (with beautiful merchandise) was between us and we ate over it.

He poured half of his tea for me in a cup, broke the bread into equal portions and we both dipped the bread into the tasty fresh cream together.

Two strangers breaking bread together, united in our love for Imam Ali (a.s)

I can never ever forget that moment and how grateful I was for this act of kindness. He had no idea how hungry I was!!!

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I requested Sister [MarYam Mir](#) to take a picture of us (incidentally, sister Maryam is a facebook friend from Australia who I had just bumped into by chance an hour prior in our hotel lobby--but that's another story)

When I told the Iraqi gentleman that I was from North America, he told me he had a cousin in America. He turned on his phone and showed me his cousin's facebook profile.

So I showed him MY facebook profile.

And guess what?

He noticed that his Iraqi cousin in America was MY FRIEND ON FACEBOOK!!!

I cannot remember the name of his cousin or of the shopkeeper but today I searched my inbox and was so thrilled to find this picture of us that he emailed to me from his phone!!!

(you can see the bread that we shared together)

What a small world indeed!!! (wow it is true what they say about "6 degrees of separation")

sometimes we are kind to a stranger--not realizing that we may not be strangers at all!!

[Mar, 25, 2014; 208 likes]

152. Many times difficulty comes upon us not only to make us thankful or to test us-- but to teach us an important LESSON about how to treat others kindly.

It is ONLY when one is the underdog, when one is at the mercy of someone else or when one is the recipient of cruel behaviour that one can truly appreciate how terrible it feels to be treated badly.

These are precious albeit painful lessons.

For no theory can bring home a lesson more clearly than practically experiencing it.

It is when one is treated shabbily by a host that one can truly understand how helpless and how insulted a guest can feel.

It is when someone insults our precious mother that we realize how terrible and utterly enraging that can be.

It is when someone doesn't thank us properly for an expensive gift (that we so lovingly selected) that we truly understand how much it hurts when a gift is not acknowledged properly.

It is when someone utters rude words and embarrasses us publicly that we fully experience what humiliation feels like.

It is when one is betrayed by the very person who says "I love you" that one can understand how shattering unfaithfulness can be.

It is when someone doesn't say "salaam" or greet us with respect that we truly understand how painful it is to be ignored.

It is when someone doesn't offer us a ride when we are stranded on the side of a road in the rain that we realize how helpless and distraught one feels to be alone--and how important it is for strangers to offer a hand to a fellow human being.

It is when someone eats something in front of us when we are secretly starving that we realize what hunger feels like--and how important it is to share with others.

These moments have been sent to us for us to taste the bitterness of hurt. And it is a blessing to experience that and to gain the lesson in it--no matter how awful it feels to go through it at that moment.

Nothing brings home the lesson better than to feel those hot tears escaping from one's eyes. Nothing brings home that lesson than to truly experience the shock, the pain and the hours and hours of reflecting upon that painful moment when it all happened.

No theory of psychology, no admonitions from the pulpit or from a parent or tear-jerking soap opera can take the place of the lessons of true life.

It is only in the experience of true pain that we can learn an unforgettable lesson.

No matter what the experience, no matter how badly it hurt, the universal lesson we should take from these is to understand how important it is to be a good person.

And to ensure that we too, NEVER, treat another in the hurtful way that we were treated.

The pain we experience is NOT for us to forever be victims and to shed tears over how cruel others have been to us.

It is to ensure WE never make someone else ever cry the way we have cried. To beg God:

"Oh Allah give me the hidayat, the Guidance to never ever hurt a human being the way I have been hurt today."

Let us remember, Allah swt puts us on the other side of the fence NOT so that we lose faith in human beings.

He (swt) gives us an insight and opens the door for us to see, if only for a moment, how it feels to be degraded, humiliated, neglected, abandoned, forgotten and insulted so that we can be BETTER human beings.

Not bitter human beings.

[Feb, 18, 2014; 85 likes]

153. Reciting at the homes of women over the years has taught me so much. It has allowed me to see how love for the Holy Prophet (saww) and his Ahlulbayt a.s can be expressed in wonderful ways. I have been to celebrations (like last night) where each woman entering through the front door is given a red rose, fragranced with attar and given a box of sweet mithai and the reciter is given a huge bouquet of flowers and so many gifts. I have seen pristine homes decorated with flowers and colourful flashing lights and candles everywhere. I have seen milads been celebrated at banquet halls like weddings!! Beautiful cakes, amazing food and a garland of flowers for the reciter (sometimes a beautiful corsage for the wrist). Women dressed in their best clothes and jewellery and a beautiful stage for the naatkhwaan to be seated. The first to be invited to eat is always the reciter and their family and each person comes to kiss and hug the reciter when the Milad is finished.

It truly is a blessing to see how these celebrations, traditions and food differ according to the culture of the people I am reciting for (Pakistani, Afghanistani, Irani, East African Khoja, Lebanese, Iraqi, Shia, Sunni etc)

But one thing is constant wherever I go--I am always amazed to see women crying with love and emotion throughout the entire lecture and during the naats/nasheeds and always a great reverence

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when standing to recite the salaam. Mashallah so much love, so much faith, so much akhlaq. WOW!! Always SO inspired when I see such love for Islam, such hospitality for the lovers of Allah swt, such respect and expressions of devotion.

Subhanallah! Ya Rasulallah (saww) be witness that your ummat loves you so very much--in every corner of the world, young or old, rich or poor!

Please accept our love and our Salaam!

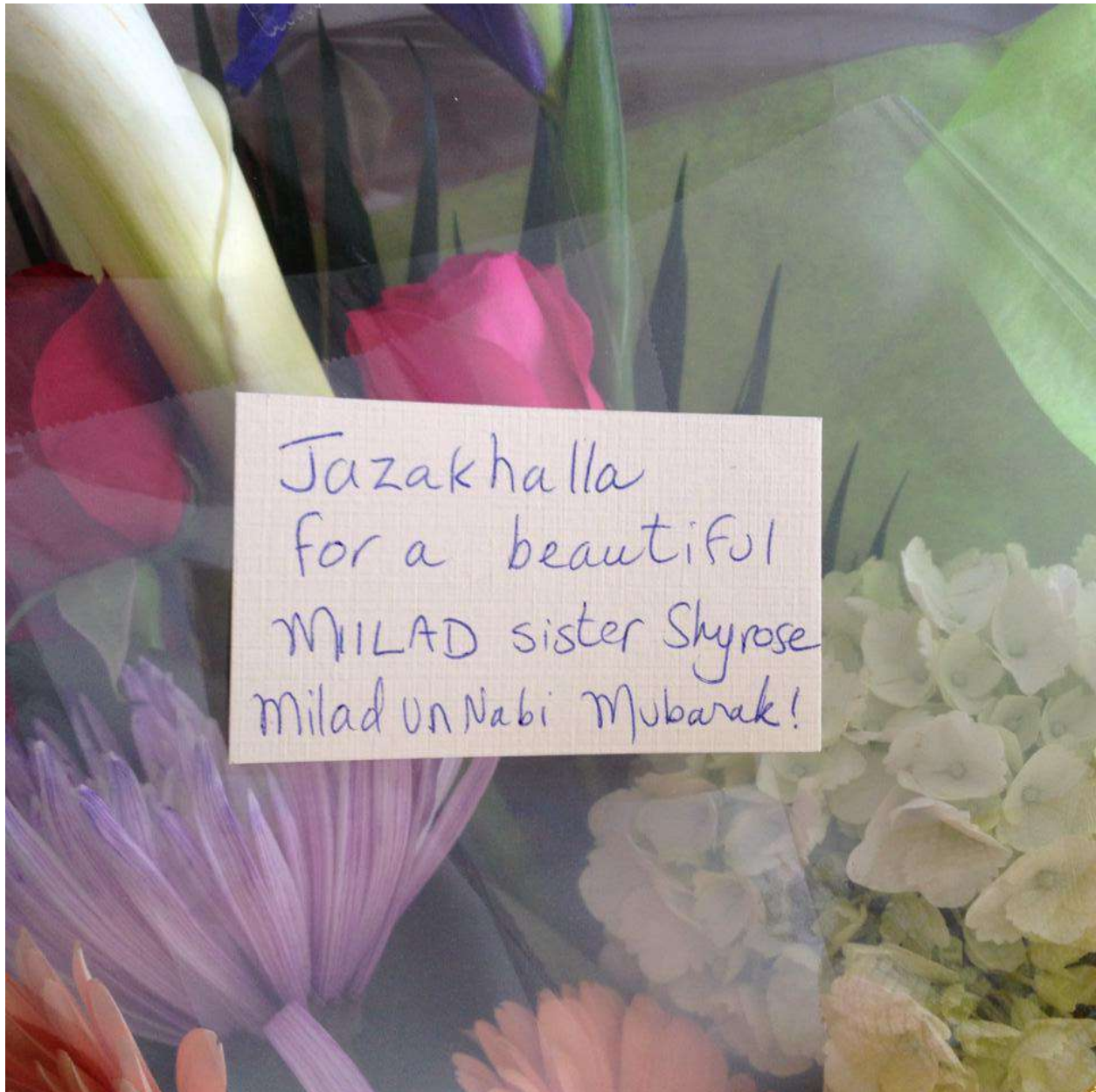
Allahumma Saley Allah Muhamed Wa AAley Muhamed

[Feb, 16, 2014; 79 likes]

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154. "I ABSOLUTELY HATE GUESTS! You have to clean the house, serve them food, entertain them and wait and wait until they leave. And then you have to clean up AFTER they leave!!! I just HATE it!!!"

I looked in shock at the young lady who had uttered these words. Even though I was just a 16 yr old at the time and she was "wiser" and over 10 years older than me, I immediately knew that what she was saying was completely wrong.

Guests are a gift of God sent to make us earn blessings! My mom had painstakingly taught all of us, her 5 children, this lesson. Her explanations not only centered around the thawaab and blessings one earns from Allah swt when one hosts a guest; mummy would spend a great deal of

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time making us reflect upon how NECESSARY it was to make others feel valued, pampered and kept comfortable. Often, when we travelled and were hungry, tired and looking for a place to spend the night, she would make us think about how wonderful it would be if someone took us to their home at right that moment. She would make us realize how difficult it is to be a traveller or a hungry guest at a home where the hosts don't bother to serve you food.

And then she would say, "And isn't it great that we one day brought so-and-so and their entire family home from the mosque and gave them a place to stay that day last year? Imagine how tired they must have been--and how thrilled to suddenly be treated so kindly? Maybe they had no money in their wallets! Think of how their hearts must have flowed with gratitude and love for us? Think of how Allah swt must have smiled at our entire family for taking care of his beloved creatures!!"

My mother was always a fantastic host and an even more amazing teacher for her children. I look at myself and my 4 siblings and I completely give credit for all our sophisticated manners to the fine example my mother was to us. And I truly am especially grateful that my mother taught us the value and art of being the perfect hostess to one's guests.

Mummy taught us to always keep one's guest's comfort above and beyond our own. And she has left an incredible legacy in her lifetime. I cannot count the number of times strangers in faraway countries have come to me or to my siblings to positively gush over how they had eaten such fantastic food at our home over 40 years ago!!! Their recollections not only included the beautiful china, the food and of having their plates filled by force, but also that awesome feeling of being treated like royalty and of being given such undivided attention and love.

Mom and my late marhoom father, were gifted conversationalists and they made an awesome, fantastic team when it came to hosting guests. Whether it was at our immensely huge white mansion in Africa, our humble home in Pakistan, our Karama apartment in Dubai and our family home in Canada, my parents' hospitality always remained CONSISTENT.

We children never dared to utter a negative word about guests coming over so often. They ensured we learned very early that such words were against Islam and against simple decency and humanity.

My mom almost ALWAYS remembers NONE of those dinner invitations!! It's the guests who remind her and she smiles and sincerely says "Please come again and let me host you again properly this time". LOL

As we grew up, we siblings were completely used to suddenly giving up our room and beds for visiting house guests. We would happily sleep on the floor because we took the cue of happiness from our mother. She would be full of joy and completely delighted to cook, clean, entertain and move furniture to accommodate her guests.

No expense was ever spared when treating guests at our home. When we were struggling financially in Karachi, we children were instructed not to eat any of the samosas until all the guests had left our home!!! "Let the guests eat their fill," mom would say. "Allah will give us more, you will see"

Preparing for a guest was a family affair. Each of us would sweep, mop, change sheets, decorate the home, fragrance the rooms, help prepare the meal and consider each detail carefully. And seeing mom's look of satisfaction at doing all this conveyed to us that we were doing a very

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important task.

We were also never allowed to go away to our rooms when people visited. We had to sit and converse with the guests, no matter how old they were. And this has taught each of us the beautiful art of engaging in social chit-chat and of being friendly to whoever our paths have crossed with in our lives.

Over the years, every plumber and repairman (of whatever religion, culture or colour) has been given tea, soft drinks and samosas/bhajias or a full meal at my mom's home.

It is a common sight to come to mom's house and to find a huge, burly Caucasian, Greek or Italian man in workman's overalls quietly eating curry and rice at our kitchen table!!! LOL

My siblings and I now follow that same tradition--we always feed repairmen who come to our home.

Any friend/relative who comes to my mom's home to simply drop off something at our place has been dragged from their car to come inside and to eat a full dinner with us. If they completely refuse to come inside due to some other commitment, it is completely common to see my mom bringing a tray of tea and bhajias to their CAR!!!!

Mom's refrigerator and dinner table is always full of tasty food just in case "someone comes over".

We 4 daughters and 1 son had strict instructions growing up in my parents' home:

If someone comes over, seat them in the living room and while mom is receiving them, immediately put on a pot of water to boil for tea and coffee. **But while it is boiling, quickly prepare a tray of soft drinks and immediately serve the guest.

NEVER EVER ASK THE GUEST IF THEY WOULD LIKE SOMETHING TO DRINK.

SERVE THIS WITHOUT ASKING. Do not take over 5 minutes or mom will be very unhappy.

And woe to you if you serve a drink without an accompanying snack LOL.

And while the guests drank tea (after their soft drinks) we kids would be warming up a full meal and setting up the table. The guests then would be invited to the table to eat a full meal.

Until this day (mom is now 77 yrs old) the dinner table at our home is ALWAYS set (with the best of dishes) in case a guest comes over.

Mom's hospitality is renowned all over the world. And we have hosted countless weddings in our home. Mostly weddings of people we barely know!!! And also of those who we may be distantly related to.

I once met a man at a mosque who had to REMIND my parents that he was the one who used their home to get married in while we all went on a family vacation. He recounted how he was a stranger in town and my parents met him in the parking lot and upon hearing that he was in need of a place for the nikah they thrust their house keys in his hands and insisted he use their home. They told him to leave the keys with our family member as we would be on vacation for a few days.

He was so grateful--and my parents barely remembered it. I was a little girl when I saw this conversation and I can still remember the gratitude on this man's face. He is now a grandfather and religious scholar in the USA but he still reminds us of my parents' generosity whenever he meets us.

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Our family home was always always open to anyone. And we were taught to never ever make a guest feel, even for a second, that we were inconvenienced by their visit. Whether their children broke a precious vase or stood on our expensive couches, we were taught to act completely unfazed. And even after they left, mom would STILL not regret having them over!!!!

When I was a newlywed, a young repairman came to fix something. I remember distinctly that moment when he didn't take his shoes off as he stepped on the carpet in our tiny apartment. Try as I might, I simply could not muster up the courage to tell him to take his shoes off. Why? Because mom had taught me, "Never ever make anyone who steps into your home feel uncomfortable. You must treat them so beautifully that they forget that this is YOUR home. Your rules should not make them feel nervous. They should completely feel at home"

When my mother-in-law came to live with me, my mom gave me the same advice, "Remember never to let anyone feel unhappy in your home. No matter who it is. When someone is in your home, it is as if they are in your fortress. They become your hostage and subject to your rules. But never ever let that "mohtaj" person feel oppressed while they are under your roof. You have to answer to Allah swt for each tear they shed."

My mom ran a strict home but not for guests. Our happy, busy home was always spotless, decorated like a fancy, very expensive museum and yes, there were special fancy towels and beautiful bedsheets that we kids were never allowed to use. There were areas that we would never dare sit in or step on with shoes. But, we watched carefully that mom never ever made those rules incumbent on a guest.

Even if someone--a total stranger--used her fine dishes or went in a "restricted" area, mom would smile and never bat an eyelid.

When I was a teenager, my Caucasian friends would love coming over because mom would treat them like adults and like true guests--seating the teenagers in the fancy living room and feeding them from her fine china while I cringed and rolled my eyes in embarrassment.

As a married woman, I still continue to visit my mom's home and to bring uninvited guests without warning. My brother (who lives with his own family in the same house as mom) is so welcoming that over the years I have sent strangers to stay for a few days at his home even though I was hundreds of miles away myself. My lovely sister-in-law has understood that guests are special to my family and sometimes when mom is not home, I marvel at how expertly she is able to display the same type of hospitality that mom is so well-known for!!!

Now that I have my own home and host my own guests, I am grateful for my mom's training for I see the amazing effect it has on my guests. Sometimes they will groan and say, "please don't fuss like this over us, please sit down" and I will smile inside knowing that I have learned from my mother well and am doing justice to her training.

Often, I treat my guests especially well because I know that my mom will ask me, "what did you serve? I hope you gave them your own bedroom? You better have packed them a lunch for their long drive home!"

I also know that my actions reflect on my mother. I would never want my lack of hospitality towards a guest to give an undeserved and unfair impression of my mom's wonderful upbringing and training.

Thank you mom for being such a great teacher. And thank you for teaching me what is Islam with your own beautiful actions.

SOME VERSES FROM THE HOLY QURAN THAT COMMAND US TO BE HOSPITABLE TO GUESTS AND TRAVELLERS (WAYFARERS):

"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is this that one should believe in Allah and the last day and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and give away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and THE WAYFARER and the beggars and for (the emancipation of) the captives, and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate; and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflicts-- these are they who are {rue (to themselves) and these are they who guard (against evil)."

[Holy Quran 2.177]

They ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever wealth you spend, it is for the parents and the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and THE WAYFARER, and whatever good you do, Allah surely knows it.

[Holy Quran 2.215]

"And serve Allah and do not associate any thing with Him and be good to the parents and to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the neighbor of (your) kin and the alien neighbor, and the companion in a journey and THE WAYFARER and those whom your right hands possess; surely Allah does not love him who is proud, boastful;"

(Holy Quran 4:36)

And know that whatever thing you gain, a fifth of it is for Allah and for the Apostle and for the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and THE WAYFARER, if you believe in Allah and in that which We revealed to Our servant, on the day of distinction, the day on which the two parties met; and Allah has power over all things.

(8:41)

Alms are only for the poor and the needy, and the officials (appointed) over them, and those whose hearts are made to incline (to truth) and the (ransoming of) captives and those in debts and in the way of Allah AND THE WAYFARER; an ordinance from Allah; and Allah is knowing, Wise.

(9:60)

And give to the near of kin his due and (to) the needy and THE WAYFARER, and do not squander wastefully.

(Holy Quran 17:26)

Then give to the near of kin his due, and to the needy and THE WAYFARER; this is best for those who desire Allah's pleasure, and these it is who are successful.

(Holy Quran 30:38)

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[Feb, 10, 2014; 156 likes]





155. JOYFUL DELIGHTFUL HEARTPOUNDING BREAKING NEWS!!

ALHAMDULILAH!!! So very excited to share this news on such a blessed day!! With your Duas my family has been blessed with an invitation from Allah swt to perform UMRAH!! I can't believe it!!

I was ONLY 9 years old when my marhoom father gave our family the gift of a lifetime--to perform wajib Hajj, visit the Holy Kaba, jannatul Baqi and masjid e Nabawi.

It was such memorable experience that even though I was only 9 I can actually remember the feeling of the marble floor under my little feet and the awesome sight of beholding the Holy Kaba. I remember the tawaf I remember holding up my little hands in prayer and even what I asked for!!!

**i even remember the moment when we took that picture in the studio with my parents and siblings. I remember the little toys my parents bought for me and our hotel room with 30 other Hajeess (we cooked our own food and slept on mattresses!)

And I remember LEADING the entire group in reciting "LABAYK ALA HUMMA LABAYK" for hours as we drove on the back of an open pick-up truck!! (My little voice never tired--lol--so the adults let me lead all the time and I was so happy to recite at the top of my lungs !!)

In March inshallah my dear husband is making this dream happen again in my lifetime!! Our 3 children and my dear mother in law will be with us!!! My little Shireen will be turning 8 in the

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holy lands of Mecca and Medina and I will get to see her as young as I was when I first went there!!

I am so full of joy and delight!! I never thought I would ever be invited again!!

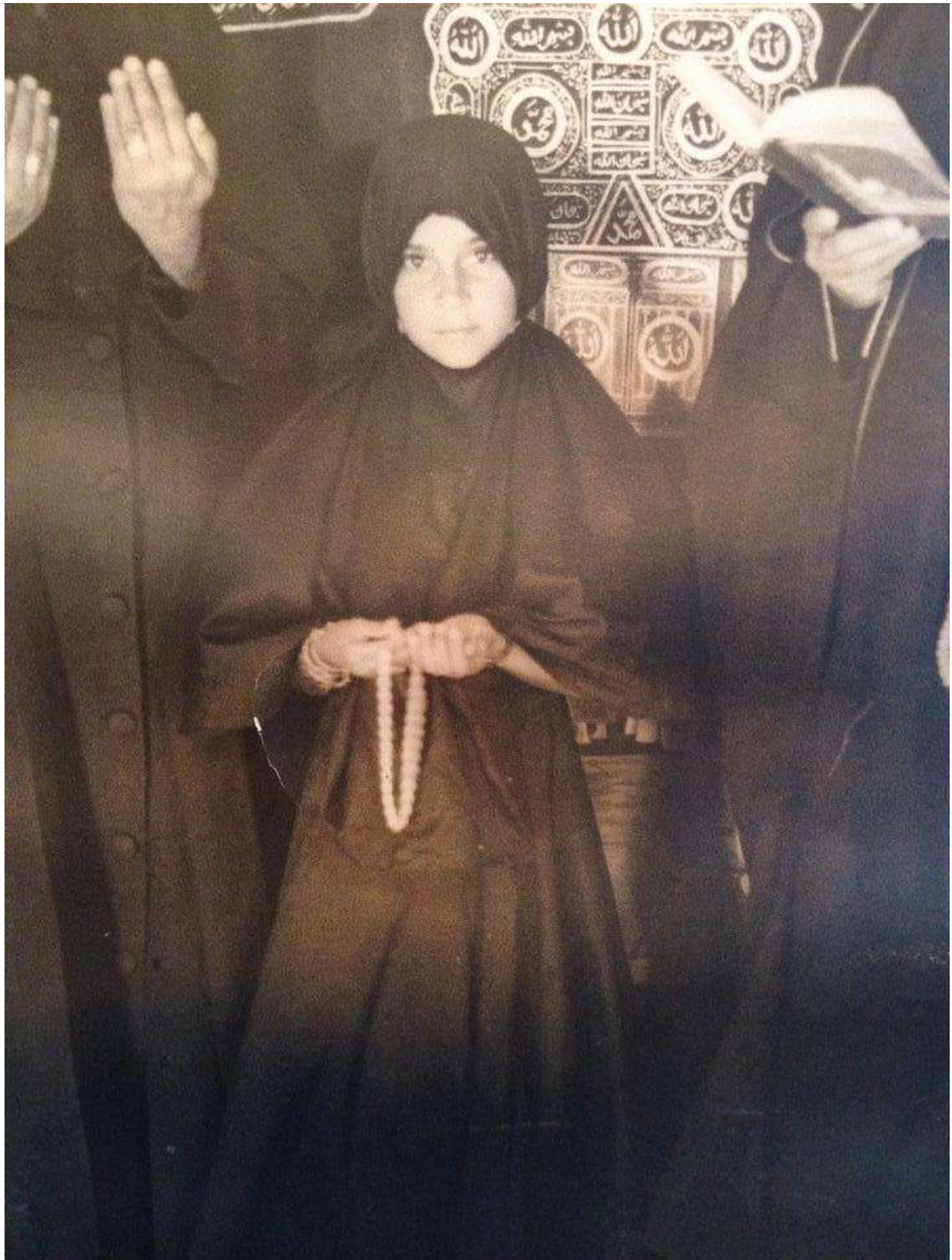
Praying for this joyous trip to actually happen!! AMEEN!

"Hum Madinay mein tanha nikal jayengey,
Aur galiyon mein kus dun bhatak jayengey.
Hum wahan jakey wapas nahin ayengay.
Dhoondtay dhoondte loog thak jayengey.
Jaise hi sabz Gumbad nazar ayega,
Bandagi ka kareena badal jaye ga.
Sar jhukane ki fursat milay gi kisey.
Khud hi palkon say sajdey tapak jayengey."

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[Jan, 18, 2014; 124 likes]



156. CHANGED BY THE EXAMPLE OF THE HOLY PROPHET (SAWW)

"I can never ever imagine you getting angry" said a lady to me a few years ago.

Hearing these words from someone who had spent time with me filled me up with more shock and surprised delight than any compliment I had heard in a long time.

Because if there is anything that I have really had to work on in my life, it has been my hot temper.

Working on it is one thing but when someone else sees a change in something that one has worked hard on, it is truly a moment of triumph and exhilaration. It is much like someone finally noticing and saying, "Hey!!! you have lost so much weight!" after one has spent months of exercising and dieting.

Growing up in Canada I was a feisty, strong-willed, outspoken and passionate student activist. I attended rallies and held up placards and yelled out slogans. I was quick to get angry and unable to hold myself back from lashing out at those who I did not agree with.

It was the same even in my personal interaction with others. I was a fun, easy-going person to be with but woe to those who got me angry! I was extremely emotional and tears came very easily. I had a way with words and a strong pair of lungs--a volatile combination for someone with a fiery temper to have.

My anger would have me literally seeing red and I could not handle injustice--whether it was directed at me or anyone else.

My family and friends knew the wisdom of avoiding an argument with me. I was a force to reckon with and fearless to say the least.

And then I took an active interest in the life of my dear Prophet (saww) and an incredible change came over me. The love of God and the awe that I felt for His peaceful messenger (saww) completely changed my entire outlook on life!

Islam is peace! And it was a peaceful Messenger who brought this way of life for us to follow!! And as I studied the life of each of the 14 Masumeen (a.s) I experienced a deep internal shift in my entire way of dealing with things. A deep serenity took hold of me and today I am a changed woman.

Thank you Allah swt for saving me!!

It was in no way easy to become a calmer person. And definitely there is a lot of work still left to do. But I can feel this deep change in me and it is so wonderful to be me, to live with myself!!!!

Don't get me wrong--I am still very capable of blowing up and burning everything up in flames with my strong words. But that hasn't happened in years now. And I can't imagine doing that again. My anger is kept so firmly in check that I no longer even have to work at controlling it!! It takes a lot to enrage me. And if I do get even slightly angry--I feel extreme remorse for weeks.

I pray for my enemies and remember them in my Salatul Layl. I may spend hours nursing a broken heart but I rarely, if ever, confront the person who has hurt me.

Being angry, or even ranting, no longer has any pleasure or satisfaction. There is no need for catharsis, no need to tell anyone how much they have hurt me or to even defend my actions for which they may have criticized me.

The feeling of being angry sickens me. And seeing it in others makes me lose any interest in making that person a close friend.

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Was it easy? Have I simply calmed down because I am older or don't feel such a visceral reaction to things?

Absolutely not. This was an active effort, and remains an ongoing effort. I went through a lot of turmoil, conflict and failure to get to the calm place where I am today emotionally. And I have had to do a lot of praying and begging to God to help me achieve success. I even prayed for my throat to hurt if I ever raised my voice.

Having three children in quick succession made my life even more stressful and anger was a regular part of my life as they fought, made messes etc. I cried into my pillow for yelling at those innocent children.

As a naat, marsiya and nawha reciter as well as a lecturer my voice is everything to me. But I would beg God to punish me by taking it all away if I ever yelled at anyone ever again. I was desperate to do anything, anything to become a calmer person.

Today if I raise my voice, my children quickly come running because it is so unusual for them to hear me shout.

Why has controlling my anger suddenly become so important to me? Because I learned some very important lessons--especially from the lives of my Holy Prophet, Imam Ali (a.s), Bibi Fatema (a.s) Imam Hassan (a.s), Imam Hussein (a.s) Imam Zainul Abedin (a.s) Imam Ali Raza (a.s) and each of the 14 Masumeen (a.s)

Anger was just not a part of the personality of any of these revered leaders. They, if ANYONE, had a right to be angry and had valid REASONS to be angry and yet not a single narration shows them behaving in an angry way.

In fact, Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s) was given this title especially because he was known to be the one who held back his anger.

Our Imams (a.s) may have used strong words or expressed strong opinions but they were always composed and extremely kind in their demeanour.

Their examples show us that those who allow anger to get the best of them have simply not achieved the sophistication of character that Islam expects of its followers. Whether that person is a community leader, Islamic lecturer or highly educated professional--if they get angry easily, they have not elevated themselves in character and not understood nor practised Islam well at all.

As I prepare to celebrate the birth and the life of this incredible Messenger of Allah swt who has inspired me to change everything about myself, I am especially aware of his influence on my temperament. And I rejoice at the changes he (saww) has brought in me.

I am in awe of the ability of the Holy Prophet (saww) to spread the message of Islam with love when his entire, beloved hometown and all of his friends and almost each and every one of his relatives mocked and doubted him. To believe in one's cause is one thing but to express conviction in that cause without raising one's voice or to engage in character assassination is truly an admirable thing!!!

Being ostracized and alienated by a society that once revered and honoured him for his truthfulness and exemplary akhlaq must have hurt so very much. How hurtful it must have been to be looked at condescendingly, to be criticized and unwanted. What an injustice it must have all felt like.

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But what must have cut through his heart like a sharp knife would definitely have been the hurtful words of his own family members. For when one's own blood acts against you there is no greater hurt.

The mocking words of the cruel Abu Lahab and his wife, being left out and ignored, publicly being ridiculed, not being able to preach his message and being interrupted when he did speak. How much it must have hurt to face their vindictive, cruel behaviour every single day. Abu Lahab would throw stones and cause our dear Messenger (saww) to bleed and his evil wife would daily lay out a huge path of sharp thorns to injure this peaceful, beautiful, gentle soul who had never hurt anyone in his life.

How did he endure such pain and injustice? Did he not burn with rage?

History shows that Mohamed Mustafa (saww) consistently spoke gently, softly, patiently, kindly and compassionately. Especially with enemies!!!

When I see the praise of Allah swt for the soft words and for the gentle demeanour of His Messenger (saww) I see evidence that Prophet Mohamed (saww) truly controlled any anger and worked hard to show forbearance and kindness. It was definitely impossible to stay calm amidst such hatred and injustice but Allah swt rewarded this admirable effort with such great inner strength that it has become an admirable quality that still continues to impress the world.

"So by mercy from Allah , [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah . Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him]" (3:159)

Whether it was being a witness to plotting, dealing with lies and confrontation or having the blessed ability to see future tragic events, the Holy Prophet (saww) always remained consistent in the way that he dealt with others. He was always fair, always calm and always gentle. His heart hurt and his eyes shed tears but he consistently advised patience and forbearance:

"Prophet Mohamed (saww) took Hazrat Ali (as) into his arms and began weeping intensely, causing Hazrat Ali (as) to weep too. When Hazrat Ali (as) sought to know the reason for Prophet Muhammad's (saw) weeping, he (saw) said:

"I suddenly recollected the malice that has taken root in the breasts of the people towards you and which they shall make manifest after my death."

Hazrat Ali (as) inquired:

"O Prophet of Allah! What should I do?"

He (saw) advised: "Patience and fortitude. If you fail to exhibit patience you shall fall into far greater difficulties."

Ya Rasulallah (saww) truly yours is a personality worth emulating and revering. Your patience and your gentle words are truly an inspiration. We crave to walk in your footsteps, to be worthy of your approval and of your intercession. Please bless us and accept our salaam! May we all be granted the opportunity to visit Medina and to present our salutations at your blessed grave ameen.

May Allah swt send His choicest blessings upon Mohamed (saww) and his progeny AMEEN

EID MILAD UN NABI MUBARAK TO ALL!!!!

[Jan, 17, 2014; 55 likes]

157. The grief of losing a dearly loved one can be so heart-wrenching and so deeply intense that happiness feels completely removed from one's very existence. It seems impossible to ever smile again. To ever find anything to be ever joyous about...

The face becomes a constant vision of sadness and the lips find it impossible to curve into a smile.

No one can truly bring cheer or evoke an uplifting in the soul that is deeply aggrieved over the loss of a dearly loved one.

Such is the nature of mourning...

The brutal tragedy of Kerbala with the heartless butchering of the brightest, bravest and finest of the family of the holy Prophet (saww) left a generation of broken hearts for each of the survivors of this unthinkable massacre. There was an anguish that could never, ever be removed.

"Ab to zindagee bher hay rona phoophi ama" said the 4th imam (a.s) to his heartbroken aunt. For forty years the soft-hearted, deeply spiritual and pious Sayyeday Sajjad. (a.s) sobbed so so painfully that his companions couldn't bear to see his tormented young body ravaged with grief and to behold his sunken eyes that were dehydrated with constant tears. They begged him to pause his crying for just a moment but it was impossible for the tears to stop flowing and flowing....

And the entire land of his grandfather, Medina Munawara, and all of the followers cried with him.

The entire city was shrouded in the tragic black colour of mourning. A deep sadness filled the land.

The grave of the Holy Prophet (saww) and his beloved daughter Fatema Zehra (a.s) was visited by sobbing family members who recounted the terrible stories of the slaying of each of the shuhada e Kerbala to companions.

It is said that Bibi Ummul Baneen (a.s) the mother of Hazrat Abbas (a.s) was one of the eloquent poets who evoked so many tears for the mourners that she turned jannatul baqi into a Husainiyya reserved for the telling of the musibah that befell the Ahlulbayt (a.s)

1400 years later we too mourn with the Ahlulbayt (a.s) with that same deep sadness. And that deep grief never leaves our hearts either. Never....

Just the name "Abbas" uttered at a joyous occasion, be it a wedding, brings an ocean of tears to the hearts that have captured his story deep within their consciousness.

Those tears are always at the brink of the eyes of every lover of the Ahlulbayt (a.s) and constantly choke the throats with deep grief.

The tragedy of Kerbala is a heat inside our hearts that permeates our entire reason for living.

We take our cues from the Ahlulbayt (a.s) and they established this lifelong ritual of mourning for us to follow.

And today on Eid e Zehra we smile and wear the apparel of rejoicing because an incredible moment occurred on this day in Islamic history!!

That same soft-hearted, grief-stricken Sayyeday Sajjad (a.s) actually wiped his tears and then his sobbing lips formed into a weak smile!!

And then the smile filled his blessed face with true, real joy and he said, "Let there be joy today".

Zakira Shyrose

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And the inhabitants of Medina removed the colour of mourning from their homes and there was happiness all around!!!

How could this be????!!

Ya Mukhtar! What an incredible accomplishment you have achieved!!

What an amazing feat you have made possible!!

How did you dissipate those clouds from the beautiful visage of our Imam (a.s) and make the warm rays of sunshine appear????

Ya mukhtar my mother and father be sacrificed to you!! You have made my dear, tormented imam (a.s) SMILE today!

Ya Mukhtar may you forever smile in the heavens enjoying a lofty enviable position amongst the most selected of companions!

Ya Mukhtar how do we thank you for bringing this season of joy to our loved ones the Ahlulbayt (a.s) ???!

Know, Ya Mukhtar, that Bibi Fatema (a.s) sends you her grateful thanks and salaams with a promise of her valuable intercession.

Ya Mukhtar we long to come to Najaf and to visit your grave in the blessed masjid e Kufa. To hold the silver grill around your blessed grave and to whisper our tearful thanks to you, oh faithful companion of Hussein (a.s)

Merhaba Ya Mukhtar!! You have shown what true loyalty and love is!!

Today we Shia around the world take our cue from our Imam (a.s) and smile and rejoice sincerely.

EID MUBARAK!

EID MUBARAK!!

EID MUBARAK!!!

And a continuous shower of peace and blessings upon the Holy Prophet (saww) and the Ahlulbayt (a.s).

Felicitations to our dear 12th imam (ajtf)!!!!

"Our Shias are those who are happy with our happiness and sad with our tragedy"

Imam Jaffer Sadiq (a.s)

[Jan, 10, 2014; 127 likes]

158. I am overwhelmed at the power of DUA and the miracles that happen under the shelter of the Alam of Hazrat Abbas (a.s) On Sunday, this scarf was placed on my shoulders after I recited majlis at the Afghan community's Imam Hossain Centre. Sister Marjan A. (the wonderful youth organizer sitting beside me) told me that this was a special honour for nadhr or murad from Bibi Zaynab (a.s) and that the scarf was directly from the very tall Alam of hazrat Abbas (a.s) and that I was to open the tiny knot at the end of the scarf as soon as my hajaat (dua, request) is fulfilled.

I immediately, silently asked for something that in my heart I knew was impossible. Then I said to myself, "why did I ask for something that will forever keep this knot tied?" So I said, "my next most fervent wish is to go to Kerbala for Arbaeen--all the caravans are full but bibi I really want to go"

Well, I want to go on record here to tell you all that not only is the Kerbala trip almost finalized

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(need your duas--booking almost done!!) but the impossible thing I prayed for is ALREADY FULFILLED!!! In fact, the impossible thing I wished for happened RIGHT AWAY and IMMEDIATELY.

This was something that I thought would be a lifelong request from me to Allah swt.

I cannot believe it myself!!! Subhanallah!! Surely Allah swt answers the prayers and is listening to our hearts!!!

WE MUST NEVER STOP BELIEVING, NEVER STOP HOPING, NEVER STOP RELYING ON ALLAH SWT

God is Great and if something is good for us, He (swt) will surely grant it to us!!! In His Hands are all the treasures of the Universe and beyond, and He only has to say "BE" and it will be.

AMEEN

I am right now holding on to this scarf and praying to Allah swt with the sadqa of the 14 Masumeem (a.s) for all my fb friends to have all of their hajaat fulfilled.

AMEEN

[Nov, 27, 2013; 65 likes]

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157. POIGNANT RETURN AFTER RECITING MUHARRAM MAJALISES

"Have we arrived home, Shyrose????!!!" my elderly mother asked after suddenly waking up from her sleep and finding that the plane had landed.

I heard her words and tears filled my eyes. I turned my head away so that she couldn't see me crying and I just sobbed and sobbed into my hands.

These were not tears of relief for having returned home.

There were tears for my Bibi Zaynab (a.s) who heard the same words from her devoted kaneez Fiza,

"fizza ne zainab se kaha, bibi madina aagaya
ab khatm hai apna safar, aata hai ab mujko nazar"

I thought of my dear bibi (a.s) and spoke to her with my heart.

"Bibi, how utterly broken your heart must have been to see your home!! No Aun, no Mohamed, no Ali Akbar, no Abbas, no Hussein. What a devastation of a home that was once full of the members of the Holy household of the Prophet (saww)

You returned to not only an empty home but with physical and emotional scars and trauma that would haunt you forever."

I looked down at my hands that were peeling from the heat rashes I got from the heat in Reunion Island. My delicate skin, accustomed to North American weather, had ripped and was bleeding in places. My whole body was aching as I had travelled 2 days by plane with hours of waiting at airports in between.

And I thought of my delicate princess, Shehzade Zainab (a.s) Sunshine had never shone on her face, she had been sheltered in the safety of her home, protected by her brothers. She had never had to walk--and was subjected to walking for days and days in the blistering sun. She had been whipped, slapped, mocked and had stones thrown at her.

She had helped women onto the camels, carried children, lifted Sayyede Sajjad (a.s) from the burning tents.

"Oh, my bibi" I cried silently. "How did you find the strength? No one even gave you condolences! How will you now return to your empty home and find the lonely prayer mats of your 2 sons that will never be used now...."

I thought of my own children waiting impatiently at home for me. I thought of the gifts I have brought them so that they can feel a bit appeased at having been left for so many days without my cooking, my hugs, my help with homework etc.

"oh my bibi," I sobbed. "What gifts did you bring when you returned? The bloody clothes of your martyred brother Hussein (a.s) to lay on the grave of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w)?! What did you show your mother as you gave her condolences? your scarred wrists where the ropes had made them bleed?"

It took all my strength to recover myself, gather our belongings and get us off that plane.

I realized that we human beings and our sacrifices are nothing compared to what the Ahlul Bayt (a.s) have done for us. We are minuscule, our bodies are weak and our efforts are so very little. And yet, they bless us and are grateful for whatever we do in their name.

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It is an honour to be a Zakir of the Ahlulbayt (a.s) No matter how difficult it can sometimes be, the rewards are always so very great.

But do you know what makes us able to do what we do? The locals of the community that we visit each year.

These community members host us, feed us, carry our purses for us and kiss us with love. This is not to give us a sense of pride. It is to give us strength and motivation to continue--for we are weak and very delicate--physically and emotionally.

I am forever indebted to all those who have hosted me over the years and who have invited me to dinner, given me gifts and souvenirs, taken me to see the city or to shop. These efforts have made the community memorable for me--how can you forget a city when the people living there have made your time there so special for you?

We who recite the musibat suffered by the Holy Household (a.s) suffer greatly inside. It is extremely draining and very painful to narrate these events. Believe me, it requires a great discipline to cry on the mimbar and yet not get shattered completely. Sometimes, we have to avoid listening to latmiyya or marsiya because it can melt our hearts so much that we cannot begin the lecture.

The 12 days of Muharram are not just physically draining but emotionally draining. There is a deep sadness within, whether we smile or appear laughing. This is the gift that the Ahlulbayt (a.s) give to us. A prevailing sense of the sacrifices they gave so that we can never ever forget.

Grief is such a personal thing that it is dangerous to assume that a calm daughter sitting at her father's funeral does not love him. She may not be crying hysterically but only she knows how much she will cry for him when we all leave that home. Never assume anything about anyone--especially when it comes to the azadari of Imam Hussein (a.s)

Some people shed blood with zanjeer. Some cry in the privacy of their homes-with not one witness. Each has their own way of showing respect and love to the Ahlulbayt (a.s) and each will be acknowledged by those who it is meant for.

Why do people take the visiting Zakireen during the month of Muharram sightseeing or invite them for dinner at their homes? Because it is a gesture of love towards the Ahlulbayt (a.s) It is a way of honouring those who have left their homes and travelled far to share some teachings of the 14 Masumeen (a.s)

Women, especially, can often only show their love and appreciation through their cooking. Thus they cook beautiful meals and fateha is recited to make it a blessed meal for those alive and those who are departed.

We Zakireen who are invited, often go to please those simple ladies who have nothing to offer but their cooking and their humble homes as a place of rest. Sometimes we are invited to huge mansions with elaborate meals--and the thought that goes through the mind is "subhanallah, even those who are so rich love Imam (a.s) so much!!!"

These wealthy people become an example to the world that it might appear that they are proud etc--but for the love of Imam Hussein (a.s) they will open their homes to people and humbly kiss the hands of those who recited the Dhikr of Imam (a.s).

In honoring these invitations, we help spread a different kind of message too.

Zakira Shyrose

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Many invite not only us Zakireen but also include 20 or 30 others so that we can all get to know each other better.

This helps us speak to people and become acquainted with their personal struggles. Often we discuss hijab or khums or charity--and hearts are changed and lives are altered.

Sightseeing helps us to understand where our community members live and in a place like Reunion Island it helps us to truly appreciate the wonders and creations of Allah swt. Often, we shop not for the sake of shopping but to return to our homes with small gifts for our children who have given their own sacrifice in letting us travel so far in the month of Muharram.

There was a time when I didn't understand why the visiting Zakira or Mualana would be taken to Niagara Falls or for shopping etc. My parents would frequently undertake these trips for the Zakireen and I used to ask why they are doing this in the month of Muharram, a month dedicated to mourning. Today, when those same zakireen meet me around the world and ask about my marhoom father and pray for him and tell me what an ehsaan he did, I understand.

Bibi Zaynab (a.s) knows how we mere mortals can become demotivated, exhausted and even drained. She sends these helpers of hers, these people of the various communities we visit, to give us respite. She sends them to feed us, take us out into the open breeze, spend time with us and to express love to us.

And we feel ready to face another day. And suddenly our exhaustion is totally gone. And we realize Bibi (a.s) has been with us all along and doing everything possible to pave the way.

[Nov, 23, 2013; 122 likes]

158. I am totally amazed at how this teeny tiny Island in the middle of the Indian Ocean (that one has to zoom in on a map to really see) is absolutely overflowing with Shianey Ali (a.s) and SO POWERFULLY commemorating the Azadari of Imam Hussein (a.s)

Truly, this is NOTHING BUT A SIGN OF ALLAH (swt). That a beautiful place on earth (which the world pays attention to because it is one of the top most beautiful places to visit on earth) has such a huge Shia population, 4 mosques, their own Radio and TV station AND people who really really know how to do Azadari!!!

People ACTUALLY DO LISTEN AND WATCH Khoja TV and Radio all day here!!!! And when they meet me, they tell me EXACTLY what I said, what examples I used, how they felt, how much they love me etc etc. What an incredible community!!!

Khoja Radio and TV is heard not only in cars, homes, offices, shops etc in Reunion Island, Mauritius, Madagascar and Paris but also all over the world (Dar es Salaam, Toronto, London, America, Switzerland, Karachi etc) Subhanallah, how very humbling that the inhabitants of such a tiny Island are making a mark in this world when we in such technologically advanced places on earth have still not succeeded in having our own such Media outlets.

The Island is very advanced--with highways, beautiful buildings, shopping centres, restaurants etc. It is French-owned so the European flair can be seen in the furniture at people's homes, the lovely architecture, the high-quality merchandise in shops etc.

I realize that Reunion Island is truly beautiful because of our jamaat PEOPLE who live here. So loving, so responsive, so kind, so warm, so polite so totally wonderful. I feel like I have been re-

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united with my lost brothers and sisters. NOW I UNDERSTAND WHY IT IS CALLED REUNION ISLAND LOLLLL

My majalises are being received very warmly with ladies from both St. Denis and St. Andre travelling between the two heavily traffic-filled areas (about 40 min sometimes) to attend both my morning and afternoon majalises. And then, in the few hours between my two majalises they listen and watch me on Khoja TV and Khoja Radio!!! That's a bit too much of me over 12 days!!! Zakira Shyrose overload!!!!

I pray they don't get tired of meeeee!!!

Jazakallah khair to the lovely people here for their dinner invitations, their sightseeing invitations, their hugs, their kisses and their amazingly expressive words of love in their emails and texts. The French sure know what love is and how to show it!!!!

[Nov, 7, 2013; 145 likes]



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159. INCREDIBLE SUNRISE in Reunion Island!!!

Subhanallah!!! It is impossible to sleep after witnessing this spectacular light show of shadows and brilliant, blinding sunlight-- across the sky over the intensely blue Indian Ocean-- beside a mountain range with their peaks in the clouds!!!

Oh Allah, I find myself on my knees, humbled by Your Greatness, Your Might, Your Awe-Inspiring seemingly casual strokes of creativity across the sky!!!

I write this with the huge windows flung wide open, with a panoramic view of these absolutely spectacular mountains before me. The opposite window, on the other side of this 7th floor Penthouse apartment shows the Indian Ocean where the sun is swiftly rising.

I can hear birds chirping in a beautiful symphony and the sounds of countless roosters echoing across the Island of Reunion.

Oh my Lord, if this world, open to enjoy for ALL of us--sinful OR pious--is so so beautiful, I wonder at how absolutely breathtaking your jannah--the reward for the hardworking faithful ones--will be.

Ya Allah, I thank you for letting me witness this beauty on earth. But please do not stop your Mercy for me at this point. Allow me to see the real Paradise too My Lord.

I ask for too much, I realize that. But I ask from One who HAS much. From One whose Mercy if one attempted to contain it, would overflow the deep oceans and seas and flood the entire the

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land.

I don't need much space Ya Rab. Just a teeny tiny spot would be sufficient!!! Allow me to squeeze myself into just one nook and a small cranny in your vast empire.

If I had just that small space--it would still not be equivalent to if I had the entire world at my disposal....

I remain your extremely over-ambitious--and equally expectantly hopeful servant....

Shyrose

"Strive for Paradise. A small nook within its bliss is better than the whole world and all the riches within."

Holy Prophet Muhammad

[Nov, 4, 2013; 144 likes]

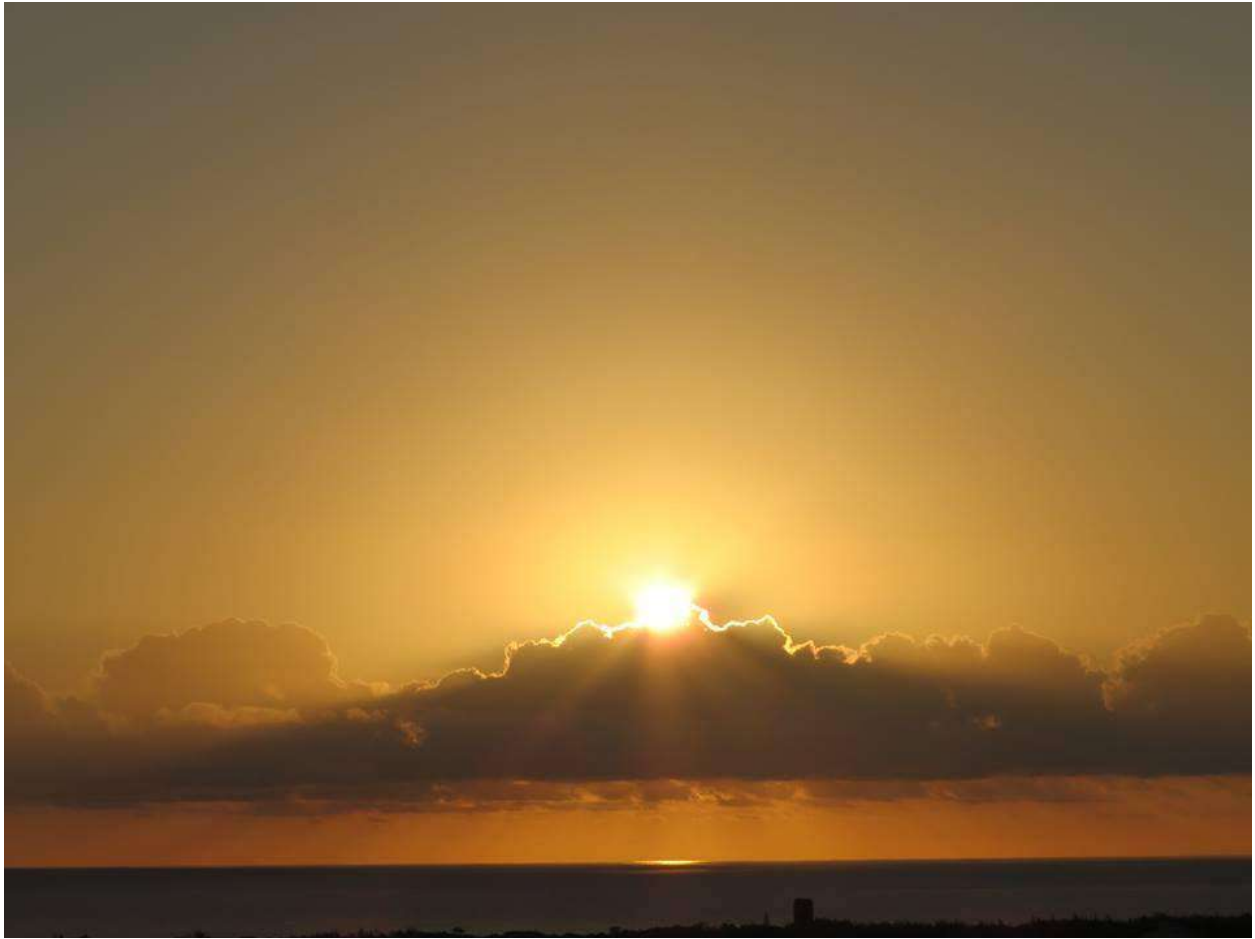
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160. FROM PARIS WITH LOTS OF DUAS

Subhanallah! I am simply overwhelmed at the incredible amount of love shown to me by the ladies of the Paris jamat. What an amazing experience!! The attendance was so high (what a great turn-out!) and the congregation was so very receptive to every word of the majlis. They cried loudly and were in tears throughout most of the majlis and the sounds of their salawat was loud and enthusiastic.

When I recited nawha their response was so loud and strong that it reminded me of the azadari I

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have seen in Pakistan!!

Afterward they crowded around me and showed me so much love and respect that I felt as if I had never seen so much love in my life!!

I will always refer to Paris as "the city of love" due to the loving Shia community there!! I think each lady must have hugged and kissed me at least 4 separate times each!! LOL

Some ladies said they didn't feel like leaving me and that they wanted to hug me again and again. Many asked me to please stay longer and come again. I was overwhelmed and deeply touched by all the love and respect they showed.

The mosque was simply enormous!!! And so very organized!! There was a coat check room (with numbered tags for coats) and shoe racks had numbers too!! The zari room was one of the most beautiful ones I have ever seen. The niyaz and tabaruk was so generous and tasty.

I am amazed that there are so many of the lovers of the Ahlulbayt (a.s) living there--and how very devout they all are!!

The most sweetest thing was when they brought me gifts. That's when I realized I really was in Paris--the gift bag said "Dior" (and I thought maybe they were just reusing a bag from Christain Dior--but NO!! Subhanallah inside was a bag full of Dior French designer make-up and J'Adore perfume!! LOL

Feeling so so blessed and thrilled to be here

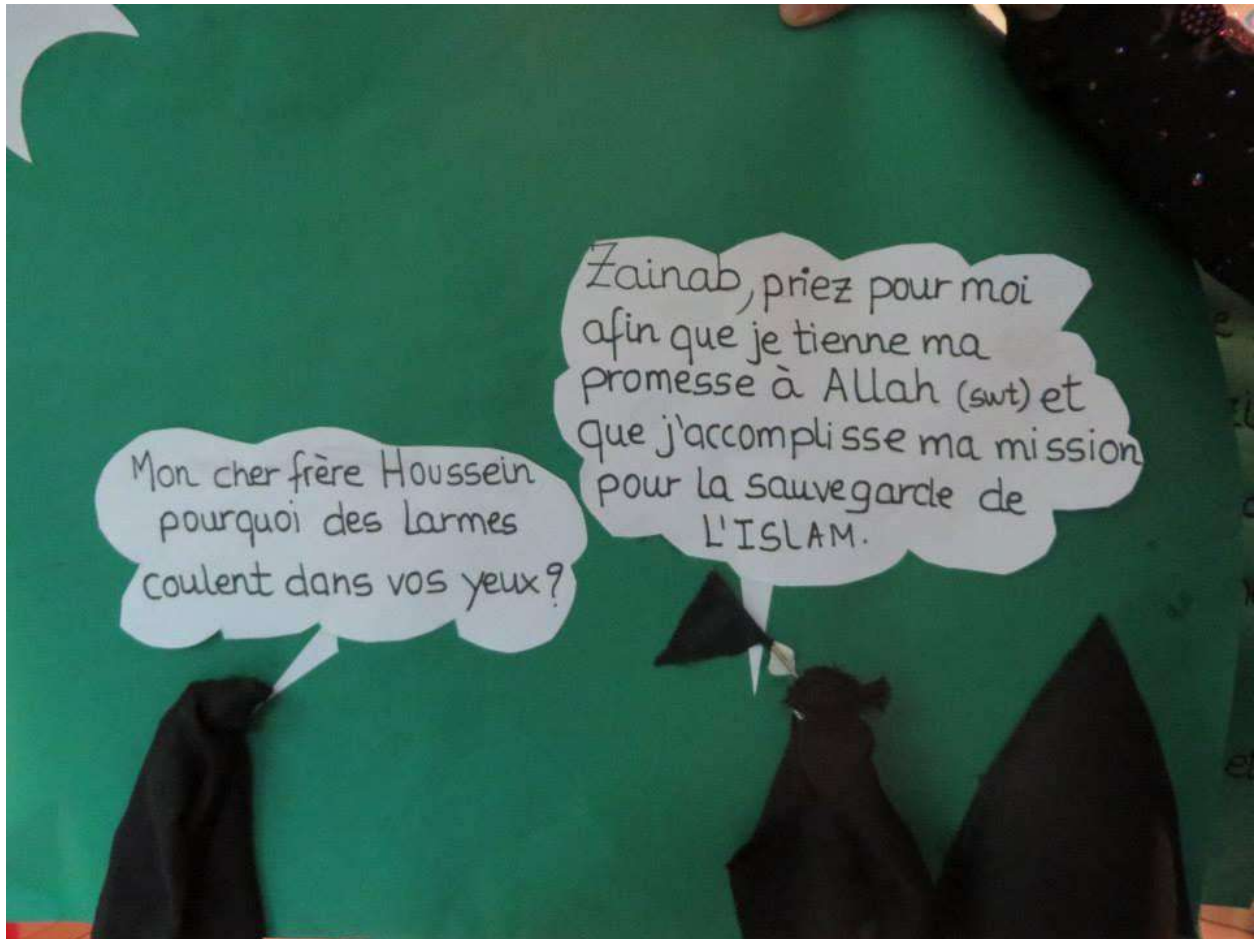
May Allah swt bless you all Paris jamaat!!! Can't thank you enough!

My inbox is already full of emails from the lovely ladies of Paris!!!

I have learned what love is from the ladies of Paris!!! mashallah!!

[Nov, 3, 2013; 140 likes]





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161. It's that time of year again. The holy blessed month of Muharram approaches and as every year, my heart is seized with 2 great conflicting emotions: INTENSE GUILT and EXTREME JOY.

Why extreme joy? Because Imam (a.s) has chosen me to serve him one more time. I live for this azadari. I want to die for this azadari. I only feel truly alive when I am speaking about Allah swt and the Ahlulbayt (a.s).

So why the GUILT?

Because I see my children, my husband and all the people who depend on me and I wonder if I am being "selfish" at leaving them behind once again.

Many criticize me for this trip I take every year. Many question my sense of responsibility towards my family and make me rethink my priorities. Whenever my children behave like "teenagers" people assume right away that it is because I don't give them enough attention because of my travels. It hurts me, makes me defensive and then makes me very very guilty as I question myself and wonder if there is truth in what they are saying.

My juggling of my role as a Zakira and as a mother is one of the most frequent questions people ask me on TV, Radio, newspaper/magazine interviews and in casual conversations too. The more I defend my actions, the more I feel intense guilt and ask myself maybe, just maybe, I could be making a huge mistake.

And then the love for Imam Hussein (a.s) takes over and I hear his voice across the plains of Kerbala asking,

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“Is there anyone to assist us”

And all I can say is LABAIK YA HUSSAIN!!!! LABAIK YA HUSSAIN! LABAIK YA HUSSAIN!

And Allah swt helps me and blesses me in various ways to look after my family in my absence.

Over the last few days these pictures will show you a glimpse of what I have been upto (not all, but some of the things I did) I took each child for lunch alone (Hassan 16 yrs, Zaynab 15 yrs and Shireen 7 yrs)

I took them shopping (going away gifts to remember me by)

I cleaned the house top to bottom (gave away clothes that don't fit, reorganized cupboards, scrubbed things, rearranged stuff etc etc)

I went grocery shopping and stocked the house with all sorts of easy to heat, ready made meals and snacks and frozen pizzas, canned goods (emergency food) etc

I cooked, filled containers and froze 20 containers of food (this meant chopping onions, tomatoes, cilantro, fresh spices, various meats and vegetables etc and cooking huge pots over all 4 burners)

I cooked 30 burgers for snacks.

I made 45 lunch bags and filled them with non-perishable goods so that papa only has to make a sandwich every morning.

I packed and labeled black clothes, socks, winter clothing, scarves, etc for each child to wear to the mosque

I arranged for play dates, after school babysitting, car pools and mosque program attendance logistics

I printed out marsiya and nawha for my kids to recite at mosque

In addition to all this, I ran a house (daily meals, lectures, madressa speeches, writing on facebook, family events, children's birthday parties, extracurricular activities, driving children to appointments etc etc)

I list all these things not to defend myself—don't get me wrong. I am hoping to give you a glimpse into the life of a zakira and what goes into making it possible for me to leave my home and my children without guilt.

And then I watch them sleep and feel waves and waves of guilt and uncertainty and wonder what I was thinking. How can I do this to them?

Tonight, Shireen (7 yr old) hugged me very tight. She has been brave since she was a baby and understood why I travel. Yet it doesn't make the pain for her (or her siblings) any less.

I was busy at the computer and she kept begging me to sleep with her.

“Mummy you know I can't sleep until you hug me and sleep beside me” she said.

And for a moment, I heard the voice of bibi Sakina saying, “baba, dear father, how will I sleep without your chest? How will Sakina survive without you?”

And I left my computer, held my baby tight until she fell asleep and as I stroked her hair I understood it all.

Imam Hussein (a.s) also cried great tears as he left his beloved child and sisters and family and caravan of womenfolk. He felt the intense worry and fear for them. The love of Sakina, her tears surely tugged at his heartstrings and made him descend that horse to take her into his arms again.

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Zuljana, the witness to this heartbreaking scene shed tears and was himself unable to leave little Sakina so alone. He had urged his master to look down and see that little crying girl. He had beseeched with his eyes to comfort her one more time.

And after Imam (a.s) took her into his arms once again he said to her, "I have a mission to fulfill, Sakina. I must go. Be brave and do your jihad too my love."

And that little girl, heartbroken as she was, wiped her tears and released her father. For she knew her sacrifice was for a greater good.

And she understood that all of us have a role to play in upholding the true religion of Islam.

Say. Surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are (all) for Allah, the Lord of the worlds; (6:162)

[No, 2, 2013; 113 likes]

162. A Special Moment in my life:

Standing next to my mentor and teacher, respected Maulana, Author, Writer and Professor Dr. Liyakat Ali Takim.

I grew up hearing his lectures and when I became Youth President, maulana became my special mentor and advisor in his capacity as resident Alim of Toronto jamaat.

He advised me on organizing events, helped me assist fellow youth with personal issues and also trained me to appear beside him on a TV show (on a local channel) on the topic of "Jesus in Islam."

When I received a marriage proposal from my future husband, it was Maulana Takim who urged me to say yes without any hesitation as he personally knew Mohsin and had taught HIM in Dar Es Salaam.

Maulana saab recited our nikaah representing the bride (and Mohsin recited his own vows).

Over the years maulana saab has recited majalises at our homes, advised us on many things in life and has been a special part of our lives. When I began reciting majalises, it was Maulana saab that I would write to to receive encouragement and advice too.

Wherever he lectures, we make it a point to attend and his entire family is very dear to us.

When I went to Kerbala for the first time in my life last year, it was with a copy of Maulana saab's translation and compilation of "Pilgrims' Guide: Selected Supplications"

So why is standing next to him in this picture a "special moment in my life"?

Because we both realized a very interesting coincidence before this picture was taken:

We will both be reciting MAJLIS IN PARIS in Gujarati this Muharram inshallah!!! (I will be reciting during the flag ceremony on Sunday to commemorate the onset of the holy month and Maulana saab will be reciting the 12 majalises thereafter)

I cannot express how special this moment in this picture was for me. Here was my mentor, my teacher and an advisor who has been a source of much inspiration for me--and I would be reciting beside him in the same city from the same mimbar as he.

No doubt I felt very inadequate and undeserving at that moment to be considered his colleague as I am nothing compared to my teacher. But I did feel great joy at the same time--he had taught me well and was a great part of who I am. And what better gift can a teacher receive than to find that one's own student has understood the lessons well, has found his/her own wings and become a true reflection of them!!!

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May Allah swt bless Maulana saab and all our respected Zakireen, teachers and mentors with health, long life and an increase in their knowledge ameen

BIOGRAPHY OF MAULANA LIYAKAT TAKIM:

Dr. Liyakat Takim

Professor at McMaster University

Professor Dr. Liyakat Takim is the Sharjah Chair in Global Islam at McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada. A native of Zanzibar, Tanzania, he has spoken at more than eighty academic conferences and authored one hundred scholarly works on diverse topics like reformation in the Islamic world, the treatment of women in Islamic law, Islam in America, the indigenization of the Muslim community in America, dialogue in post-911 America, war and peace in the Islamic tradition, Islamic law, Islamic biographical literature, the charisma of the holy man and shrine culture, and Islamic mystical traditions. He teaches a wide range of courses on Islam and offers a course on comparative religions.

Professor Takim's second book titled Shi'ism in America was published by New York University Press in summer 2009. His first book, The Heirs of the Prophet: Charisma and Religious Authority in Shi'ite Islam was published by SUNY press in 2006. He is currently working on his third book, Ijtihad and Reformation in Islam. Professor Takim has taught at several American and Canadian universities and is actively engaged in dialogue with different faith communities.

[Nov, 2, 2013; 80 likes]

163, "Hum Hussainy hay Dunya me Pehlay huway!!!"

MUHARRAM MAJALISES BY ZAKIRA SHYROSE JAFFER DHALLA ON AN ISLAND in the Indian Ocean!!!!!!

I truly feel so blessed to be able to serve Islam and the Ahlulbayt (a.s) wherever I am called-- to answer to the call of Imam Hussein (a.s) on the plains of Kerbala on the day of Ashura

"IS THERE ANYONE TO ASSIST US?!"

I am flying tomorrow to recite Muharram majalises in Reunion Island (yes an Island!!) and will remember you all in my duas from the mimbar inshallah.

The azadari of Imam Hussein (a.s) truly occurs all over the world and even on Islands that are in the middle of the Indian Ocean!!! What a sign of Allah swt and a testament to the fact that HAQQ can never be hidden or extinguished.

The flag of Hazrat Abbas (a.s) is held up high in every well-known and even obscure place on earth. (Did you know that even the North Pole has a flag of Hazrat Abbass (a.s) there?!!)

I am posting a video to give you an idea as to what an incredible place Reunion Island is--not only is it gorgeous as a masterpiece creation of Allah swt--but the 2,500 Khoja Shias there (out of a total Island population of approx 837,000) are so very active that they have 4 jamaats (St. Denis, St. Andre, St. Pierre, St. Paul) and their OWN RADIO AND TV STATION!!!!!!

Famous speakers and nawkhwaan from around the world have been invited to recite there over the years. The Shia community of Reunion Island speak ONLY FRENCH AND GUJARATI!!!

QUICK FACTS ABOUT Reunion Island (or 'La Reunion' in French):

- a part of France and an Island in the Indian Ocean, off the eastern coast of Madagascar and southwest of the nearest Island, Mauritius (Seychelles).

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- It is referred to as “France in the Indian Ocean” and commonly called a “Piece of Paradise”
 - an extremely beautiful island (often compared to Hawaii) and has a very tropical lush atmosphere, amazing fruits, mountain, sunny beaches and incredible sea and aquatic life and also has ACTIVE VOLCANO (last erupted in Jan 2010)
 - *the Island is on what geologists refer to as a HOTSPOT (meaning a volcanic region where there is hot molten lave under the earth's crust)
 - 40% of the Island's 2,512 sq. kilometres is deemed as Natural World Heritage Site.
 - The entire population is approx. 837,000 (Demographics from 1999 show a population of 717,000) and approximately 2500 of those are members of OUR Shia community there (French and Gujarati speaking)!!!
 - The Jamaat is SO ACTIVE that they own their own RADIO AND TV STATIONS (called Khoja Radio and Khoja TV) which can be heard and seen in Paris, Madagascar and all over the world (via internet)
 - The Shia community there is extremely active with 4 mosques spread across 4 directions (St. Denis, St. Paul, St. Andre and
 - The madressa is extremely active and famous speakers and nawkhwaan from all over the world are regularly invited to recite
- [Nov, 1, 2013; 32 likes]

164. The month of mourning is almost upon us and our thoughts are with the Caravan of Imam Hussein (a.s) moving through the blinding sun and blistering desert. Imam (a.s) is deep in thought as his faithful horse Zuljanah carries his loving Master over the scorching sands. Imam's heart is full of grief and foreboding...

He knows he cannot ignore the plight and call of help of the oppressed and yet he understands the peril he and his family face...

He looks back at his small caravan and surveys the faces of his devoted companions. So many are of such advanced age that this difficult travel itself could endanger their lives And yet they have come along fully aware that a bloody battle may be awaiting them...

Deep in thought, Imam considers the possibility that each and every man will be martyred on this fateful journey.

What will then become of the helpless women and children they will leave behind?

How will Zainab and Umme Kulthum and the very ill Sayeday Sajjad be able to protect them and lead them back to safety?

Imam must have had a very reassuring thought at that precise moment....For he must have remembered, these were no ordinary women. And no ordinary young man accompanying them. These were the daughters of ALI THE LION OF GOD. And that young man was the son of the King of Martyrs, Hussein ibn Ali.

Not only would they survive and save others....BUT THEY WOULD SAVE ISLAM ITSELF and arrange for the salvation of the souls of the upcoming generations and generations to come for hundreds of years to come.

[Oct, 30 ,2013; 35 likes]

165. Heartbroken to hear of the passing away of one of the most dear and powerful mentors of my life.

Since I was a very little girl, many loving adults over the years have taken me under their wings and made me their daughter. I have been blessed to have some incredible, influential and very

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indulgent adults in my life who saw a great potential in me and did their part to bring me forward. I owe them much because of the confidence and opportunities they set up for me.

Uncle Salman Qaadri was one of those very influential people. This was an 'uncle' (of no blood relation to me) who was instrumental in my meeting, chatting and taking pictures casually with the then Prime Minister of Canada and his wife (Brian and Mila Mulroney). Through uncle, I met Bob Rae, the Premier of Ontario, then the next Premier David Peterson and also great great politicians like Jack Layton. I attended the signing of the new Human Rights accord and other monumental events. My parents also got to meet Noor Jehan, the famous Pakistani singer known as "Malika e Taranum" due to the Qaadris. I met countless Pakistan ambassadors and diplomats. I sang the Pakistani National Anthem at the raising of the Pakistani Flag at Toronto's city hall. I appeared on TV countless times (before I was even 13 yrs old) and often it was with uncle standing right beside me--because he and aunty had brought me to that high-profile political event.

I was 11 yrs old when I first met Uncle Qaadri (an engineer by profession) and his wife Dr Musarrat Qaadri (a Gynaecologist and president of the Association of Pakistani Physicians of Canada). They had been in Canada since the early 1960's and knew every high-profile person in the city. Uncle and aunty saw me entertain a large crowd of adults at a party with my childish singing and jokes and stories and as soon as they saw me and heard me, they just took a great liking to me. He and his wife immediately made me their "daughter" and over the months they began inviting me and my family to all sorts of high-calibre type of gatherings.

There I was a little girl, and uncle would introduce me to very, very famous and important people. He and his wife would constantly remind me that I was destined for 'greatness' and that I should study, aim for the stars and use every talent I had as they felt I could be a Prime Minister some day!!!! ha ha ha! But their faith in me made me aspire to be the best that I could be and I tried to better myself just as they said I should.

By age 13, uncle had me singing the National Anthem of Canada for a huge gathering of over 1000 dignitaries. Next, I sang at the very prestigious Royal York Hotel (where the Queen stays--and where it is a rarity to be invited). Once I entertained a conference of 1000 doctors and medical professionals at the Annual Physicians convention. I was a fixture at private gatherings and pool parties in huge mansions of extremely famous stars and politicians--gatherings full of very important adults who chatted with me as if I was someone of significance.

Uncle and aunty would always place me as their child prodigy and would introduce me with great flourish everywhere we went. They told everyone I was their daughter (they had one adult son who later became a Physician and is now a Member of the Provincial Parliament MPP in Canadian government)

By the turning point in my life when I wore hijab and decided to give up singing in public, uncle had managed to get me an opportunity to sing the National Anthem at a Cricket Match in Toronto (Pakistan vs West Indies I believe) at the huge Sky Dome stadium (now known as the Rogers Centre).

He was very disappointed when I declined and saying no to him was one of the hardest things I had to do to in my life. Uncle and Aunty were immensely proud of me and were confused as to why I would want to give up a 'sparkling future' to become more religious. They were proud of

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me but were sad that I would no longer sing and not even recite nasheed in front of males anymore.

As I got married, moved away from Canada and had children, I met the Qaadri family less and less. Every few years we would meet at a high-profile event and there would be many happy tears at our reunion. They were pleasantly surprised to see me speaking about Islam at large venues and were amazed at the changes in me.

But they saw that I had grown up-- and they had wisely understood that they had to let me grow and be the person I wanted to be. My choices were ones they were proud of and they so wished they could take me even higher--but I didn't want to go there anymore. My focus was now only on God and nothing else. And they were kind enough to step back.

Every year or so I gave them a call to catch up on development of our busy lives. Uncle would urge me to join politics, and learn from and help the election campaign team for his son, Shafiq. He was disappointed that I had too many commitments to be involved.

I recently met Uncle and Auntie at a very grand wedding that I was speaking at just 2 years ago. Both were so thrilled to hear about my successes and my adventures. Uncle looked at me ruefully and sadly said, "But the world lost a singing Star. You gave up singing" I smiled at him and said, "I still sing uncle!!! I just sing the praises of my Lord. And that will take me to heaven inshallah!!" He smiled indulgently and said, "so now you wont sing for even your uncle just this once? I shook my head and said, "sorry!! please forgive me!!!"

He patted me on my head and told all the people standing around him, "Once upon a time, this little girl used to make an audience of 1000 people totally mesmerized. You don't have any idea what this little girl is, do you?" and he shook his head sadly.

My only regret is that my busy life did not give me the time to keep in proper contact with uncle Qaadri. He had made me his daughter but I never kept in touch like a daughter should have. I often saw him and his family on TV or in the newspaper and followed their lives from afar--but there was just never enough time to keep in touch.

Today, as I waited at a grocery store for my order to be ready, I nonchalantly picked up a Desi Newspaper to read the headlines, "Salman Qaadri dies peacefully at his home" and a complete sadness took over me. He had passed away last week and was buried with so many famous people in attendance. And I, his once adoptive daughter, didn't even know....

A host of emotions passed through my heart as I took in the shocking and heartbreaking news. My life flashed in front of me and I saw all the times this uncle gave me some very incredible opportunities. I felt gratitude and realized that he was totally instrumental in making me the confident young woman I am now. He believed in me like none other and paved the way for me to reach high, high above others. He had trained me like no one could have and his wisdom and advice has rung true at so many points in my life.

I felt immense regret at losing one more benefactor and mentor. The older adults who made me their child prodigy are rapidly getting older and are leaving this world to be with their Lord.... I will have to grow up and learn to be strong without their constant encouragement and guidance. Life is short and we truly do not take the time to honour our cherished friends and relatives. And then when it is too late, we realize that without them the world and life as we know it will never

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be the same. Sadly, it is when the light around us gets dimmer or is extinguished entirely that we realize how precious it had been all along to guide the way.

Please recite sura fateha for my dear marhoom uncle Salman Qaadri....

[Oct, 26, 2013; 54 likes]

166. Ya Allah, we turn to you and we beg of you to solve all that distresses and causes us much anguish.

Ya Allah we feel helpless. As if nothing can fix what has fallen apart. This despair makes us feel hopeless. But how can one who believes in YOU and loves your Prophet (saww) and his holy progeny (a.s) ever feel this way?

And yet we are spiralling into grief, pulled by Satan who mocks us for what little faith that even exists in us and he misguides us in our hour of need.

Ya Allah we beg of you to restore the trust in our broken hearts. To give us from what YOU have, and what you can easily give. Let us see the the light, that glimmer of hope.

We come to you as beggars, on our hands and knees and with our heads in sajda. We are holding our empty hands in front of you, not anyone else--for you have commanded us not to seek from anyone but You.

So do not turn us away empty-handed. Do not let us feel so alone and so beyond help.

You are surely able to do all.

You are surely able to miraculously open doors,

You are surely able to heal those who are deemed to be incurable, You are surely able to bring love into the hearts of the hard-hearted and cruel ones.

You can solve all that ails us if You please.

We beg You to be pleased with us and in the flicker of an eyelid make everything alright.

On this sacred day of Arafah, let not the sun set before you have removed all the misery and pain from our hearts, amee

[Oct, 15, 2013; 37 likes]

167. My father passed away and was buried on this day 21 years ago (between the shahadat day of Hazrat Muslim a.s and the blessed day of ARAFAH)

I feel a mixed range of intense emotions. It's a day when I "allow" his memory to hurt and to touch my heart, to make me smile, miss, reflect and speak to him in my mind. If I let that pain touch me every day I wouldn't be able to make it through the day. So I keep the memories locked up only to be opened just once a year...

I am what I am because of him. His genes, his upbringing, his money, his influence on me, his presence, his inspiration, his encouragement and the roof and emotional shelter he gave to me.

I regret that I didn't adequately convey my gratitude and acknowledge all his many gifts to me when he was alive. More words should have been said. And many many times...

As the years go by and I mature and time grows between us, I am even more acutely aware of what he was.

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This confidence I have, this fearlessness, this ability to feel I can do ANYTHING is because my father, a man, empowered me, a growing woman. He made me feel that the world is my oyster. That if I reached for anything I could make it mine.

He ensured I could use that sense of power by equipping me with all that I needed. He gave me the best of education and taught me how to drive and bought me a car at 16 yrs so that I could drive myself to high school and university.

He brought our family to Canada and uprooted himself to give his 5 children an education and security. Even if that meant he himself could no longer be in his own comfort zone and use his own skills here anymore.

I never had to worry about paying for university, clothes, car payments, text books, car insurance, petrol, lunches etc etc.

Life truly was given to me on a silver platter. And my father fed me with a silver spoon.

Dad ensured I was dressed modestly, he kept a firm eye on me that I didn't mix with the opposite sex and made sure I had an Islamic education.

His voice was so gentle that it barely touched my ears and his demeanour was so soft that even a bit of lemon in food would have him cringing. On the rare occasion that I did press his feet he could barely taken the slightest pressure without wincing.

He was absolutely gentle in every way and his defences were always down...

He respected his daughters' privacy and respected us so much that he never touched us himself--even for a hug or a kiss. It was we who reached out to him because we would be overwhelmed with love for him (and that too only at airports or on Eid mornings)

He never entered our rooms without knocking first even though it was his own house.

He created an environment and a safety net and was just preparing to let me fly as he watched--ready to catch me if I fell.

And as soon as I found my wings and took off and flew high up in the sky, he was called back to His Lord.

Sometimes when I am soaring high up in the clouds and experiencing incredible moments of victory I look around and search for him:

"Look at me Daddy!! Wish you were here to see your baby! Your youngest! Look how far I have come dad!! Look how well I can fly daddy!!!"

And I feel his smile upon me and feel his happiness and I know he is at peace with himself for a job well done.

He did his part as a father and he did it well.

Daddy, this victory is not mine. You made it happen. You paved the way for me and guided me to the starting point of the race. You coached me, you invested all that you had in me and you did that all selflessly.

I never gave you anything in return then and I can't give you anything now...

This ehsaan can only be repayed by Allah swt. And I know thankfully, that He pays back abundantly and--with great dividends to a father--for every good deed a child does.

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It is not much daddy but it is all I can do. Here is a sura fateha...a small gift that takes barely a minute for the lifetime of efforts you put into me and into our family.

Allah swt has promised that this "mere" act can erase all the sins and truly elevate the position of the deceased. And I recite it with that immense hope in the Mercy and Benevolence of my Lord.

fb friends let us all recite a sura fateha for EVERY FATHER who has returned to Allah swt since the beginning of time. And if possible remember to mention your father (if deceased) and my father too by name.

Marhoom Habib (Mullah) Moledina Jaffer

If your fathers are alive I pray Allah swt grants them a long life. May Allah swt grant you many years of love and cherished moments together AMEEN

Don't lose this chance to hug your dad and tell him in many words, no matter how overly-sentimental or dramatic it sounds, how grateful you are for his many efforts and gifts.

[Oct, 14, 2013; 205 likes]

168. Here's the turkey (made by my sister in law) that went along with my side dishes. Mashallah there was a LOT of variety as my other sisters also brought food (so lots of "desi" food, East African dishes and more). Mashallah we were a total of 21 immediate family members (my siblings, their spouses and children and my mom's great grandchildren too) --but about 15 family members (nieces, nephews and their children) couldn't join due to schedule conflicts 😞:(

Shireen Fatema read out her dua of thanksgiving for us all and we remembered all our marhumeen with sura fateha. Tomorrow (the shahadat of hazrat Muslim a.s) is the 21st death anniversary of my marhoom father. We missed him but surely felt his loving presence.

So thankful to Allah swt for the gift of family. Life is so much more beautiful when you have your loved ones to accompany you on this journey.

Definitely a blessing to have family but this blessing can only be truly enjoyed when we invest our time, effort and emotions into these relationships.

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[Oct, 13, 2013; 88 likes]





168. As a world traveller, I have visited the ruins and museums of Turkey, old temples in India, the Taj Mahal, ancient churches and Notre Dame Basilica in Paris, Venice, the ancient Notre Dame Basilica in Montreal etc.

History truly becomes alive, precious and meaningful when we visit the structures of the past. You get a sense of wonderment, a sense of awe at the visions and ambitions of ancient man. You marvel at the design and architecture and strength of stone. You feel reverence for the great thinkers, philosophers, dreamers and leaders of the past.

You get inspired to learn more about these historical places and the people who stood there centuries ago. You feel a connection to their ghosts--you want to ask them what they wish they could tell you as they reflect upon their own lives.

Imam Ali (a.s) in his famous letter 31 to his son Imam Hasan (a.s) expressly advises him to visit the ruins and structures of the past to understand the lessons of life from them.

Truly, the buildings and monuments of the past are precious for many reasons, whether they are religious structures or not.

Nations understand this and you often find buildings being designated as Protected Historic Landmarks--destroying, altering even modifying these structures are punishable and subject to huge fines by law, even imprisonment.

The famous (Khoja) Islamic Centre in London, (in Stanmore) was a hospital years ago. Today, the masjid people cannot make a single change to the structure (which they completely own) because it is a protected historic site (not because it is necessarily historically relevant but simply because it is so old!!!!)

I have seen dilapidated old sheds and schoolhouses being actually removed from a busy area (lifted carefully with Government cranes, funded with our precious tax dollars) so that they can be placed and preserved in a safe (less dusty) part of the city and restored!!!!

In such laws is the respect for the past. And a true acknowledgement of the legacy left behind by those before us.

Reading this article (link below) was an eye-opener and filled me with deep sadness.

And then, today, I saw LIVE footage on Ahlulbayt TV (with Rauf Shokoya) that the mountain where the Holy Prophet (saww) stood and called the people towards ISLAM AND ALLAH (SWT) has been destroyed!!! Construction is going on right now over there!!! I am still shaking hours later after seeing that. It has given me courage (and I take it as a sign) to post this status (which I actually wrote yesterday but then took down because I worried I was not being cautious in my words).

What else has been destroyed? Here is a quote from the article below:

"Photographs obtained by The Independent reveal how workers with drills and mechanical diggers have started demolishing some Ottoman and Abbasid sections on the eastern side of the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca.

The building, which is also known as the Grand Mosque, is the holiest site in Islam because it contains the Kaaba – the point to which all Muslims face when praying. The columns are the last remaining sections of the mosque which date back more than a few hundred years and form the inner perimeter on the outskirts of the white marble floor surrounding the Kaaba.

The new photos, taken over the last few weeks, have caused alarm among archaeologists and come as Prince Charles – a long-term supporter of preserving architectural heritage – flew into

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Saudi Arabia yesterday for a visit with the Duchess of Cornwall. The timing of his tour has been criticised by human rights campaigners after the Saudis shot seven men in public earlier this week despite major concerns about their trial and the fact that some of the men were juveniles at the time of their alleged crimes.

Many of the Ottoman and Abbasid columns in Mecca were inscribed with intricate Arabic calligraphy marking the names of the Prophet Muhammad's companions and key moments in his life. One column which is believed to have been ripped down is supposed to mark the spot where Muslims believe Muhammad began his heavenly journey on a winged horse, which took him to Jerusalem and heaven in a single night.

To accommodate the ever increasing number of pilgrims heading to the twin holy cities of Mecca and Medina each year the Saudi authorities have embarked upon a massive expansion project."

And here is a quote from a letter I received from someone at Hajj right now:

"The famous Sakeefa has been replaced by a beautiful garden but many of the homes of Banu Hashem have been destroyed and replaced with toilets"

The Mecca our parents and grandparents saw is no more. Even the Mecca I saw as a 9 yr old little pilgrim is no more. Wish I had paid more attention when we went for Hajj years ago. I was only 9 yrs old. I thought I would be able to see things properly when I would one day return as an adult....

What is most alarming is that it is the NON-Muslims are concerned that history is being destroyed! When someone like Prince Charles (who has much to lose) has the courage and concern to speak out against this (especially when people criticized him that he didn't speak out against murders), it makes the rest of us wonder what the fuss is about!

Do we have to be archeologists to care about these places being destroyed?

I fear we will one day wander the streets and wonder if anything ancient ever really existed in this Holy Land....

I long for the Medina and the Mecca that the poets have long gushed about. Those urdu sonnets and odes to the streets of Medina where the Holy Prophet (saww) once walked, those beautiful sentiments about touching the walls where he leaned again and smelling his fragrance as if he had just walked by..-

Ya Rasulah I recited those nasheeds hoping I would actually be able to see all those places I had read about and recited about!!!!

[Oct, 12, 2013; 36 likes]

169. Ever been COMPLETELY surrounded by beggars and overwhelmed with their requests?

Or ever found that relatives always approach you and have hope in you for financial help because you live a comfortable lifestyle and have a good source of income?

Ever felt a bit upset that whenever fundraising is done for a mosque or for charitable causes that people always seek you out and ask for a contribution. Sometimes the thought arises: "Why don't they ask others? Why am I the only person they can find?"

Often, to avoid such scenarios we avoid certain needy people, relatives or even fundraising events for fear of being compelled to give. Sometimes our friends save us by hiding us from those who will inevitably come to ask us for money or some other assistance.

Consider the reaction of Imam Ridha (a.s) to a similar instance in the life of his son Imam Mohamed Taqi (a.s) whose shahadat we commemorate today:

One day Imam Reza (A.S.) wrote a letter to his son in Madina.

"Oh son! I have heard that the servants do not allow the people to come and simply contact you and put their difficulties before you. Be aware they (servants) do not want your benefit and prosperity now I order you that the door of your house be open to all the people and all of them be free to come and go so that whosoever may wish he could ask you question about his difficulty and may have the energy and (freedom) to do it.

Whenever you go somewhere carry money along with you so that if somebody is in need you may help him. Keep your problem stricken, and entangled relatives in view and attend and help them well. Always do not forget generosity and attending to the afflicted ones."

[Oct, 5, 2013; 53 likes]

170. A special, inspiring evening with renowned lecturer Sh. Jihad Ismail. I am so very grateful and touched by the respect and generous attention my dear teacher and mentor gave to me. His humility, willingness to share and to give advice and sympathy has taught me what a true teacher and leader should be like. Mashallah he gave a superb lecture on fathers (their role, their rights, the quantities they must have etc) and later at dinner he regaled us with lovely stories, anecdotes and gems of Islamic wisdom. I especially enjoyed the personal family pictures he shared with me on his mobile phone (mashallah May Allah swt preserve his family AMEEN)

Sheikh, may Allah swt take you home safely AMEEN

[Sep, 28, 2013; 97 likes]

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171. An evening with Syed Ammar Nakshwani--Al Mahdi Initiative:

Mashallah an extremely well-organized and successful event by the Pickering community's Mahdi centre or as is affectionately referred to--Maulana Baqri Centre)

The LIVE broadcast event had a goal to raise \$3 million towards the building of the new, very spacious, multiple-purpose centre--and mashallah towards the end of the evening at least 2 million was raised. (The proposed structure will be very similar to Toronto's majestic 9000 Bathurst or Jaffari Islamic Centre)

So very impressed to see such an efficient and well-synchronized team of volunteers. The event was very professionally presented with dramatic video clips, beautiful chorus nasheed and thought-provoking lectures by great local and international speakers.

Maulana Syed Mohamed Rizvi, Syed Zaki Baqri and Syed Asad Jafri presented soul-stirring lectures and encouraged the crowd to give generously.

Syed Ammar Nakshwani's speech explained, in detail, the importance of the number 313 (from the holy Quran) and of the special followers of the 12th Imam (ajtf)--motivating us all to yearn to be one of the sincere, loyal supporters of The Awaited one.

(Mashallah the youth of Toronto (Al Huda Centre and Jaffari Islamic Youth) were also able to benefit from his lectures during this trip to Canada)

Syed Ammar was kind enough to come to the ladies side of the partition to greet me and we reminisced about our memorable trip to Kerbala last Arbaeen when we both visited the sacred land to give majalises for the zaireen of Imam Hussein (a.s). We followed up on some of the issues we had discussed at length when together in Kerbala and caught up on each others' travels and religious activities over the last few months.

It meant a lot to receive so much respect and kindness from a fellow colleague--May Allah swt continue to inspire humility, comradeship and unity in all of the reciters to consider each other as fellow soldiers in the army of Imam Zamana (ajtf) AMEEN

[Sep, 23, 2013; 121 likes]



172. My dear sweet fb friends. Your love and kindness never fails to amaze and to overwhelm me. Your birthday messages have started flowing in since last week (even though my birthday is tomorrow) and I can't express how very touched I feel. I look at some of those messages and note that you wished me LAST year too--and those are personal messages--not even the automated ones! And then I see that you wrote even the year before!

And even though it's been years in some cases, I still haven't been able to even respond to your salaams and to even your frequent requests for an answer. But your love and kindness remains steady!! Wow!

Please forgive me for not being able to reciprocate. Try as I might, I cannot keep up with all the emails I get!! Please forgive me!!

I really do feel guilty, especially when this time of the year comes along, that I receive so much of your sincere love and cannot even show you that I DO notice, and that I DO appreciate.

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Two years ago, on my birthday, my fb account actually crashed and I was sent a message that the high traffic had caused an error!! I can never forget that day!!! I received frustrated messages from a lot of you the next day that they had tried all day!!

What an incredible birthday gift!!

What do human beings want but love in this world? And how precious that love feels when it flows in on its own especially when you know you don't deserve it and the sender knows you cannot pay it back....

You, my fb friends, are very very precious to me. I consider you a special gift from Allah swt and like a family to me --even though we have never met. Your friend requests pile up even though you see that the page is full and I wish I could write back to each and every one to say "thank you so much for this love!! I cherish your hand of friendship!!"

You take the time to read my lengthy posts and even make the effort to write such beautiful words in response. Your 'likes' from the vast world of cyberspace show me you are really out there and are acknowledging me.

It means the world to me.

Please know that I do love you all. And I cherish you. And I marvel at how kind and forgiving you all are despite my not being able to write back.

Your birthday wishes, as they flow in, make me want to go into sajdah and to tearfully thank my Lord for the gift of you. And I ask Him with all my heart to fulfill your requests and to grant you ease from whatever difficulty you are facing. AMEEN

I write this mass email because I cannot possibly thank each one of you and tell you personally how much your love means to me. So sorry it looks so impersonal.

But please accept it anyway and indulge me...I write this with all sincerity.

Thank you for making me so happy.

I pray Allah swt makes you as happy as you always make me.

AMEEN

With all my Duas and affection,

Shyrose

[Sep, 22, 2013; 68 likes]

173. "Forgive me if I have ever hurt you"

It must be Hajj season....

These types of emails are flooding our mailboxes, Facebook threads, texts and phone messages too.

Why?

Because Allah swt has made it clear: do not come to me seeking forgiveness until you make amends with my creations.

It's an eye-opening truth that suddenly reveals itself when one sets off for this journey of a lifetime:

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Debts are not only monetary. They can also be emotional!! They can be in the unfinished business of an APOLOGY that remains pending upon us.

Alhamdulillah most of us smile when we see these kinds of apologies and respond with assurances and joyful wishes of farewell.

But what if that person has truly hurt us, damaged us, plotted against us, made our lives a living hell or even God forbid stolen from us?

How does receiving such a blanket apology make us feel?

Does it ring hollow? Does it feel sincere? or do we feel it in our hearts that this person is only asking for forgiveness because they are compelled to do so?

Perhaps that person has even genuinely realized that MUCH emotional unfinished business remains unpaid. Perhaps their eyes have opened to the fact that only WE can now absolve them of this burden now. And, perhaps, they truly are beseeching and quite sincerely too.

How do we feel?

An unvoiced conversation begins at that point. A sad feeling deep inside that ruefully says "wow, it took so much for you to finally come to this place. So much to finally acknowledge the pain you have given. It took the threat of God's wrath to finally make you come to my door? That threat always existed!! So why now? It took so long for you to finally understand that your ibadat will be useless if someone somewhere has a complaint against you? How sad..."

Why DO we wait so long to approach those we hurt? Why do we bring ourselves to this point in our lives where we have to be COMPELLED, quite reluctantly, to come in front of those we have wronged because now we have become mohtaj of their forgiveness.

Why wait so long?

Why wait so long that there is not enough time to even cajole and convince this bitter friend to forget and to forgive?

Have we become so distant and disconnected from the teachings of Islam that we do not realize how important it is to cherish our fellow believers EVERY single day?

Do we know so little that we continue to spend long hours on the prayer mat expressing love for our Lord--knowing all the while that someone sits on a prayer mat somewhere, GOD FORBID, complaining about us to the same Lord?

Have we really become so proud that now the shame of looking repentant prevents us from saying "I am sorry"?

Today, as millions of the faithful respond to the call of their Lord to turn to Him, let us sincerely forgive especially those who have wronged us--for it pleases God when we do so.

And most importantly, let us prepare for our OWN future Hajj by seeking forgiveness from others TODAY.

Whether He calls us physically to Him this month, next year or 20 years from now, let us prepare TODAY.

Let us start paying off those monetary AND emotional debts TODAY.

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So that when we stand at the doorstep of a fellow believer with our ehram on and our suitcases at our side, the apology we seek has already been LONG AGO attained.

And we are not prevented from attaining the forgiveness we desperately need because there is simply not enough time to open up and air out the past grievances.

And the final embrace of a once sworn enemy that we welcomingly receive is one of true and earned forgiveness and real friendship.

[Sep, 19, 2013; 99 likes]

174. I AM SIMPLY ECSTATIC!!! I WON FOR SCRABBLE IN THE SHIA OLYMPICS (AL WAHDA SPORTS FESTIVAL) in Toronto, Canada!!!!

Scrabble in Olympics, you say? Hey, come on--it's a BRAIN SPORT!!! (and quite exhausting too!!)

Trust me, winning runner up was no easy task!! I played against some hard-core scrabble players!!! We started at 8 am and ended at 5.45 pm and our scores over each game were accumulated to find the top scorers.

I made the top 4 semi-finalists and then FINALIST!!! (each turn had to be completed in 2 mins)

My opponent was extremely talented and impossible to beat. She truly earned the title of scrabble champion!!

BUT THE BEST PART?!!!

In my FIRST turn in the first game (at 8 am in the morning) I USED ALL MY LETTERS and scored 75 points!!!! (everyone keeps asking me what the word was and I can't remember it for the life of me--I was too stunned and dazed--using all my letters like this had never happened to me before!!)

BUT WAIT IT GETS BETTER!!!

THE MOST INCREDIBLE PART??!!!

After 20 minutes I used ALL OF MY TILES AGAIN!!!! And scored 75 points again!!!!!!

Now THAT is unprecedented!!!

What a miracle!!!!!!!!!!

(The picture shows me receiving my trophy by Vaughan City Counsellor Susan Rocco and the Toronto jamaat Chairlady)

Thank you Allah!!!

[Sep, 1, 2013; 152 likes]

175. UNDERSTANDING ALLAH SWT THROUGH THE BLESSINGS HE BESTOWS UPON US

My dear dear facebook family,

THANK YOU!! Jazakallah khair everyone for your "likes", sweet comments and wishes of congrats over my Scrabble runner up victory at Al Wahda Sports Festival (ie Shia Olympics). I am embarrassed and apologize for looking like I am glorifying myself and gloating over this 'trivial' trophy especially when there are major and serious world events to be busy reflecting upon but trust me this was TRULY a milestone for me as I am hardly a great scrabble player. I played against THE hardcore Kings of "Obscure 2 letter words and Clever Strategies"(and

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those who play scrabble online and play several times a week!!!)

There was NO CHANCE in this lifetime to ever win against such legendary opponents.

I joined the tournament to provide comic relief to the players--I even made plans for the afternoon (and bought a ticket for an event) as I expected to lose by 11 am. I can't believe I ended up being a FINALIST!!

Lol Usually when I make a word I take so long that my opponent falls asleep while I decide. For this tournament we only had 2 minutes to have the word already formed and ON the board and it is a victory for me that I even survived THAT nerve wracking ordeal!!

My opponent in my first winning game told me it was all "luck and the tiles you happened to pick" that led to my victory--and I totally agreed as I know this was all by the Grace of Allah swt for He just gifted this milestone to make me sooo happy.

There are many reasons as to why I glow over my joys and blessings and the achievements of my children on facebook. First is because I have genuine well-wishers such as you all who make all these moments sweeter with your love and encouragement. The second is not to show off about myself (which it can easily look like) but to show off the amazing Grace of Allah swt.

Let me explain..

I was soooo deliriously happy with this joyous victory yesterday (and still am actually) because to me every single good thing that happens to me makes me deeply aware of the fact that Allah swt truly can make the impossible possible.

He has the keys to His treasures and can fling open the door to ANYONE (even a mediocre, unworthy person like me) simply if He wishes to.

Moments like these bring home the fact that one can never lose hope in His benevolence and His great quality of being Easily Pleased.

It makes me bow my head to Him in reverence and say "Praise be to You! You are GREAT! You really are!!! And You truly bring unbelievable blessings to those who hold on to You."

Whenever God is so Merciful to me I become more and more humbled in front of Him (even though it surely looks like all I am doing is praising myself).

Behind closed doors He and I have a conversation where I cry in shame and acknowledge the fact that He has raised me higher in this world while He knows what a sinner and how insignificant and worthless and low I truly am.

How true are the words of Imam Zainul Abedin (a.s):

" O God,

raise me not a single degree before the people

without lowering me its like in myself

and bring about no outward exaltation for me

without an inward abasement in myself to the same measure!"

And His choosing to make me look good when I am not so good just makes me realize how Great and Forgiving He truly is. His love sure is unconditional!!!

I have understood my Lord more and more deeply every time He raises me high--because He does this despite his Knowledge of the true me.

In these Benevolent acts of His, I get a true sense of His Mercy which is deeper than any ocean and His Generosity which is higher than any mountain.

The Mercy and benevolence of Allah swt descend upon us every minute of the day. And we must

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do shukr. And we must tell everyone how wonderful and incredible He is. Such moments of being thankful and singing His Praises occur every breathing moment of our lives. And we must take advantage of them. They have their own, rightful place in doing Dhikrallah.

Acknowledging His Blessings does not mean ignoring the other equally pressing world events, illness, difficulties and personal emotional issues we all are experiencing everywhere.

The two are in their own places and both must be acknowledged at the right place at the right time. And constantly.

May Allah swt bless you for sharing in my joy and being such true friends despite the miles between us AND despite the fact that most of us have never even met!!

I truly thank Allah swt for the gift of YOU my Facebook friends!! You mean the world to me and my duas are with you!

With all my love, affection and heartfelt duas

Zakira Shyrose

[Sep. 2. 2013; 45 likes]



176. THE MOST SWEETEST NEWLYWEDS I HAVE EVER MET

Zain Ali Panjwani and Kashish Fatima Raza Panjwani have stolen my heart with their love and generosity. This young couple (married only 1 and a half months!!) generously offered to host me in London even though we only met at Camp UK for the first time in our lives! Zain Ali is the nephew of brother Sibtain Panjwani (former president of World Federation) and we heard Zain Ali's most beautiful voice at Camp UK when he recited duas and Adhan for us.

And from the moment I have arrived here at their home, this couple has amazed me with their respectful, loving, generous and incredibly kind gestures of warm hospitality, friendship and affection. They have graciously shown us around Covent Gardens, Edgeware road and virtually the entire Central London area and took us to eat at a lovely Middle Eastern Restaurant. They have opened their hearts and their homes to us and LEFT US THEIR APARTMENT KEYS while they attend another camp until Monday morning (I will be leaving their home on Sunday before they return!!!)

I am so very touched with their love and trust (we are thoroughly enjoying this fantastic, state of the art high rise apartment overlooking the entire city . Zain Ali's simply fantastic mom (who generously offered us to stay here in this apartment even though the entire family is gone) and his sweeeeeet sister Sabiha have shown us around the city (and Sabiha spent the day with us at Buckingham Palace, Wembley Stadium etc)

I just feel soooooo blessed that Allah swt allows me to meet such incredible people in my life. I have so many in-laws and close relatives and friends in London but somehow I ended up staying with this couple!!! It just goes to show that Allah swt has a plan and in His infinite Wisdom, wants us to gain thawaab and also meet new people in our lives who can be role models for us. Islam highly highly praises those who are good to the "traveller" and "wayfairer" The Holy Quran exalts those who help those who are away from their home, the gharibul watan and for good reason: when you are away from home, from your own comfort zone, you realize what true kindness is. You also, as a result of being out of your own element, learn how to be kind to those who visit your own city.

And when you feel comfortable, happy, safe and well-fed in your host's home, the duas that flow from the heart are PRICELESS.

I know WITHOUT A DOUBT that the barkat us guests will leave here (as we take away all calamities) will bless this couple and their entire family with success, careers, employment, wealth, good marriages, healthy children, safe homes, health, happiness and much more than they can ever imagine.

And I pray they will link the good things that happen to them to the fact that they helped a stranger and a traveller. And i pray they never, ever stop being so generous.

Zain Ali and Kashish, I am soooooo touched with the love I see between you two. It has made my heart sing with joy to see your budding love, mutual respect and shared goals to serve Allah swt. I pray with all my heart that you always stay so much in love and so devoted to the service of Allah swt.

Please don't ever change. I am so excited to see what the Almighty (swt) has in store for your in your future as I just know it will be FANTASTIC ameen!!!
love you love you love you!!!!

[Aug, 24, 2013; 125 likes]



177. I AM SO BLESSED TO HAVE MET SUCH AMAZING HOSTS THROUGHOUT MY TIME HERE IN LONDON AND BIRMINGHAM

Zaynab Sajjad I pray that Allah swt grants your father the choicest place in jannah. I will be thinking of you and praying for him and your entire family as you visit his grave today. I pray that all your dreams come true, that Allah swt blesses you for being such an amazing daughter and a wonderful human being. I have been absolutely touched and impressed by what a sweet and loving person you are. I feel so honoured that you went out of your way to find out what I like to eat, arrived early and brought a car too to give us a great time--and the way you were willing to change your plans just to make us happy. I keep marvelling at how many gifts you brought, how respectful and obedient you are and how easily you adjusted to our loud and rowdy group (!!!) I know the daughters of sister Nicole Correr who were with us can vouch for how flexible and fun you were to have with us.

Subhanallah I have seen few like you and I know some young man will be absolutely lucky to have a girl like you! Wish I had an unmarried brother! Zaynab thank you for being so appreciative, for being so generous, for wanting to drop me to Stanmore despite having to be home. Don't worry we were totally fine and every single thing worked out because your intentions were so very very pure. My memories of London will forever be coloured with images of you and our time together. I just don't know how to thank you enough. Please do call me when

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you have time as I want to know if you are okay, if you reached home on time and how your trip to Birmingham went. You are very special to me and are in my duas forever!!! with lots of love,
Shyrose

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178. I am deeply touched and so impressed by my fellow speakers and lecturers at Camp UK. The mutual respect, comradeship and love I have seen here between us all--Sheikh Mohammed Al-Hilli Zahra Al-Alawi Amina Inloes Nicole Corrieri Zakira Shyrose Jaffer Dhalla, Sheikh Usama Al-Attar and many others has greatly increased my faith in humanity.

Each one of these individuals have shown mutual respect and love and I have not felt even a drop of envy or jealous between any of us. We end up asking each other what our topics will be and ruefully saying "wish I could attend your lecture!!!" Sheikh Mohamed Al-Hilli said that he and Sheikh Usama Al-Attar were saying to each other "I wish no one will come to my lecture so that I can attend so-and-so's lecture instead" LOL now that is humility!!! subhanallah!

They have treated me as one of them even though many of them are very senior and learned and the youth reported to me with awe that Sheikh Usama recommended my workshop to an attendee who asked a certain question!!! He said, "for this answer, go to sister Zakira Shyrose's lecture" Even the youth were amazed that Sheikh has such a big heart!!

Sheikh Hilli went to the organizers to request that I be given an opportunity to give a keynote lecture to the entire camp!!! And they agreed despite the schedule being extremely jam-packed with so many amazing speakers. What an incredible heart of Sheikh to do this for me without being asked!!! subhanallah!!

Sister Nicole Corrieri has been frequently complimenting me for my nasheeds, sister Amina Inloes encourages me that I have much to share and have a lot of admirable qualities as a speaker and sister Zahra Al-Alawi seeks me out, asks me to CO-HOST her workshops!!!! we speakers often have lunch together, say salaam across the fields and inform each other about the praise someone has expressed about them!!!

What baraka and love abounds here subhanallah!!! ya Allah please do not allow shaitan to come here between us, ever. It is so refreshing to see fellow lecturers who do not compete or sabotage or dominate the podium. I cannot believe such goodness exists!! These scholars and lecturers are an inspiration to me and restore any disheartening feelings I have ever felt.

I am humbled by the love and respect here. May Allah swt give each one of them success and tawfiq to continue to trail-blaze the way forward. My duas are forever with you all, dear colleagues. I will miss you all with all my heart. Thank you for everything you have done for me and for all the love you have given me. God bless you. Ameen

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[Aug, 15, 2013; 71 likes]





179. THE MIRACLES AND BLESSINGS OF CAMP UK 2013

Subhanallah it has been an incredible few days at Camp UK in Shrewsbury Shropshire near Birmingham. I came here to speak and lecture at this camp and instead I leave here enlightened and with more than I came with!!!

1) THE STAFF BECOMES IMPRESSED WITH US SHIA MUSLIMS THE

Subhanallah!!! There is a huge non-Muslim staff here at Conover Hall (and old castle that once was also a boarding school before it became a camp). The staff have been especially been impressed with the akhlaq and beauty of manners of our attendees. They have commented to us that we are the best camp out of all the camps they have ever hosted!!!! This is a huge huge compliment as thousands come here!! Our exemplary teachings from the Holy Quran and the Ahlul Bayt (a.s) are evident in our manners and our attitude. These staff are intrigued and amazed by us. Remember this is deep in the British countryside--we are probably the first Shia Muslims they have ever come face to face with! And our first impression has made a huge difference!!

2) HOLLY BECOMES IMPRESSED WITH THE MIRACLE OF ISLAM AND SHIAISM!!!

It started with us noticing a British young lady at our salaah times. She would come and sit on the chairs and watch us in fascination. Someone told me to go and explain salaah to her as she had requested it. So I sat beside her and explained the philosophy and words. All she could say is "this is just amazing to watch"

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She watched in total fascination and almost in tears. She told me she had no type of religion in her at all. She didn't even know about Christianity!!! And Islam just felt so powerfully attractive to her just now!! She was often in tears as I spoke to her or hugged her or touched her. Just remember, we are deep in the British countryside. Holly has never seen Muslims before, let alone Shias. This is the first time she has seen salaah or heard the Holy Quran and she is just riveted!! she can't look away! she keeps coming back to our prayer halls and joins our activities!!!

Over the past few days she has been expertly guided by sister Nicole Corrieri and many other speakers, attendees, youth etc have been explaining a lot about Islam to her. When Sheikh Ahmed Haneef arrived, he sat with her during dinner and answered her many questions.

She came to maghrib salaah wearing a green hijab!!!

By fajr she was there again, watching us all pray with tears in her eyes. When we did Dua Saba it was heartrending and beautiful and I could see her being very moved. When we went into sajdah all I could do was wonder if she too would do the sajdah. So I got up from sajdah and covertly turned around to see her and at that very moment saw the incredible sight:

Holly was trying to move her body and mimic us all and finally she went into SAJDHAH!!!! It was the most awesome thing I have ever seen!!! She had submitted to Allah in a deep way without saying a word!!!

SHE HAD DONE THE SAJDHAH THAT SHAITAN HAD STUBBORNLY REFUSED TO DO!!! ALLAHU AKBAR!!!

3) A dear young Sunni Muslim young girl (in our dorm) has become more and more interested in Shiasim. Her shia friend convinced her to come to Camp UK for some fun and so she joined her. This young lady had done her own personal research into Shiaism and was already greatly attracted to it anyway. So we roommates spend each night with her and are doing our best to gently, lovingly and enthusiastically encourage her to take that leap of faith.

I AM SEEING THESE MIRACLES UNFOLD IN FRONT OF ME AND I CANNOT SLEEP OUT OF SHEER EXHILARATION AND JOY. What a fantastic fantastic experience to behold!!!

PLEASE PLEASE PRAY FOR THESE TWO WOMEN. WE ARE AT THE CAMP ONLY UNTIL SATURDAY. WE WANT TO COMPLETE OUR MISSION AND DUTY AND HELP THESE WOMEN REACH TRUTH AND SALVATION AMEEN

[Aug, 15, 2013; 61 likes]

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180. Jazakallah Ja'ffari Islamic Youth of Toronto jamaat for your hospitality, kindness and respect at my recent lectures during the Girls Sehri/Daku Night.

It was a true honour and such a welcome opportunity to spend quality time with the youth of our community. It is always most rewarding and deeply satisfying to be able to address the youth of the community that I grew up in. These youth have a special place in my heart especially because they are the children of my own friends!!

The event was so lively, well attended, full of entertainment and tasty food!! There was yoga, a hijab demonstration, crafts, religious activities and much more. Truly made me wish I was a youth again! And brought back memories of all the youth all-night sehri programs I used to attend at our mosque.

I did 2 separate sessions--one with the under 8-13 yrs age group and one with the 13-25 yrs group.

For the older group we had a large circle and open discussion to explore the important themes of:

Peer pressure, hijab, self-esteem issues, racism, mixing with the opposite sex, parental conflict and the challenges of living in the West

The discussion was so lively, intense and prolific and I was really touched by everyone's willingness to share, speak frankly and to reflect in such an open forum.

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Many youth also wrote long comments and questions to be read out for the group to reflect on. It was truly a good sign of the discussion's fruitfulness when many youth came to tell me that they wished the discussion could have gone on even longer.

My heartfelt thank you to all the youth who took the time to personally express their appreciation and to write to me with their positive comments. I am so very delighted that it was so well-received. This means the world to me!!

Thank you JIY committee especially for being so kind to Shireen Fatema and for allowing her to accompany me and to informally attend the event even though she is too young. I am really grateful for the patience and love you gave her.

A special thank you to Jaffari Islamic's female youth leaders for their hard work Chandni Merali Insiya kanjee, Zahra Kassam, Shumaila Dhirani and other helpers Zainab Esmail Nargis Najarali Mehjabeen Somji and others.

[Aug, 8, 2013; 34 likes]

181. EID MUBARAK!!

Celebrating for the CORRECT reasons as the blessed, long-awaited day of Eid approaches

SUBHANALLAH!!! Praise be to Allah swt who rewards His servants on this day of festival with countless incredible blessings---and with worldly delights too!

What a Benevolent Lord He is to reward us for that which will only benefit US on the Day of Judgment!!!

We have put in extra-long hours of fasting this year. Spent hours on the prayer mat. Given charity, forgiven others, extended a hand of friendship to relatives, shared our tasty treats and prayed shoulder to shoulder in mosques around the world. We have put aside the joys of summer holidays and forgotten our tvs and cds and mp3 players and rushed to the mosque to recite the Holy Quran and to hear lectures of guidance. We have driven our children to classes and patiently explained the virtues of being obedient to Allah swt to our reluctant children while enthusiastically encouraging them to fast and to memorize passages of the Holy Quran. We have woken up late at night to feed our families and battled headaches and missed our precious coffee breaks--all this simply for the pleasure of Allah swt.

And now we have reached the finish line!!!! Yayyyyyyyyyy!!!!!!

The Almighty is smiling upon us, His devoted servants right now. He is delighted in our obedience and our forbearance. Much like a parent revels in the joyful scene of his obedient family spending happy moments together, Allah swt too must be so delighted to behold the millions and millions of His believers dressed in pure white and bowing to him with love and total obedience and submission on the day of Eid.

There is no doubt in my mind that He would be overflowing with pleasure and showering His devotees with their deepest heartfelt requests.

Imagine the most richest and most generous of kings being immensely happy with his subjects...wouldn't his table be filled with fantastic food and presents be given to each and every one who enters his castle? Even the not-so-obedient people entering his palatial home would still be generously treated with utmost hospitality simply because the king is in such a good mood.

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A winner on such a day would cherish his own victory and safeguard his earnings.
A successful student would not rip up his hard earned degree on the day of graduation!!!!
That would be INSANE!!!

And yet so many of us, in a misguided wave of deep excitement on the day of Eid BURN the very jewels, foods, money, castles, silks and diamonds of jannah that we have earned and come together to celebrate!!

The day of Eid may begin with pure Eid prayers and joyous duas of hugs of "Eid Mubarak" (may this achievement be blessed for us!!) but then become totally derailed with the casting away of the hijab on our head and of our eyes, immodest festive clothing, mixing with the opposite sex, loud music parties, lining up outside the theatre for the latest Bollywood movie and a total abandonment of all our senses!!

That blessed anticipated hour of the Maghreb prayers that we spent in the mosque every single day for the past month may become totally forgotten along with the other daily prayers. The time of fajr may be once again spent in that deep sleep of neglect and forgetfulness.....

What a colossal loss!! What a completely illogical way of behaving!!!

But shaitan makes it seem totally rational.....

Imam Hassan (a.s) once passed by some people who were playing and laughing on the Eid-ul-Fitr. Imam Hasan (A.S.) stopped at them and said:

Allah has made the month of Ramadan the racetrack of His creatures so that they will compete with each other in acts of obedience to Him to attain His satisfaction.

Some people preceded others and could win, while others dropped behind and failed.

How strange who plays and laughs on the day when the good-doers are rewarded and the wrongdoers are losing is!

By Allah I take the oath, if the cover is removed, they will realize that the good-doers are engaged in their advantages and the evildoers are engaged in their sins.

The Imam (A.S.) then left.

What an incredible lesson. The good doers are engaged in their advantages. The evildoers are engaged in their sins.

What are we doing as we celebrate today?

Let us be mindful of that question as we enjoy the rewards of a joyous day of achievement. We have been successful! We have been purified!!! We have a huge list of sawaab from the nights that are better than a THOUSAND MONTHS!!

Let this day be a day of true celebration for good deeds with a CONTINUATION of good deeds.

Let us go forth and make EACH day a day of Eid--a day when we have not sinned. A day when we have only ADDED to the sawaab we have earned during this past month.

Let us make this a truly Mubarak Eid. A blessing and a joy that will actually be accepted and reaped by us in the here and in the hereafter.

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EID MUBARAK MY DEAR, PRECIOUS FB FRIENDS!!! You are a true inspiration to me and have made this holy month so beautiful for me with your own beautiful posts and comments to my posts too.

May this day bring acceptance of good deeds, fulfillment of requests and forgiveness of sins for you and all your loved ones!! AMEEN

With sincere duas and much love and affection,

Zakira Shyrose Jaffer Dhalla

[Aug, 8, 2013; 120 likes]

182. MASHALLAH! So impressed by the hardworking youth of Al Huda Centre on 975 Kennedy and Lawrence in Toronto. The event last night was so well-attended, the Lebanese food was scrumptious, the youth were modestly dressed, so polite and so engaged with the lecture and everyone displayed exemplary manners. I was touched by all the love and respect the youth expressed and it really was so inspiring to see how organized the entire event was.

It fills the heart with joy to see our upcoming generation manage events so efficiently. The youth waited until I began eating to start their food! They ensured I was the first one at the dessert table and waited on me so lovingly--waiting for me to ask for something, anything!!! They thanked me publicly and then each and everyone came to thank me personally. I was amazed at their superb manners and their willingness to learn and their enthusiastic attitudes!! Everyone was so kind to my children and treated them with utmost love and respect. The discussion time was especially lively with a lot of questions and comments.

What truly amazed me was the great trust and respect the parents gave to the youth--they dropped them at the mosque and donated food and money to support them. Young males and females were together 'alone' at the mosque and yet conducted themselves with so much alhlaq and modesty mashallah!

Thank you so much for a lovely evening and your emails and messages of appreciation. You all have given me much hope for our future and reassurance that our youth will truly lead the way forward to join the army of Imam Zamana (ajtf) AMEE

[Aug, 2, 2013; 90 likes]



183. Inspired by renowned scholar and educator Sheikh Mohamed Ali Shomali.
(seated on the left beside my husband, my mother-in-law (Batulbanu Dhala) and myself)

Dr. Mohammed Ali Shomali is a graduate of the Islamic Seminaries of Qum. He has also earned both a BA and MA in Western Philosophy from the University of Tehran, as well as a Doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Manchester. His publications include: *Self-Knowledge* (1996 & 2006, also translated into Malay, Spanish and Kiswahili), *Ethical Relativism: An Analysis of the Foundations of Morality* (2001, also translated into Malay), *Shi'a Islam: Origins, Faith & Practices* (2003 & 2010; also translated into Spanish & Swedish), *Principles of Jurisprudence: An Introduction to Methodology of Fiqh* (2006). He is a co-editor of *Catholics & Shi'a in Dialogue: Studies in Theology & Spirituality* (2004), *Catholic-Shi'a Engagement: Reason & Faith in Theory and Practice* (2006) and *A Catholic-Shi'a Dialogue: Ethics in Today's Society* (2008).

[Jul, 28, 2013; 80 likes]



184. THIS HOLY MONTH IS ABOUT THE CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS TOO!!

Look around you everyday as you attend the festivities of the Holy month of Ramadhan. Notice that there are children everywhere?

These are the budding flowers of our ummah. They need to be nurtured until they blossom so that the mosques of our future will be populated long after we are gone.

These innocent children do not know about how to sit still or to follow proper decorum or etiquette. Be gentle with them. They will never forget a harsh word--God forbid it is our angry reprimand that makes them never attend again!!

A loving word, a candy offered to soothe them and a sympathetic smile when they spill tea will never ever be forgotten. In fact these children will honour you forever.

This year I did quite a few lectures for the children. I prepared information, printed songs, loaded my car with heavy things, drove to mosque and took out precious time from my cooking time etc. all for little kids who can't even express a thank you (although they did give me huge hugs and do point to me when I walk by at mosque!! So thrilled!!)

Why did I do all this?

Because I too was a child. And I know how each thing I learned as a child has made me what I am today.

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I have vivid memories of loving strangers, hugs from people and lots of patience from my Madressa teachers. I wasn't particularly an outstanding student at Madressa but people taught me anyway. They didn't roll their eyes and say mean things.

Today I attend mosque because it was made welcoming to me.

And I pray that we can continue this tradition of honouring and believing in our children for our next generations.

The Holy Prophet (saww) loved children and would gently remind parents who scolded or hit them to please stop. He would remind them that soiled clothes can be cleaned but a scar on the heart of a child can never be erased.

I look around me at the hundreds of teenagers who come to mosque each day. I know their parents had to drag them there. I too have teenagers--I know how moody they can be. So when I see one at mosque I smile and hug them. I want them to feel like coming to the mosque. They have stressful lives as it is (schoolwork, strict parents, bullies who tease, misunderstanding with friends, etc). They are fasting (it is still hard for them) are struggling as they read through passages of the Holy Quran (and are getting corrected and scolded) and would rather be home playing video games or texting friends.

But they came to the mosque.

Let us make the mosque a sanctuary for them. Let us treat them gently and not yell or scold them.

They are sensitive. They cry easily. They misunderstand our best of intentions.

Forgive them, love them. Give them a chance.

Children are full of love and innocence. Let them be children for a little while longer. Don't show them how cruel the world can be. Let them believe in goodness and kindness and unconditional love

Yesterday my child taught me something about love. I share this story to illustrate how masoom children are and how we adults don't give them a chance.

My 7 yr old Shireen asked me for money at the mosque. I thought she wanted \$2 and whispered ok but she had actually asked for \$20!!! I gave her the \$20 I had in my purse and she innocently assumed it was all for her!

And she promptly went and spent \$20 to buy a big cake at the mosque bake sale.

I was shocked! Unhappy with I returned it to the bake sale and got my \$20 back.

Someone scolded my teenager for Shireen's behavior and another told me to "control your child as she buys things and returns them" and I felt so terrible.

I had tears of embarrassment and scolded Shireen in a quiet hallway for spending so much for a silly cake. She cried and cried and had red eyes.

I asked her what she would do with such a huge cake. She doesn't even finish a teeny piece usually!!

She said, between huge sobs and hiccups,

"All the kids loved it so much as it sat on that table. It was so pink and beautiful!! And I thought, "it is the month of Ramadhan and I can share it with so many Muslims. I just wanted to make them happy"

Her words made my feel so terrible.

I took her hand and we went back to the bake sale. I paid for the cake, cut it into 50 slices and gave the huge plate to Shireen.

She went to the children's room and served all the children with her own hands. The kids came

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like butterflies over a flower!! It was gone in less than a minute.

She gave each and every piece away (but gave me 2 slices--one piece for one her big sister Zaynab and one for her teenage Madressa teacher!!!) I managed to save her one small piece too.

The kids and parents thanks her. They couldn't believe their luck.

And I felt so terrible for not taking the time to understand what my innocent, loving child wanted to do. I thought she was being greedy and impulsive.

She was, in fact, putting into practice what she had learned about the Holy month of Ramadhan.

And that's a lesson we all need to learn.

This month is about love, about sharing, about giving, about kindness and goodness.

Let us practice it.

And let us start with how we treat the children and teenagers who are under our care and mercy.

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[Jul, 23, 2013; 95 likes]

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185. Going to the masjid every day has become even more special these days as I get a lot of little boys and girls who come up to me and say 'Hey it's the puppet aunty!!' and 'It's the aunty from ahlulbayt tv' and the funniest one: 'It's the aunty from the ipad!!!'

It seems there are some very intelligent little boys and girls who have actually MEMORIZED my puppet shows and know each and every word the puppets and I say!!! Yikes!!

Thank you to all the moms and dads who take the time to write or to stop me in the halls to share their appreciation and cute stories of how their children love the puppets (and watch the programs repeatedly!!!). It means so much to me!! Thank you for the encouragement!! God bless you ameen!

And to you kids--Jazakallah for all the love my little friends. I am so very honoured!! Here's a little song (I did not write this one myself) for you to sing whenever you look up at the sky.

When you leave the mosque at night, stop in the parking lot and look up and search for the blessed moon of the Holy month of Ramadhan--and ask the stars to help you find it!!!

with lots of love and affection

Shyrose aunty

TWINKLE TWINKLE LITTLE STARS
HAVE YOU SEEN THE MOON OF RAMADHAN
SHINING BRIGHTLY IN THE SKY
BRINGING US THE BEST OF DAYS AND NIGHTS
TWINKLE TWINKLE LITTLE STARS
HAVE YOU SEEN THE MOON OF RAMADHAN

[Jul, 17, 2013; 107 likes]



186. GRAINS IN THE HOLY QURAN--lecture by Zakira Shyrose at the Al Asr program today. Over 100 students had the opportunity to touch, see, smell and learn about how Allah swt creates lentils, rice, pulses, oats etc and mentions this in the Holy Quran.

Indeed, Allah is the cleaver of grain and date seeds. He brings the living out of the dead and brings the dead out of the living. That is Allah ; so how are you deluded? (6:95)

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[Jul, 15, 2013; 111likes]

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187. Jazakallah to all the wonderful Iraqi ladies of Al Zahra Islamic Centre for their fantastic hospitality and for a lovely evening filled with English and Arabic nasheeds, lectures and scrumptious food! The Grand Celebration for Imam Mahdi (ajtf) was a sparkling success and it was truly an honour to be a part of it. SUBHANALLAH it is always an amazing experience to see how different cultures celebrate--people were dressed in beautiful kaftans and there was a lot of clapping during nasheeds with many ladies doing that high pitched yodeling they do at weddings and happy occasions. It was a wonderful opportunity and reminder that Allah swt has made so many different cultures, nations, tribes, skin colors, languages and food customs--and yet they can be united with one strong unbreakable bond--THE LOVE OF ALLAH (swt) AND THE AHLULBAYT (a.s). Ya imam Mahdi (ajtf) accept our love and allegiance and be witness that we hold hands across the differences with the purpose of awaiting you and assisting you as ONE FAMILY when you rise AMEEN
[Jun, 28, 2013; 73 likes]



188. If any book has changed my life, it has been Sahifa Sajjadiya by the 4th Imam Zainul Abedin (a.s)

This Imam (a.s) has taught me what it means to be a true, sincere, good, loyal human being. Through this book, his words have opened my eyes as to how Allah (swt) works, how Great He is, what His Wisdom means, how His Mercy is expressed.

I have learned what God expects from me through the words of this Imam (a.s)

I have understood how lofty the ideals of Islam are, what good conduct means, how I have so much to work for in my personality and attitude.

Most of all, I have truly understood how I should feel towards my enemies, towards those who are jealous of me, towards those relatives who hurt me, towards those who create hurdles for me, towards those who make me cry.

Imam (a.s) has taught me goodness. He is the sole reason I mention the names of those who hurt me (dead and living) in my namaaz e Shab (salatul Layl) begging for their forgiveness, asking Allah swt to not take my tears of hurt seriously for it will destroy them and I only want them to be forgiven.

This is how my imam (a.s) has reformed me.

He has taught me to squash any iota of hatred I may feel in the deep, dark, hidden depths of my heart--for it can be seen by He who matters the most: GOD

For this was an Imam who had EVERY right to be bitter.

This was an Imam who had EVERY right to hate.

This was an Imam who had EVERY right to not want to be kind to anyone nor to trust anyone.

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For he had been betrayed, hurt, tortured, hated, imprisoned, oppressed and made to feel totally helpless even when he was the King of the World. He deserved so much more and yet they hurt him and hurt him.

And what came forth from his lips and his pen?

LOVE. ONLY LOVE.

Ya Imam I am humbled by the softness of your heart.

I am in awe of your forgiving gentle soul.

I am amazed at your non-violence in the face of so much brutality.

I am shocked at the love that flows from you when you experienced so much hate.

Ya Sayadey Sajjad (a.s) I rest my head at your feet and I beg you to make me like you. I beg you to make my heart as loving as yours. I beg you to heal my soul.

Oh you, who people ask for healing of all illness, I ask you to heal this heart of mine and cure it of any hate, any bitterness, any revenge, any violence.

Show me how, ya Imam.

Bless me.

Inspire me.

Cure me.

Erase all the pain.

Make me cry only as you did: for the gham and sadness of Hussain (a.s) and for NOTHING else.

I rejoice in your birth. I rejoice that Allah swt sent an inspiration such as you into my life. I rejoice in the exemplary life you have led.

Blessings and the intercession of Imam Zainul Abedin (a.s) upon all the lovers of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s)!!! Khushali Mubarak!!!

[Jun, 15, 2013; 25 likes]

189. If there is anything I have learned in my work as an Islamic preacher and dealing with people from all walks of life it is this: Don't judge people.

That teenager who is "odd" rude or misses too many days of school? He may be struggling with undiagnosed mental issues. It is not because his parents didn't bring him up right.

That broken marriage? It is not because they didn't work hard enough. There may be learning disabilities that made coping strategies impossible in ordinary issues.

Those people addicted to strange past-times? They may be struggling with obsessive compulsive disorders.

I am sharing this particular video and article because every parent tends to judge their own child!! We conclude they may be hopeless or lazy etc. And our friends, relatives and doctors may even suggest these same things to us and judge our parenting as flawed. But there is always hope.

The words of this mother touched my heart: every child has a spark inside them.

Allah swt has created each one of us with gifts (some are "different" than what you and I consider intelligence). No one is a "waste of life".

The challenge is finding one's calling--to look for that spark within the person we are trying to help. And allowing that gift to that gift and grow.

With a special prayer for all those mother's and fathers who are living with the extreme

challenges of bringing up a child with special needs. Sorry we judged you and didn't consider that your child is dealing with more than met our eyes. May Allah swt give you strength and HOPE in doing what you do. AMEEN

[May, 29, 2013; 16 likes]

190. THE POWER OF A KEPT PROMISE

My mom taught me one of the most precious lessons of life: never ever break a promise. She did this by example. She never lightly promised an ice cream or a trip to the park. If she said it she did it.

I learned to believe in her without question.

She would caution me, in turn to never lie to my children. "if you break their trust, you will shake their faith in human beings" she would warn. What an amazing analysis of the human heart!!

I realize now that to have even ONE person to trust in life is the biggest gift a human being can have. Just one....

And even that is hard to find!!

For without trust what is there left?

If a person's word means nothing then how do you have any pure interaction? It would be just tainted with suspicion and self defensive actions.

The world functions on promises. In fact, the verbal agreement is an accepted legal and binding contract in the field of law.

A person's word has to account for something. It creates a foundation for everything else to rest on.

Later on in life, I learned that Islam takes the act of the promise very very seriously. The holy Quran is full of commands to fulfill promises and the Holy Prophet (saw) has advised us to fulfill the promises we make in countless Hadith. It is the basis of a true believer and one of the conditions of piety and salvation. Heaven is only for those who fulfill promises!!

Why this great emphasis on being true to one's word? Because Allah (swt) knows that when you break a promise, you truly break a heart. You shake that person's faith in the goodness of people. You re-open a wound and make them realize that people are not worth relying on or trusting.

And eventually you break their trust in God--because He ultimately gets unfairly blamed for the flaws in His free-willed creations.

And that is a huge loss.

For a world full of wounded hearts that have been hurt by broken promises is a world full of bitter, untrusting soulless creatures. No humanity and no hope.

Barren land where nothing can grow.

How many times people come to me for spiritual counseling and say to me "i can't fall in love or marry because someone broke my heart once" or "I rely on no one for this world is full of traitors" or "I trusted her/him and I won't make that mistake again with ANYONE".

People don't even give financial credit or loans to upstanding citizens of the community because "sorry I have had a 'bad' experience"

Isn't that a colossal tragedy when everyone (even genuine people) must be assessed as potential betrayers because a few thieves ruined it for everybody?

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Unethical behaviour when it comes from fellow believers hurts the most. For if a Shianey Ali cannot be trusted then there truly is no hope. When one has such great role models, teachings and examples and one still cannot show evidence of goodness then what will teach them?

Call me an idealist but for me, when a person goes back on their word it saddens me to the core. It depresses me and sends me to bed for a few days as I mourn the state of the ummah (and believe me people break promises with me all the time. Not in personal relationships but in my work as an Islamic Preacher!!! I cannot count the number of times I have been promised an opportunity to speak and then told at the last moment--often without apology--and often as i am about to walk to the podium--that the agenda has changed) But this is just a minor example.

Imagine a world where everything must be taken in writing...

And even that would be no guarantee!!

We are already at that stage of unethical behaviour.

A broken promise is a tragic event. It is the loss of a great ideal. It is shaitan winning again in shaking the most basic principles in a human being: trustworthiness.

It is the irreplaceable loss of the respect once had for a person. The loss of a friendship.

It is the loss of that ideal world of believers that would have encouraged our awaited Imam Zamana (ajtf) to return to.

A promise is a promise. Big or small. Spoken or written. To a child or an adult.

It is humanity.

It is the Islamic way.

It is the only way.

[May, 27, 2013; 79 likes]

191. Delighted to be invited to speak at an interfaith camp gathering of 500 BOYS AND GIRLS SCOUTS (of all faiths) tomorrow. It is an honour for our Muslim group to be given the opportunity to address the entire crowd and speak about spirituality and nature at the 432nd Scouts Camp In Toronto!

Mashallah it is wonderful to see our Shia community children and youth smartly dressed in their Scout uniforms taking part in activities, putting up tents, making campfires and volunteering etc. This Muslim Scout group (the first of it's kind in Canada) was begun by my dear marhoom friend Muntazir Moledina (who suddenly passed away at the age of 26 yrs due to Cancer) It touched my heart to see the students he mentored and trained now take up leadership positions to guide the children of our community. Mashallah great work Samil Latif reza Dattoo safdar Dhirani and others

My 7 yr old Shireen is a "Beaver" and we are Inshallah spending the night with her in a tent (it will be our first time camping!!) Looking forward to the campfire tonight:)

I highly recommend parents to enroll their children as they learn alhlaq, team work and independence too!

[May, 25, 2013; 76 likes]

Zakira Shyrose

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192. Inspired by a Man of Faith

I entered the airplane (to travel to Los Angeles to speak at an Interfaith event) marveling at the strength that can come to a human being when they know someone is praying for them. (That strength came from you, my fb friends, who not only sent over a hundred "likes" to indicate you would pray for me but also wrote lovely messages to give me confidence and to reassure me that you knew I would give justice to the cause.) I really felt stronger--and as I walked into the plane, I prayed for Allah swt to Guide me as there were some questions I needed answers to (especially to compare Islam and Christianity).

As I waited for the passenger in front of me to put their bag in the overhead compartment, I noticed a young man settling into the seat in front of me. He had, in his lap, a large book. It was the Holy Bible.

I hesitated. How to speak to a complete stranger? The delay (as I stood there in front of him) gave me the confidence to finally get the courage to speak to him. I asked him if he knew a lot about the bible. He smiled, shrugged and said, "a little." I told him I was to speak at an Interfaith event and that I needed to understand what the "Golden Rule" means to Christians. I asked him if he could explain some points to me and he readily agreed.

After the plane took off, I made my way to him and he reassured me, "You are not disturbing me at all. I was actually looking forward to speaking to you."

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The eyes of all the passengers in the small plane were on us. A woman in hijab speaking to a man with a bible!!! Most could hear us as this was a very small aircraft.

We discussed Christ. We discussed the words of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) and the relevant ayats of the Holy Quran. I told him about Imam Ali (a.s) and he was extremely impressed. I gave him some websites to read more about the Nahjul Balagha, Risalat e Huquq (of Imam Zainul Abedin) and the famous letter of Imam Ali (a.s) to Malike Ashtar (to understand the role of the "Golden Rule" in governance).

He opened the Bible (he had both the old and new testaments with him) and wrote me references to look up. He was so kind, so patient and so respectful that I felt as if I was talking to an angel!!!! Speaking to him gave me the opportunity to articulate my thoughts and when I saw him inspired or impressed it gave me the reassurance that I had good points for my lecture after all.

When we landed, he was waiting for me in the terminal. He somehow knew which gate I had to walk to (even though there were several planes going to L.A he somehow knew which flight was mine!!) He proceeded to walk me to my gate (it was a long walk). As we spoke, I told him that I knew without a doubt that Allah swt had placed us on that plane together for a reason.

"Isn't it wonderful how God brings people towards His Light?" I asked. He smiled in that quiet, pious way of his that I already had become familiar with.

I told him it was his Bible that had made me speak to him. I wanted to bring my Holy Quran to read on the plane as well but I wonder if it would have made him speak to me? In fact, if I had the Holy Quran, I probably would have been taken in for questioning by the authorities!! He shook his head in sadness at that realization.

He told me to buy myself a sandwich as I had a long flight ahead. I wasn't hungry but I did what he said. And he was right--when I later hungrily ate the sandwich on the flight, my heart was full of gratitude to him for guiding me. I really wouldn't have bought it if he hadn't made me!!

Like a true momin should when travelling with a companion, he walked me a few steps towards my gate (even though he had to go the other way). I thanked him for all his help and he asked me, "Can I pray for you?"

I was taken aback but readily agreed.

He stood solemnly and bowed his head. So I did the same.

He said, "Oh Lord, bless this lady and help her to spread your light. Guide her with your inspiration, make her words come with ease. She is doing your work, help her My Lord, to bring people towards you. Help her to show everyone that you exist in all the faiths, that You are Great"

He kept praying beautiful words for me, just for me, and soon, I forgot to bow and I just watched him in fascination. His faith in God was evident on his face. He looked so beautiful--his deep faith made him look like an angel!! I could see no flaw on his face. He became perfect in my eyes. He was talking to God and so lost in the conversation that I envied him. I marveled at the goodness that comes from a true man of faith, no matter what his faith. This gentle kindness that makes one concerned for the welfare of others, that finds a common ground of humanity to wish the best for others (especially when they work for God)

Zakira Shyrose

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As he prayed, I felt all the worries fall off me like leaves. Believe me, it was as if my shoulders became upright and my back straight. As he bowed his head deeply for me, my whole being became more strong and tall and upright. wow! Prayers work like this?!!! Instant reaction!!!

He bid me goodbye and handed me his business card and told me to call or write if I had any more questions. It was then that I asked him what his name was.

He pointed to the Sky with a finger and said, "Sky"

I smiled at his joke. As he walked away, I looked down at the business card in my hands and sure enough there was his name,

"Skye" It really WAS his name lol.

How aptly had his parents named him. He really had smiled like an angel from the sky. And had inspired me about God and made me feel so much stronger in those precious moments we had spent together.

To tell you the truth, I can't remember even one word we discussed. In fact, none of the points we talked about even made it to my actual speech. And yet I felt like I knew more!!!

I think Allah swt had placed him in my life at that moment simply so that I could be inspired, so that I could see how we can be true ambassadors of God. Most especially, Allah swt had put him in my life so that I could feel the **POWER OF PRAYER**.

And I have become a believer. Pray for others. It truly works!!!

with duas for all of you, my fb friends

Zakira Shyrose Jaffer Dhalla

Zakira Shyrose

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[May, 16, 2013; 95 likes]

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193. It truly was an honour to meet brother Ali Al-Najjar for the first time. I have heard so much praise about him and it was a surprise to realize that he had been sitting in the front row when I gave my speech! I realized what a humble and kind person he is the minute he spoke to me with such encouragement and positive feedback about my speech. Sheikh Mohammed Al-Hilli is one of the most humble and pious people I have ever met. And Allah (swt) has blessed us with the opportunity to cross paths in several countries (UK, USA, Africa and unforgettably, Kerbala) Every time I see him, I am struck by the noor on his face and an exuberance and goodness that indicates true piety. He is full of knowledge and experience and yet his humility is greater than all of that. The way he has encouraged me, spoken with so much respect and compassion (ie. he always took the time to ask me how I was managing without my lost suitcase in Kerbala) and praised my work always fills me with deep admiration for him. Mashallah I pray for the long life of these scholars and servants of the Ahul bayt (a.s) They are our heroes and our role models without a doubt.

[May 16, 2013; 25 likes]

194. Mayor of Bell county, Los Angeles California (far left) Mr Ali at the Interfaith event where I represented Islam. Mashallah there are many distinguished personalities in this picture including sheikh Mohammed Al-Hilli (UK) Islamic lecturer Ali Al-Najjar (USA) Sheikh Falah (Los Angeles) brother Munawar Rattansi (UK, Vice President of World Federation) and others

[May, 16, 2013; 24 likes]



195. Syed Mustapha Qazwini completely surprised me with his incredible memory! He was able to remember my name AND the conference we both spoke at in Windsor, Ontario over 2 years ago!!! He recognized me in a crowded room of people!! Mashallah I was so inspired by his humble demeanour--it meant a lot to me to be given so much time and respect by such a great scholar. After we took this picture he turned to me and said "It is my honour to have a picture with you sister" I was completely amazed at those words!!! I understood then that when one takes the time to encourage and to make others feel worthy, then Allah swt elevates such humble people beyond measure....

[May, 16, 2013; 58 likes]



196. Thank you Allah (swt) for blessing me with a mother who has made me everything that I am today. My Mom has not only taught me to believe in myself and to live up to my potential (and beyond!!) but she has given me the biggest tool to face everything in this world--A **POSITIVE ATTITUDE.**

Many people remark that I have a cheerful personality and a great zest for life--and they wonder how I can be so happy all the time. Sometimes my teenage kids tell me to "mom can you please be serious at least once in a while??" Without a doubt, this quality is in my mother and she has taught me to be happy and carefree by example and by training. Mom always knows how to find humour in ANY situation and she spreads cheer wherever she goes. She never tolerated sulking, depression or negative thinking. This has allowed me to face all the ups and downs in my life with a great big smile on my face and with true peace in my heart. Because when a person smiles, it sends a message to the brain to BE happy--and this eventually makes one happy in the heart!!!

Now that I am all grown up I realize this was my mother teaching me **SABR, RELIANCE ON ALLAH AND HAPPINESS WITH HIS DECREE.** Her encouragement to smile and deal with whatever He (swt) sent my way was actually a lesson in Islamic principles and understanding what God truly wants from His devoted and obedient slaves.

Thank you mummy for teaching me to be happy. It makes me see everything around me with

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rose coloured glasses and everything seems so colourful and blessed. And it IS!!! Allah swt has blessed us with so much to be thankful for--and nothing shows gratitude in a slave of His Lord than a smile of happiness.

May Allah swt keep my mother smiling forever. May He (swt) make us the CAUSE of our mother's smiles and may He (swt) make her as happy as she has made her children all her life. AMEEN

Happy Mother's Day my dear fb friends--please give a big hug to your mothers for me!!! She gave you to me!!! with love, Zakira Shyrose

[May, 12, 2013; 175 likes]



197. From Midday on the 2 May 2012, The World Federation received reports that extremist rebel forces in the Adra District of Damascus, Syria vandalized the resting place of Hujr ibn Adi –the loyal companion of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and Imam Ali (AS). These reports suggest that the shrine that was built over his gravesite was attacked, destroyed, his grave dug open and his body exhumed and taken to an unknown location. At this time, given the mass confusion in Syria, The World Federation cannot confirm this either way but is working hard to ascertain the exact facts.

Hijr ibn Adi was a pious man who stood for justice and fought oppression alongside the Holy Prophet of Islam and Imam Ali (as). Hijr ibn Adi and his son were killed in 660 CE by Muawiya ibn Abu Sufyan because of their unwavering loyalty to Imam Ali (as).

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Today, Muslims travel far and wide to this burial site to pay their respects to Hijr ibn Adi. However, since the conflict began in Syria, pilgrimages to sacred shrines across the country have halted including the ability to exercise rights and freedoms.

The World Federation (after learning of these reports) strongly condemns the alleged vandalism of the resting place of Hijr ibn Adi and is appalled by this hateful attack carried out by the perpetrators. Islam is a religion of peace and respect where the life of every human being, regardless of faith, race, culture or gender is held sacred.

Regardless of religious identity or ideology, we must make sure of the protection of one and all. Therefore The World Federation of KSIMC cannot accept the violation of any burial site, religious property or holy shrine and demands that every effort be made to bring these perpetrators to justice. As such these crimes may go to highlight the grievances of minorities inside Syria. Furthermore, The World Federation will use its best endeavours to protest against these callous and heartless acts.

Let us come together as one global voice to peacefully denounce such atrocious behaviors and crimes against humanity.

For more information, please email secretariat@world-federation.org
[May, 3, 2013; 23 likes]

198. One of the most exasperating things my mom did when I was growing up (and STILL does) is to ask me, as soon as I entered any place, "say salaam to everyone"
Sometimes I would have already said salaam but she would insist that I do it again or add a hug or kiss for added respect.

As a teenager, this formality used to drive me up the wall and as I grew older it would embarrass me to no end.

As a survival mechanism, I quickly learned to enthusiastically greet everyone within a 10 feet radius with exuberant smiles, loud salaams and welcoming hugs before mom had a chance to say one word. Lol

Mom would even check with me AFTER someone left if I had hugged them in greeting and hugged them when they departed. I would roll my eyes and beg her to please, please see that I was not a baby anymore and that I knew such basic things by now!

I learned to feel guilty and to replay scenes of my own behaviour during greetings and to this day if I neglect to stand up to greet someone it haunts me for days. Sometimes I even apologize to people days after the fact for not greeting them in the way I had been taught to.

It is because I am now, finally able to truly see the incredible power that being greeted has on a human being.

I have learned that this is not simply a ritual but a very important part of successful human interaction.

Now that I am older and wiser, I cannot thank my mom enough for teaching me this basic Akhlaq, courtesy and good etiquette.

I can now see the way this habit of mine (painstakingly cultivated in me by mummy) endears me to people and brings sunshine to their faces. Often, my initiating eye contact, getting up to hug or kiss them brings delighted astonishment to people's faces. Some seniors get so impressed that they often ask "whose daughter are you?"

Even children and teenagers who meet me know to expect a hug and kiss from me. I greet

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everyone with the same enthusiasm!

As a recipient myself of respectful salaams by people of all ages, I can now fully appreciate how crucial it is to

greet others. I have experienced how a loving salaam (accompanied with a sincere smile) can truly chase away feelings of insecurity or social discomfort. Even senior males at mosque in parking lots often stop and say salaam to me and it makes me realize how humble and respectful our culture and religion has taught us to be.

Sometimes when I return to mosque after days of being out of town, it is these same kind of loving salaams by community members that truly make me feel that I have returned home to my own family. There is nothing more joyful for a human being than to know that they have been missed and that their arrival makes others happy.

Being greeted is being acknowledged, it's being included, it's being told "I see you, I like you, I am glad we met today". And as Muslims, it is to give the gift of an added dua: may you have inner peace and contentment. SUBHANALLAH what a great religion we have that places such great importance to saying "salaam". Allah swt truly knows human nature and understands what is needed to unite hearts of human beings.

For me, the most special salaams are when my former Madressa students seek me out at mosque or if they see me at the grocery store or mall. Their respect shows me a level of gratitude and indicates to me that they will forever appreciate whatever little I did in increasing their understanding of Islam.

When my children, siblings, nephews and nieces say salaam to me with a hug and smile it makes my world complete. It shows me that they cherish me and consider me worthy of their love. It indicates to me that I have a revered status in their lives and that is a priceless feeling.

For what more do human beings need in this world but to feel special, important and needed by others?

Thank you mummy for teaching me something that seemed so trivial to me but what truly was the key to bringing happiness and joy to others--AND the respect and admiration of others towards me.

Ma, tujhay mera salaam! May you live and share your wisdom for many, many more years to come AMEEN

[Apr, 21, 2013; 60 likes]

199. One of my most special moments in Kerbala was when I had the incredible fortune to meet my favourite poet, the most renowned Syed Naushe Raza "Raza" Siravi

This is the poet who wrote the famous Urdu ode to mothers, "mowt ki aghosh me jab thak ker kay sojatee hay ma" (I first heard it recited beautifully by the Syed Naqvi brothers of England)

This beautiful piece of poetry always has even grown adults crying out loud whenever I have recited it in a gathering.

I never dreamed I would actually meet the poet who wrote this, that he would be walking beside me on the days leading to Chehlum (Arbaeen) on the blessed land of kerbala as we walked past the shrine of Hazrat Abbas (a.s) and Imam Hussein (a.s)

We were both barefoot and walking amid hundreds of people and we spent precious moments talking of the awe we felt to be in the presence of Ababdillah Hussein (a.s) and the honour of mingling with his millions of loving followers.

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At one point, overcome with emotion, I told him "I am your daughter, please do not hesitate to ask me if I can be of any assistance"" and he suddenly burst into tears. He cried and cried like a child and thanked me for this honour.

Later I learned he had not been blessed with children and that is why my words had touched him so deeply.

"Chacha" (translated: "paternal uncle" in Urdu) as we endearingly called him, gifted me with signed copies of his Urdu books one entitled "Ma" (mother) and the other "Bahen" (sister)

Copies of the books can be seen in the attached picture in the hands of famous nawhakwaan Ali Safdar and talib e ilm (Najaf) maulana Syed Mohd Raza Najafi as they stand beside "chacha" (far left)

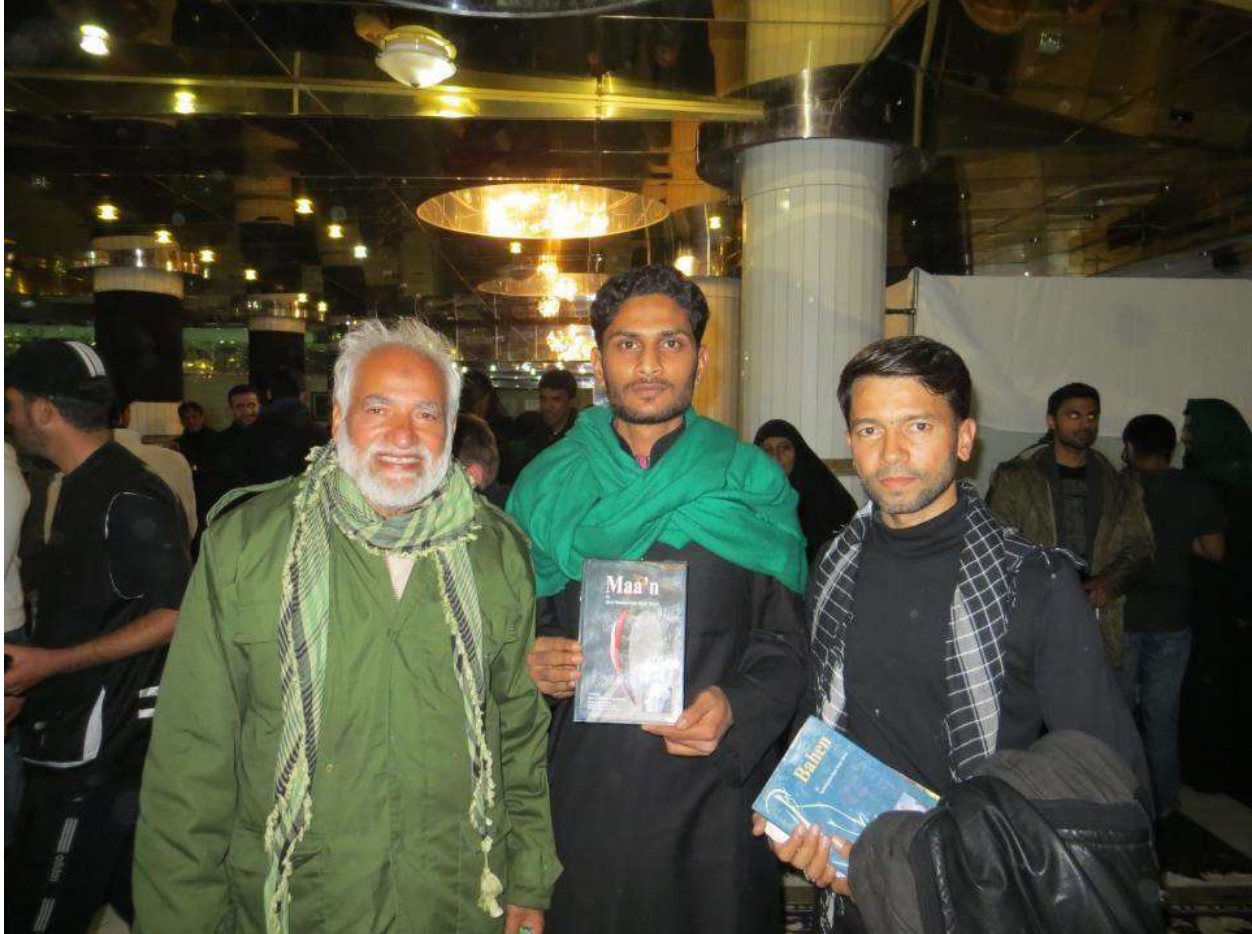
I was so overwhelmed with happiness to be in the company of these wonderful lovers of the Ahlul Bayt on my trip to kerbala in Chehlum.

I will forever cherish the love chacha gave to me and in the short time we spent together, I truly saw what a pious, humble and incredible human being he is.

Recently, he had me in tears when a lady approached me at mosque the other day to convey to me his salaams all the way from India. What a humble, caring individual to remember someone so insignificant from so far away!!

I pray for his long life as he has much to contribute in his continuing lifelong services to the Ahlul bayt a.s I pray Allah swt grants me the opportunity to meet him again and to learn at his feet, ameen

[Apr, 9, 2013; 68 likes]



200. RAIN, A SIGN OF MERCY Listening to the beautiful sound of rain on my window pane and feeling a rush of joy at the colourful spring flowers this rain will soon bring. Isn't it amazing that flowers and vegetation will burst forth from even the most hidden crevices and nooks of the earth? The rain and sun will benefit ALL, even those dry shrubs that look hopeless and even the most weakest will find strength to sprout and stand tall!!

Spring is in the air and the world will become full of colour and life and all the trees will become heavy with leaves and laden with fruits on their branches. Wow. What an amazing sign of the existence of Allah swt and His constant Creating of miracles around us.

The all-encompassing nature of rain is a symbol of Allah (swt)'s Mercy over His entire creation. When it rains, every plant receives nourishment.

Similarly, when He Smiles upon us and bestows His Blessings (ie gives us wealth, health, family, friends, power, status, joyful moments in life etc) He gives to All.

This is why even though we sin, turn away from Him, disobey or become the least deserving, He still includes us when He Blesses others.

Even though we remain ungrateful and unheedful, He always looks after our every need and every wish.

This is not a sign that we are deserving. It is a sign of His nature--which is forever Kind, Compassionate and Merciful.

His Benevolence is not conditional. He loves all His creatures.

What a Loving, Nurturing Lord He is and what unworthy slaves are we...

As I listen to this life-giving rain I feel loved and truly cared for. I feel enveloped in His Mercy.

And I feel hopeful that even though I am undeserving, He will never deny me His love.

He is Great and His Greatness is that He, like a forgiving, hopeful mother, will always shower His Love upon me.

How I wish I could be a better child.

For when I please my mother, the expression on her face is priceless and whatever she already does for me becomes infused with even more blessings, Duas and joy.

Hearing this Merciful rain evokes in me the need to show gratitude to my Lord.

And because He doesn't need anything to make Him Greater than He already is, He will Bless ME and I will become greater in His eyes.

SUBHANALLAH what a Loving, Beneficent Lord He is!!

And We send down from the sky rain chartered with blessing, and We produce therewith gardens and grain for harvests." (Surah Qaf, 9)

[Apr, 9, 2013; 58 likes]

201. CHANNELING OUR GRIEF TO A GREATER CAUSE

The sudden news of death, whether it is of a child or of an old person, always serves to shock us into realizing that death is a reality and that life is temporary. In our busy, frenzied life we are suddenly compelled to pause and to absorb the news. And then, sometimes for only a brief moment, our own end flashes in our mind's eyes.

If we do not capitalize on that moment, and encourage ourselves to reflect upon our mistakes and what we have prepared for our hereafter, then we lose an extremely valuable opportunity.

"The dead whom you have been watching, suffice as preachers," says Imam Ali (a.s)

Grieving has its place, and must be done for the pain of separation must be expressed. Many of us then erroneously go on to express anger--at life, at people who may be to blame and most dangerously, at the decisions and Wisdom of Allah (swt)

But it is important, after grieving, to continue on to a better stage of grief, and that is to engage in great self-reflection and experience sincere regret at the time one has already lost to prepare for the hereafter. With this must come a firm resolve to be a better human being and to be a true servant of Allah (swt)

One day, the Commander of the Faithful, `Ali, upon whom be peace, entered the market of Basra. He saw people utterly absorbed in themselves and the business of buying and selling; it was as if death and resurrection would never happen. This atmosphere of negligence deeply disturbed him, so he wept and said: "O servants of the world, O slaves to the worldly!

Throughout the day you are busy buying and selling, swearing oaths as you do so, and your nights are spent in sleep and a state of complete unawareness. So day and night you are unaware of the hereafter and the outcome of your affair; when, then will you prepare yourselves for the journey that awaits you, and when will you gather the provisions you need? When will you begin to remember the hereafter and resurrection?"

The Quran calls out to us,

[40.39] O my people! this life of the world is only a (passing) enjoyment, and surely the

hereafter is the abode to settle;
[Apr, 1, 2013; 52 likes]

202. Being the Keynote speaker at University of McMaster Ahlul-Bayt Islamic Society (MAIS) was not only an honour but also a wonderful opportunity to see our exemplary youth at work.

Often we feel disheartened to see some of our youth not attending events or taking ownership to organize community programs. The tendency is to paint everyone with the same brush and to assume they are all apathetic or even totally distanced from faith. The youth, most often than not, tend to get a bad rap.

Alhamdulillah my work as an Islamic lecturer puts me in touch with many young people all over the world. I have had the great fortune to speak at events organized by youth committees in England at Leicester Absoc, in Toronto for the Jaffari Islamic Youth (JIY), the youth committee Bazm-e-Sakina in Karachi under Zohra Rajpar, youth in Vancouver, Florida (USA), Milton Keynes, UK and at various other centres around Toronto, Canada.

Meeting these young people of our community has, in fact, given me faith and added motivation to continue my own work. There are truly exemplary youth out there who genuinely want to learn more, who feel a great passion to organize educational and recreational events for their fellow youth and who truly exhibit great signs of leadership at a young age.

Some of these young men and women are far away from their own homes, live on campus and lead very busy lives. Others live at home which makes their workload even more challenging for they have to juggle school, work, family relationships and social networks too.

And yet they find time to attend mosque, youth events AND be a part of youth committees that organize programs for others. That is truly remarkable and commendable!

It is important that we look at these youth and do whatever we can to further enhance and support their growth. Too often, our sadness at those who are left behind drains us and even takes away all of our attention. And we neglect to honour and reward those who are striving to make a difference.

They too need a boost, a pat on the back and recognition for all that they do.

Subhanallah it truly filled my heart up with delight and joy on Friday to see that there are so many committed and devoted young people in our community. Seeing them energetically and enthusiastically set up tables and chairs, decorate the hall, greet the guests, work the sound system and stage curtains, serve food to the guests, take pictures, give speeches and recite nasheeds was so very inspiring. I was especially struck by their exemplary manners, respectful demeanour and mature way of carrying themselves!

The fact that they were so engaged with the lecture topic and had so many questions during the discussion was even more uplifting for my soul! I scarcely had a dull moment during my entire time at the event--there were youth waiting to speak to me and to take pictures with me at any given time!! So many wanted my advice on their career path, their struggles with school, their questions about the faith etc. These were young men and women who truly were interested about making their lives and paths successful.

It really gave me hope and reassurance for our future as a community. I was also very grateful to all the adults and families that had come out in full support to attend the sold-out event. It gave the students such a morale boost to see their parents and community encouraging their efforts.

Zakira Shyrose

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May Allah (swt) keep this passion and love that our youth have for their religion shining bright in their hearts forever AMEEN

Our duas are with you! Keep up the great work and never feel disheartened or discouraged! We see all that you do! You are the hope of our community and role models for your fellow youth! with lots of duas

Zakira Shyrose

[Mar, 25, 2013; 96 likes]



203. Ever noticed how wonderful it is to receive a compliment? Words truly are powerful and many great men and women have amazing stories of how they were motivated to achieve simply because one teacher or friend or stranger took the time to appreciate them.

Compliments are important and praise (whether it is for a child or a full-grown adult) can do wonderful things to raise self-esteem, encourage, give strength and chase away the clouds of despair and depression.

Often, people who praise us are totally unaware how their words have lifted our spirits and made us believe in ourselves. If we all realized how precious our simple exclamations of "you are so smart!" or "you look great" or "wow, you keep your house so clean" or "you've really taught your children well" can be to those who crave a kind word, we would always be making an extra effort to compliment.

However, compliments can also be a dangerous thing. How?

When we allow them to create a sense of superiority within us. When we begin to take praise as the absolute truth about us. And then arrogance, over self-confidence and an inflated sense of self-assurance comes over us.

Imam Ali (a.) has offered us a great solution to remain humble and a great way to ensure that we do not get carried away when people praise us. He explains how in his sermon 193 on the Qualities of a Believer:

They are not satisfied with their meager good acts, and do not regard their major acts as great. They always blame themselves and are afraid of their deeds.

When anyone of them is spoken of highly, he says:

"I know myself better than others, and my Lord knows me better than I know. O' Allah do not deal with me according to what they say, and make me better than they think of me and forgive me (those shortcomings) which they do not know."

Thus Imam Ali (a.s) recommends constant inner self-reflection as we graciously accept a compliment. This means smiling and honouring the person who took the time to praise us but realizing inside that we are not as fantastic as they have said. It means not being content with our work and always knowing that we could do better and that there are others who are far better than us.

Finally, it means admitting to oneself that only Allah (swt) how weak we truly are and then asking Him to forgive us for creating an impression that He knows is untrue.

When we look at him gratefully as "Sataral Ayyub" (the One who hides our flaws) every time someone compliments us, we gain an opportunity to be forgiven inshallah.

Finally, when complimented, one must beseech Allah (swt) to make that compliment directed towards us TRUE, to truly make us as the world thinks we are.

"Oh Allah...make me better than they think of me and forgive me (those shortcomings) which they do not know"

AMEEN

[Mar, 21, 2013; 39 likes]

204. One of the most precious moments of my life--being a part of this crowd as we walked and chanted (at midnight on the eve of Chehlum) to the shrine of Hazrat Abbas (a.s) The energy was loud and palpable and the emotions of others around me was absolutely inspiring! The people of Iraq and from around the world recorded us on their cell phones as we walked by--they were totally amazed to see over 600 (some say we were a 1000) English speaking people from the West pledging their love for Ababdillah al Hussain! Our banners were in English and we chanted in English and the security people asked us incredulously, "Shia in America?!!! Canada?? Britannia??!!"

We were all motivated with the words of Sheikh Mohamed Hilli and cried to the Nawha of Ali Safdar and latmiyya of Ali Fadhil. It was freezing cold and we waited for hours as other processions marched ahead of us--and we cried remembering how bibi Zainab (a.s) and her caravan of women, children and a gravely ill Imam, Sayeday Sajjad (a.) had to wait outside the palace of the tyrants in Kufa and Shaam. Later, I was escorted home and walked with Syed Amaar Nakshwani and others. We were both mentally preparing for our early morning Chehlum

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lectures and were so moved by the entire experience. And we thanked Allah swt for the opportunity to be on the sacred land of Kerbala on such a blessed night, serving Imam (a.s) and responding to his call. LABAYK YA HUSSEIN!!!!

[Feb, 20, 2013; 32 likes]

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205. Someone has said famously that "LOVE HURTS" And how true it is that no matter how much you truly, sincerely love a human being, they will inevitably, someday, somehow hurt you, let you down or disillusion you. For some these lessons of love are particularly harsh and leave them so wounded that they are forever injured and in pain, and never able to love again.

Life, time and again, continues to show us in various ways, that to love a human being and to place them first and foremost in one's life is the biggest folly a human being can do.

On this day when we are surrounded with hearts everywhere (in shops, offices, on the internet, facebook, twitter, in cards, school, billboards etc) and when love is celebrated so publicly let us remember not to get too carried away.

Sure it is a good and important opportunity to tell our loved ones that we truly do care (and that is so necessary, no matter what day of the year it is) but it is a mistake to make any human being or any object as one's most, most precious and prized focus in life.

For the most greatest place in our hearts must be reserved for only Allah (swt) Only He must take precedence over anyone or anything else.

When we allow Him to take His rightful place, everything else in that heart falls into place.

Then the heart becomes loving enough, caring enough, merciful enough, compassionate enough, forgiving enough, generous enough and BIG enough to love everyone and every thing else in the way that HE wants us to. And in the order that He wants us to.

Allah swt never betrays, never lets us down, never hurts and never disillusions. For He is Perfect. He is without flaws. He is the Best.

Even His tests leave us stronger. Even His punishments become cause for more Mercies to be sent our way. A true believer will find that no matter how much pain he or she is in, he doesn't feel abandoned, alone or totally destroyed for he still knows where to find more strength--in God and only in God.

This Valentine's Day, let us remember to reorient ourselves so that our priorities are clear to our souls. And let us pledge our love to the One with whom all our loyalties forever must remain.

Let us say and mean it:

"Allah I love you the MOST. You are the Greatest in my life and come first in my thoughts, in my plans, in my intentions, in my EVERYTHING"

It is only when we love Him that our hearts will find true fulfillment. And peace. And rest.

It's His promise to us...

Those who believe and whose hearts are set at rest by the remembrance of Allah; now surely by Allah's remembrance are the hearts set at rest.

Holy Quran (13:28)

[Feb, 13, 2013; 92 likes]

206. Eid Milad un Nabi my dear fb friends!!! My heart rejoices with happiness and love as I ponder over how my life has become worthy of living by the gift of the Message brought by our Beloved Prophet Mohamed Mustapha Salalaho alaihey wa aal layhee wa sallam.

Ya Rasulallah!!!! May Allah swt reward you and elevate you higher than anyone has every been elevated, Ya Rasulallah, for you have done a great ehsaan, bestowed a great obligation upon us by guiding us towards Allah swt and the Sirat E Mustaqeem!

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We celebrate your coming to this earth. We celebrate the gift of you (s.a.w.) and your family (a.s) in our lives.

This month is always such a very precious and busy time for me. The blessed month of Rabil'Awal always brings with it, a flurry of invitations (to give lectures and to recite nasheeds and naat at milads) from my Muslim sisters from both Shia and Sunni communities. And I want to give you a glimpse into what happens in my life whenever this mubarak month arrives.

I look at myself and I cannot believe how incredibly blessed and full of splendour my life has become simply because I chose the Path that leads to God.

My time is spent visiting various masajids (Shia and Sunni) private homes and banquet halls to attend elaborate celebrations commemorating the birth of our Holy Prophet (s.a.w) Over the years I have been especially flown to recite at such countless celebrations in international locations.

Over this weekend, I recited at a Sunni gathering in a banquet hall filled with 500 women, and then at a Shia masjid filled with 200 ladies of Pakistani origin. It was an incredible and inspiring time as I saw so many women crying with the love of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) Their love and devotion made me realize how united and similar we all really are for we all have a common beloved Prophet (s.a.w)

At each of these gatherings that I recite at, I am delightedly welcomed at the door and treated with utmost love and generous hospitality. Women of all ages listen in rapt attention as I give lectures and recite Urdu naat, munajat, manqabat, hamd and English Nasheeds too.

And I leave each event with tearful women showering me with love and grateful kisses. They thank me for helping them to express their love for Allah (s.w.t) The Prophet (s.a.w) and the Ahlul Bayt (a.s) and they hold me close and recite duas for my long life and for my voice to continue to evoke love and inspiration in their hearts...

And I am compelled to accept their proffered loving gifts of bouquets of roses, boxes of mithai (sweets), beautiful gifts of clothes, cash, jewellery and perfume. I am overwhelmed with these gifts and I refuse and they insist and they thank me for introducing the love of Hussain (a.s) in their hearts, and the understanding of who the Ahlul Bayt (a.s) is in their lives and the significance of hadith e kissa. I look in their eyes and I see their love as they escort me to my car and see me off with fervent requests to grace their events next year.

Every year, this particular time makes me shed tears of happiness and gratitude to Allah (s.w.t) for giving me a voice that I can use to recite the praises of our Holy Prophet (s.a.w) and His Holy Progeny (a.s)

I spend my time in sajdah and thankfulness for the gift of Islam and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) in my life that has guided me to use my voice for a halaal and worthy purpose. As many of you have read before, there was a time when I had the opportunity to use my voice for something totally unworthy. And when I look at how my life has been blessed with guidance, I cannot thank my Lord enough.

I thank Him for selecting an unworthy and flawed human being for the most noble of tasks. I cannot believe how much He continues to shower upon me when I do not deserve it and am so lacking in the virtues that I wish I had. I feel ashamed to receive so much for doing so little....I beg Him to make me deserving of the honour He bestows upon me so generously. I ask Him for life so that I can continue to use every ounce of my being to please Him and only Him and to earn His Pleasure in whichever way He deems fit. AMEEN AMEEN AMEEN

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May this blessed month of Rabil Awal fill your hearts and your families and homes with happiness and Mercy. And may peace and contentment shower upon you along with guidance and inspiration to seek His Pleasure ameen.

EID MUBARAK!!!!

[Jan, 29, 2013; 150 likes]

207. Returning home after a day of filming interviews at tv studios. TOPIC: Incredible Experiences of performing Ziyarat in Chehlum

Don't forget to watch Zamana TV THIS Saturday (Jan 19) at 9.30 am channel 129 on Rogers network.

[Www.zamana.tv](http://www.zamana.tv)

(show will also feature interviews with Syed Maulana Rizvi and other attendees at the recent protest and Candlelight Vigil against Shia Genocide held in Toronto)

[Jan, 16, 2013; 69 likes]



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208. Joined over 700 people at the protest against Shia Genocide last night. There were people far beyond where the eyes could see SUBHANALLAH! I gave a speech on the bus (which was filled with entire families) and it was so inspiring to see community members from every sect, culture, race and segment of our society there. There were non-Muslims, Sunni, Pakistani, khojas, Indian, Hazara, etc all there for ONE purpose--to be the voice of the voiceless around the world. Men, women, children and seniors all braved the bitter cold and stood for hours outside the Pakistani Embassy--never allowing themselves to sound tired or lacking spirit or passion for the cause. Our respected resident alim Maulana Syed Muhammad Rizvi addressed the crowd in an informative and analytic speech that cautioned us about the future safety of other defenseless groups if we don't speak up today. Other political activists and religious leaders also gave motivating speeches. The candles we held in our hands had the names of each of the shaheed of the massacre in Quetta. We chanted "Labayk Ya Hussein" and pledged allegiance to our 12 Imam (ajtf) as we shouted slogans against the regimes that are turning a blind eye to the oppression. Our placards, held high above our heads, gave a complete message especially to all the media, TV reporters and crews and newspaper journalists covering the event. May Allah swt bless this world with peace and understanding and grant the martyrs a choicest place in jannah. May He grant sabr and Rizk to the widows and orphans of these martyrs and may He accept the various efforts of each and every person around the world who work tirelessly to create awareness and change. AMEEN

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[Jan, 15, 2013; 218 likes]

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209. A MESSAGE OF HOPE TO ALL THE DEMONSTRATORS WHO ARE HOLDING VIGILS AND PROTESTS AGAINST SHIA KILLINGS AROUND THE WORLD RIGHT NOW:

To all those who are braving the cold (or heat) for hours to attend these demonstrations AROUND THE WORLD: We have all seen you on tv, on facebook, twitter and on internet channels. May Allah swt reward you ALL for your concern for the oppressed.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w) has said:

“One who hears the entreaty of a man, ‘O Muslims! Come for my help,’ and does not assist him, is not a Muslim.”

We ask Allah (s.w.t) to Guide and Inspire us all to raise a voice on behalf of all of those who need to be heard.

Our duas are with you!!

Ay Shahido, Ay hayder kay pyaaro, tumko Zahra (a.s) dua day rahee hay....

Please know that your efforts are worthy and will bear fruit, inshallah.

Bibi Zaynab (a.s), Imam Zainul Abedin (a.s) and a small caravan of women and children CREATED A REVOLUTION that still, even centuries later, reverberates around the world.

They began this revolution with their tears and their laments to the on-lookers on the streets of Kufa and Shaam.

Then they used their words to awaken the dead hearts and spirits of those same on-lookers.

Our Bibi (a.s) then shook the world with her speeches as she waited for hours outside the Palaces of the Tyrants.

In the court of Yazid (curse be upon him and on the killers of the shuhada of Kerbala), she then reduced grown Kings and Ambassadors to tears with her eloquent words.

Her lonely caravan, draped with the black clothes of mourning, quietly completed the Chehlum of the Shuhada of Kerbala and returned home to narrate the tragic events that they had witnessed. And a new way of stirring the hearts began....

Her painful, agonizing steps, like yours today, seemed lonely and desolate. To the onlooker they may have seemed totally futile but Bibi (a.s) knew that every journey (no matter how long and arduous the path is) BEGINS with the first few steps.

Today, look at how far we have come! That first quiet Chehlum is now commemorated by 21 million lovers of Imam Hussein (a.s) who come from ALL OVER THE WORLD.

And Islam continues to be the fastest growing religion in the world.

And more reverts are returning to the message of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s) than ever (especially at a time when the voices of Shias are trying to being silenced)

The key to her success was that Bibi (a.s) NEVER DESPAIRED. She NEVER GAVE UP HOPE in the Power of Allah (swt). She HAD FAITH not only in Allah (swt) but in the goodness laying dormant in the hearts of the true believers of the deen that her grandfather had brought to this world.

The revolution of Kerbala has been fought and upheld by millions of people over the centuries. Some have fought with their swords. Some with tears and majalises. Some have avenged the pure blood of the Holy Household (a.s). Some wrote poetry. Others gave political speeches. Some befriended the Imams (a.s) and sat beside them to give them faithful companionship. While others gave them moral, financial, emotional and physical support in various ways.

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EACH ONE PLAYED A PART.

And you are playing yours....

And as you demonstrate outside an embassy, know that someone out there is also writing an article. And as you give a fiery speech, know that someone out there is writing a moving piece of poetry. And as you demand politicians to take heed, someone is also writing to TV stations or working quietly in organizations to create infrastructural change. And as you sit at Dharnas and cry, others are making movies to create awareness, while others are writing on facebook, twitter and in magazines to awaken the world. And as you walk long hours in the cold (or blazing heat) and protest in front of political or military and army groups, know that others are working with Amnesty International and with other groups to create the changes we need.

And each effort is worthy. And some efforts may simply take longer to bring fruit....

If you look around you and see certain people, groups or organizations missing, don't feel that you are alone. Don't feel that they don't care. Don't take their absence as a total evidence of their lack of care and neglect. For there are many ways of advocating and causing revolutions and everyone is inshallah doing their part. And perhaps another part of your city is holding a similar protest and the ones you miss beside you are actually doing the same thing elsewhere....

The Ahlul Bayt (a.s) never gave up hope, never stopped working to keep the message alive and never even berated anyone who looked like they didn't care. They had hope that the awareness they were creating would someday, one day, touch the hearts of those who were unaffected by the importance of speaking against injustice and oppression.

The fact that Bibi (a.s) BEGAN her revolutionary majalises after being released from prison in Shaam and Kufa is an incredible fact to ponder over. She actually guided THOSE WHO HAD THROWN ROCKS AND WHO HAD MOCKED the ladies and children of her caravan. She then honoured them with the important task of grieving over the graves of the martyrs that they had once betrayed and forsaken!

Bibi (a.s) did not consider those people as write-offs and beyond help. In fact, she worked the hardest on those hearts which seemed as rigid as stones. And she managed to make those same people shed tears of regret.

Subhanallah....

If there are some who are truly not making an effort, then KNOW that your efforts will cause the awareness that is needed. But also understand that dead hearts cannot be awoken with angry words or by blame. They are awoken with love and understanding, by teaching by example and by appealing with facts. Bibi (a.s) freely quoted from the Holy Quran and gave examples that made people cry. Her calls to justice had more of an impact when she gave people something to ponder upon than if she had just angrily shown her fury at the people.

Dear brothers and sisters, PLEASE KEEP THE FAITH!!!!!!

Our voices, whether they are silent ones at peaceful DHARNAS or loud ones at protests outside embassies and in downtowns WILL BE HEARD. For truth ALWAYS prevails. And it WILL PREVAIL. It may not happen immediately, but it WILL. One day. And it will completely prevail especially when our Imam Mahdi (may He hasten his return) who is watching our efforts and is a witness to the oppression of our people, reappears from ghaibat. AMEEN

'We are not negligent of your affairs nor are we forgetful of your remembrance.'

-Imam Zamana (a.s)

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(please click on "like" to make this appear on your newsfeed and "share" so more can benefit from this post. May Allah swt reward you AMEEN)

Zakira Shyrose

[Jan, 13, 2013; 130 likes]

210. My heart is aggrieved today and I feel so sad that it makes me feel helpless. I just cannot get the vivid image of the home of Bibi Fatema (a.s) out of my mind, even if this day occurred centuries ago. I can almost see the utter chaos and hear the heartbreaking sounds of wailing emanating from the homes of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s) as the tragic news of the passing of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) is relayed to the people of Medina.

Today my dear Lady of Light became orphaned. The father who always spoke to her so lovingly and never ever raised his voice towards her was forever gone. That father, who tried all of his life to give her so much love that it could somehow make up for the loss of her mother Khadija, had also, forever, left this world. He would always stand up when Bibi Fatema (a.s) would enter the room and would kiss her and make her sit in his own honoured place of seating. He could not bear to see her sad or distressed. He would tell people that if they hurt her it was as if they were hurting him. He would hold her close and say that her scent was the scent of jannah. That if they wanted anything from him, they should go to her home and ask. That if he was their role model as a man, then she was the role model for women.

How much my dear dear Lady must have cried today. And how much she would cry for the rest of her short life—for she would not live for too long after this fateful day.

When a father dies, a child inevitably feels the most intense sense of loss of security. No matter how old one is, no matter how rich or secure one is in status, education or number of family members, the loss of a father feels like a colossal loss. And this sense of loss becomes more acute as the days of life progress and especially when one experiences injustice. It is then that these unfamiliar words come suddenly to one's lips with a great realization: "if my father was alive, no one would have dared treat me this way."

When a father dies, it is the daughters who cry the most. In fact, in many cultures daughters are called the "zeenat" (beauty) of a father's funeral for it is their cries that loudly and heart-wrenchingly signal to the world that the marhoom was deeply loved and missed.

Bibi Fatema (a.s) also shed tears as she missed her dear father. But her tears soon took on a more poignant and heartbreaking sound as she began to lament the state of the ummah after the demise of the Messenger of Allah (s.w.t)

As she wept, her tears threatened to start a revolution for people began to ask what aggrieved her so deeply. Surely the members of the Holy Household never lamented so deeply for the loss of that which is God's to take in the first place. And she began to tell them of his forgotten message and of the loss of her inheritance. She wept over the invasion of her home and the martyrdom of her unborn child, Mohsin.

And for that, her tears were silenced. And despite being in a culture where bereaved daughters are visited and consoled over the death of their fathers for many, many days, Fatema (a.s) was banished to a "house of sorrows" and asked to limit her grief for during the day or during the night.....

As a daughter who has lost her own father many years ago, I can attest to the fact that the anniversary of my father's death day always, always brings tears to my eyes. I commemorate his

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passing away, I remember him, I pray for him and I reflect upon his life and whether I have been a good daughter to him since he left this world. The anniversary of his birth day surely makes me rejoice, each year, at the gift of his life (and of his wonderful contributions) but how can I forget the day of his death and not pause in remembrance? It is seared in my consciousness forever and ever.

I visit his grave, and I grieve there and I ask him to intercede on my behalf for Allah (s.w.t) will only bless a child whose parents are pleased with her. I give condolences to my mother and siblings and all those who loved him. I hold special gatherings and recitations of the Holy Quran in his remembrance and people give me condolences even though so many years have passed since he left this world. He was a mere human being and yet it is acceptable for me to revere his memory this way. So why should I not remember my Holy Prophet (s.a.w) in this way too?

When Allah (swt) is pleased that I remember my father in this way, I am assured and am convinced that He is pleased if I remember His most loved Messenger (s.a.w)

Today is a day to honour the memory of our beloved Holy Prophet (s.a.w) and to give condolences to the Holy Family (a.s) that ALL of us Muslims revere and are commanded to respect.

Today is a day to bow our heads and to shed a tear for the passing away of a great Prophet (s.a.w). To reflect upon his life and to cry for our lost hearts. To beg forgiveness from our dear Prophet (s.a.w) if we have not adhered to the message of Islam. To seek guidance to do what pleases Allah (s.w.t) and to ask for inspiration in case we have not given the due respect that Allah (swt) had commanded of us, through him, for his kin.

"(O Prophet) tell (people) I don't ask you any wage (in return for my prophet-hood) except to love my near kin. And if anyone earns any good We shall give Him an increase of good (in return for it)" (Quran 42:23).

[Jan, 10, 2013; 113 likes]



211. SUBHANALLAH!! Fb friends THIS IS THE YOUNG MAN (my cousin's son) who is TOTALLY RESPONSIBLE for making me join FACEBOOK 3 years ago!!!

Yes he is totally BLIND and yet he is the one who could "see" how important it was for me to connect with people and to be accessible to them. I pray for him all the time and thank Allah swt for this young man's wisdom--he was so persuasive that he almost made the account for me! There are countless times when I say in my mind "munawar how do I thank you for making me join Facebook?!!!"

There is something else you must know about him. Please read an excerpt of an article I wrote about him (for jaffari news magazine may 2004) when he was 17 yrs old. Inshallah I will post the entire article and link from website soon:

A vision beyond the ordinary – Achievements of a visually impaired student

Teacher, author, poet, computer programmer, web master, Science and Engineering Fair Regional winner, History and Presidential Academic excellence award winner, prestigious Disney scholarship winner, medal bearing runner, golfer, wrestler, swimmer, track and field athlete. These words describe the achievements of not several world famous scholars and athletes but those of one 17 year old teenager from our very own Florida jamaat. But there is something else about Munawar Bijani that makes his many achievements seem even more astounding.

Munawar Bijani truly is a remarkable individual, achieving so much despite being visually impaired. At the age of four, Munawar lost his sight due to complications at birth. With the use

of Braille, vision/orientation/ mobility teachers and assistive technology, Munawar has been able to go to public school with his twin Muntazir and younger brother Murtaza.

Signing each email with his motto, “It’s your attitude not your aptitude which determines your altitude,” Munawar credits the Holy Quran as the source of inspiration that governs his life. Learning to recite the Quran has definitely been a labour of love for young Munawar. A gift from an aunt visiting from Dubai, his Braille copy of the Holy Quran came without any instructions on how to decipher the symbols. Painstakingly with help Munawar taught himself how to read the Quran in Braille and has now authored a manual to help fellow visually impaired people read the Quran in Braille.

Excellence in areas such as academia, sports, extra curricular and service earned him several awards such as the prestigious Disney’s Dreamers and Doers award over 900 other students, in spite of his visual impairment.

With his inspiring words, ambitious drive and astonishing achievements, Munawar makes us realize that a blind individual is not an example of Allah’s injustice. Rather, through his accomplishments become apparent Allah’s miraculous wonders and His infinite bounties. We pray to Allah (SWT) that he grants Munawar the strength and tawfiq to continue to inspire us all, inshallah.

[Dec, 18, 2012; 76 likes]

212. A ZAKIRA’S JOURNEY OF TABLIGH

By Zakira Shyrose Jaffer Dhalla, B.A.(hons), M.Ed.,

As we drove this morning on Chehlum day to Masjid Shahe Khorasan I noticed an unusually quiet city. The roads of Karachi were totally, uncharacteristically bare. There were absolutely no people anywhere! All I could see were empty stretches of streets. It was almost spooky and I was genuinely confused as to what could be the matter. Then I noticed the police... Everywhere...The roads had been cleared, security was ultra-tight. An ice-cold chill descended over me as I realized how naive I had been to forget that this was Pakistan on Chehlum day. I felt goose bumps rapidly forming all over my skin and I noticed that my suddenly dry lips had begun to automatically, fervently, urgently, recite every prayer I could think of. I felt a total sense of foreboding and it felt like I was in a war zone. I looked to my left, I looked to my right and all I could see were military tanks everywhere. Army soldiers in military fatigues walked the streets, snipers with guns peeked out of windows from buildings, soldiers seated in military tanks were openly pointing machine guns directly at our car as we drove by. And then it truly dawned upon me: the azadaars would need protection today... I wondered how long the love for the Ahlul Bait a.s will be misunderstood--a hatred that started from the time of Bani Umayyad until now. Tears blurred my vision and fell onto my lap, over my tightly clenched hands. I silently asked God to keep me alive until we could make it to the mosque. “Let me share what I want to today, Ya Imam Hussein. Keep me alive until I have evoked the tears for the Chehlum mourners. Let me complete my mission Maula.”

-excerpt from personal letter to my husband and family members (January, 2012)

It is hard to deny that my journey of becoming a Zakira has changed my life, my focus, my priorities and the entire purpose of my existence. Indeed, my own visceral reaction when faced with the real possibility of death was a self-revelation and a poignant moment of truth for

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me: ***“Let me share what I want to today,”*** I had pleaded. And it was not for my 3 children, my husband, my happy life with family and friends or even any unfinished milestones in my life that I had desperately begged for more life for: ***“Keep me alive until I have evoked the tears for the Chehlum mourners....Let me complete my mission, Maula.”***

I marvel at how very precious this role of doing tabligh has become for me in such a short time. I am amazed at the strong pull of this calling that compels me to willingly give my time, energy, money and every ounce of my being to this path. The joy of being able to share my love of God with others energizes me so completely that it is what makes me feel truly alive. Suddenly, my life has meaning and every action that I do is infused with spirituality and true purpose:

“Say: Surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are (all) for Allah, the Lord of the worlds” (6:162)

I am honoured to share my experiences, at the behest of my colleagues of the editorial board of the World Federation, to provide more insight into the theme of *tabligh*, the chosen theme of our inaugural issue.

An Incredible journey

And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong, and these it is that shall be successful (3:104)

Eight years ago, I had absolutely no inkling that I would one day be a Zakira let alone that I would be reciting Chehlum majlis this January (2012) in Karachi’s Masjid e Shahe Khorasan (Soldier Bazaar) in front of a congregation of 1000 ladies. For I had honestly never ever secretly aspired for nor ever yearned for, let alone *envisioned* myself reciting majlissey Hussain a.s. Truly, Allah s.w.t is the Best of Planners and He in His infinite Mercy Guided me towards Him so rapidly and so powerfully that I was inspired and compelled, in spite of myself, to share my love for Him at such an increasingly public level.

*Jisey Chaaha der pe bulaliya, Jisey Chaaha aapna banadiya
Ye barey karam ke he faysaley, Ye barey naseeb ki baat he*

-anonymous Urdu poet

I often get asked what earth-shattering event precipitated this religiosity and motivated me to become an Islamic preacher but in all honesty, nothing like that really happened. I simply took one baby step towards Him and He took so many towards me that I could truly feel His presence and I found that I wanted to be even closer...and the journey began to look manageable and I did not even notice how far I had come.

And Allah invites to the abode of peace and guides whom He pleases into the right path(10:25)

While my actual spiritual journey began when I wore hijab at 22 yrs, the true growth happened when my 2 children, Hassan and Zaynab were already 6 yrs and 5 yrs old and while I was an incredibly busy housewife with a husband in Medical school. Suddenly, I was irresistibly drawn to seek more knowledge about my faith and I found myself inspired by the Holy Quran, attracted to the Nahful Balagha and spiritually awakened by the Sahifa e Sajjadiya. I began to spend hours

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and hours reading biographies of our aima e tahireen a.s and began sharing what I had learned at private gatherings. I noticed that I had suddenly found a voice and that my public speaking had become surprisingly very powerful; and this was simply due to the fact that I had sincerely found something I so *passionately* wanted to share.

Soon, I was researching and writing full-fledged majalises (in English) but presenting them in Urdu in front of large audiences. I found myself experiencing a personal miracle for I could even recite masayeb in Urdu, a language I could previously *barely conduct a proper conversation in!!* The spiritual changes that happened within me during the next two years of my life, when I sometimes recited 4 majalises a day (while pregnant with my third child!), were truly soul-altering. My connection with Allah s.w.t had reached a crescendo of intensity. I felt as if a revolution was occurring within me, as if my heart was literally opening up; a sense of urgency overtook me and I sensed that something of enormous magnitude was about to happen to me.

“I feel as if I am standing at the precipice of a very, very tall mountain but instead of a fear of falling, I am overcome with a soaring spirit that urges me to fly. I feel so much unexplained urgency within me, so much spiritual intensity that I feel as if my heart will burst. Am I feeling like this because I am going to suddenly die, in the very near future?”

-excerpt from personal letter to sisters (April, 2003)

And in a breathtaking miracle that still leaves me amazed, Allah s.w.t paved the path ahead for me to begin reciting Muharram Ashra majalises all over the world: Vancouver (Canada), Orlando (USA), Milton Keynes (UK), Leicester (UK) and Ashra Sajjadiyya majalises in Peterborough (UK) Fatimiyya lectures in Dar es Salaam (TZ) and most recently, Ashra Zainabiyya in Karachi (Pakistan). Over the last six years, Allah s.w.t in His infinite Mercy has blessed me with the opportunity to recite in London (Stanmore), Los Angeles, Birmingham, Dubai, Sharjah, Toronto, Miami and Pakistan (Mehfile Murtaza and Masjid Shahe Khorasan).

(note: to hear more about my story please visit www.zakirashyrose.com for an in-depth, 2 part interview on Ahlulbayt TV with sr. Zahra Al-Alawi. Parts 3 and 4 will inshallah be airing this month on the same channel)

The Noble task of Tabligh

And who speaks better than he who calls to Allah while he himself does good, and says: I am surely of those who submit? (41:33)

The collective moral and social duty upon a community to propagate the message of Islam has clearly been commanded by Allah s.w.t and great reward has been promised to those who undertake this noble cause. Our community has enjoyed a proud history of producing prolific preachers and leaders who have not only strived greatly to teach and maintain the principles of the faith to our own members but who have also valiantly established the propagation of the message to the non-Muslims of our respective host countries. Indeed, our community has been able to uphold its longstanding tradition of creating the best Islamic institutions around the world especially due to these successful, multilayered efforts in tabligh.

As a community, it is imperative to continue to support and maintain all endeavours of tabligh. The implications inherent in a story like mine are that *anyone*, with the right inspiration,

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nurturance, opportunity and Divine Blessings can be a potential Islamic lecturer! It means that we must continue to provide the correct Islamic educational opportunities and to strengthen our madressa system--for a sound foundation creates the possibility for future growth. It indicates that we must continue to invite prolific speakers (male and female) during majalises for *all* the segments of our community for it may just spark something incredible in someone of *any age*. It means that we as parents need to continue to attend majalises *and* to bring our entire families, for a certain culmination of information does continue to take place when there is such a lifelong acquisition of knowledge.

As a community, it is time we embarked on a much-needed, concentrated and visible social marketing campaign to encourage Zakireen. The community, with its many needs, requires preachers of all ages, of both genders, who can speak various languages (English, French, Gujrati, Urdu, kiswahili) and who have come from different walks of life.

We truly need to send out a loud message in each jamaat that we as a community are taking on a concentrated approach and are interested in promoting and training those who wish to pursue this path. Our eyes need to be on the up and coming talented maturing men and women amongst us, regardless of their ages, and we must actively encourage them into this field. This recruitment must happen regularly and must be a permanent institution in itself, with a dedicated team that specifically works on this.

Note: for more information on offered programs, visit www.world-federation.org and click on "Islamic Education" For Short courses for ladies at the Jamiat uz Zahra in Qum visit http://www.world-federation.org/NR/rdonlyres/50D02659-DDD5-480E-ADDD-05173AB8666B/0/5a_JZshortcourseFAQ.pdf and to enroll in NASIMCO's youth summer courses in Iran click on <http://nasimco.info/index.php/projects/camps/187-qum-summer-camp-2011>

The Joys and the Challenges

As a wife to a Family Physican and busy mother to 3 children (Hassan, 15 yrs, Zaynab, 13 yrs and Shireen Fatema 5 yrs) my life is a juggle between household chores, school events, extra-curricular activities, appointments, family events, madressa and mosque. Being a Zakira means that I have to additionally find time to read, research and write my majalises (typically in the middle of the night) load heavy sound equipment into my car (mostly in snowy conditions) and regularly drive across the city to recite at private homes and various mosques. Not only does this put great demands on time but there are many costs involved (petrol, road tolls, equipment, printing, baby-sitting etc) and I have to be organized with having dinner ready and arranging for the children's various activities.

In a globally connected technological age, it is also imperative to remain available to impart knowledge and to offer spiritual guidance on the internet. Being accessible via my personal website, twitter and facebook requires even more of my time and I deal with an overwhelming amount of correspondence each day.

Travelling internationally for weeks in a row, sometimes several times a year, means (in addition to researching every day for my majalises) pre-arranging frozen meals, preparing non-perishable school lunches, labelling uniforms and clothes for each day of the mosque and enlisting after-school rides, chaperones and baby-sitters. It means finding the time, during my absence, to keep

in touch with my husband and children on phone, email and Skype and yet trying to maintain focus on my hectic schedule of majalises, seminars and lectures.

My work as a Zakira, therefore, compels almost all of the people in my life, especially my husband, mother, mother-in-law and extended family to sacrifice and assist in various ways. It has required my children to seek greater maturity within themselves in order to understand their place and their own contribution towards the noble cause of tabligh. I regularly struggle with the guilt of whether I am doing justice to the many roles I must fulfill and am constantly examining my actions for moderation in everything that I do.

The infinite physical energy that is required of one is, however, nothing compared to the emotional resilience required of being a Zakira. Reciting *masayeb* everyday can be extremely draining and requires one to be able to be emotional and yet do so without losing control. The steady stress that comes with constantly putting oneself in front of large audiences, vulnerable to criticism and intense scrutiny can truly make one's work daunting. One has to learn not to take things personally or to be distracted by the tendency of audience members to look at their watches, whisper or laugh, or show disinterest through body language. My vantage point from the mimbar has given me appreciation for how to behave respectfully when I am a member of the audience for I know how easy it is to unwittingly cause hurt to a speaker.

Often, well-intentioned friends or family will question my sincerity or my priorities and ask if what affirmation I do get from the people is worth the amount of time, effort and costs involved. And I wish I could adequately explain that it is not the *people* but rather *I* who stands to benefit the most from this path that I travel.

The wealth that I receive from this work is priceless. It is something that cannot be purchased, nor gained in one day. For being a Zakira actually spiritually empowers *me*, and the knowledge I impart inspires *me* as a follower of Islam and the Ahlul Bayt a.s.

The incredible blessings of tabligh are such that tabligh benefits not only the faith of Islam and the community of believers but also contributes simultaneously to the spiritual and moral development of the persons who undertake it, thus fulfilling an important duty towards one's self.

Every majlis I recite enriches me in more ways that I can describe. Every topic I am asked to speak about becomes an opportunity for me to learn more, and every new passage of the Holy Quran that my research takes me to broadens my own spiritual horizons even more.

And thus, it is I that stands to be most guided through my work as a Zakira. For it is when one teaches others, that one truly *learns*. It is when one is enlisted to explain what one knows that one begins to truly *understand*. And it is when one is compelled to practice what one has been preaching that true piety begins to shine through one's soul.

[29.69] And (as for) those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them in Our ways; and Allah is most surely with the doers of good.

The additional role of the Zakira

Conducting tabligh as a Zakira means that one has to be a complete ambassador of Islam and must serve holistically, using every skill, strength and virtue that one possesses. One must be able to reach out to and connect with all the age groups that are in the audience. Thus my work entails not only imparting Islamic knowledge from the mimbar but also involves using my secular education in Psychology and Education, sharing my life experiences, utilizing the various languages I speak and employing my own unique talents in creative ways.

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Every Muharram, I typically conduct teacher training seminars for madressa teachers, provide parenting seminars for young mothers and give special lectures for youth groups, seniors and for children under 12 yrs of age. For the youngest members of our community I have devised Islamic puppet shows to discuss a wide range of themes including respecting parents, sibling rivalry, the strategies of Shaitan, importance of salaah, understanding Kerbala and many others. Due to the position of trust that Zakireen are in and the fact that they meet so many people around the world, many find themselves also being asked to play the role of a matchmaker. Such requests are so frequent that I have been compelled to make my own registry and data form. World Federation has initiated a successful matchmaking program (visit <http://www.khojamatch.com/>) and there definitely needs to be a way for Zakireen to merge their individual efforts with that of the program and still maintain the privacy promised to the families in question.

A Zakira invariably becomes privy to people's most painful secrets and is frequently called upon to be a spiritual advisor and trusted therapist. It truly has been heartbreaking to realize that our community members (male and female) in every jamaat continue to face some extremely painful issues in their lives. Over the years I have heard the most poignant of personal stories: victims of physical and sexual abuse, spouses embroiled in child custody disputes, women who are unable to remarry because their estranged husbands won't grant them an Islamic divorce, parents who have children who are addicted to drugs or are engaged in immoral lifestyles, adults overwhelmed with caring for elderly parents, families that face abject poverty due to unemployment and abandonment and seniors who are primary caregivers for adult children who have mental illness and depression. My degree in Psychology has helped me to assist in temporary ways but there is only so much one can do in the short time that one is visiting a jamaat and I feel great guilt for not being able to follow up with these cases. There is definitely an urgent need for crisis intervention, on-going emotional therapy and group counselling in our communities throughout the world.

A precious blessing

The regular inspiration I receive as I travel this path truly enhances my growth and world-view and makes the content of my majalises that much more richer.

I meet wonderful, pious people all over the world and they inspire me with their knowledge, commitment to God and service to Islam. I get to visit jamaats all over the world and to see, first-hand, how hard the volunteers and youth of each community are working to organize events, disseminate knowledge, establish their madressas, prepare niyaaz, carry out azadari and provide recreational sports and entertainment to its members.

I am grateful to Allah s.w.t for blessing me with the opportunity to also serve as an Executive Councillor on NASIMCO for the World Federation, a position that allows me to further enhance my tabligh efforts. It has been inspiring to witness the ongoing endeavours of our community leaders and to observe that they remain sensitive to the emergent needs of their members and to consistently respond with solutions to challenges.

Every Muharram, I receive an incredible chance to speak at and be a part of a community's Julooos and procession programs, visit their madressas, and witness their fundraising activities.

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I receive the unique opportunity to interact with community members (male, female, youth, seniors, children) around the world and to develop long-lasting relationships. My faith in Allah s.w.t and in the goodness of people is increased whenever I witness the warm hospitality, helping behaviour, generosity and love that is bestowed towards the guests of Imam Hussein a.s during the blessed month of Muharram.

Spending so many days with different jamaats gives me an up-close and personal view into the ways that various executive communities function, the joys and challenges the members face and the specific needs unique to that community.

And I become privileged to see some of the amazing special projects, Islamic schools, resources and programs that the community has to offer. I am constantly inspired by the marvellous and innovative ways that different communities around the world are serving their members: Vancouver jamaat has a grocery shop on the mosque premises, Orlando has a prolific mothers' parenting group, Mehfil e Murtaza in Karachi has a fitness room with state of the art work-out equipment, Birmingham has a food stall in the parking lot and the Karachi community is building a recreational centre with swimming pool, daycare centre and library. Toronto's brand new Ja'ffari Village offers a hairdressing salon and spa for men and women, has a flourishing interfaith group and participates in the remarkable "Out of The Cold program" where the homeless visit the mosque and share hearty meals with community members.

I see magnificent examples of how much a community can do with an ambitious, forward-thinking vision of establishing a true presence in society. On my recent trip to Karachi, I was able to visit community schools and address a student population totalling 2300 students, visit the multi-storied hospital (with state of the art medical equipment), tour a dozen tall buildings (housing projects for low income families) see a medical clinic (with over 30 types of specialists) and explore the construction site of an upcoming recreational centre.

And thus, every year, as I travel to do tabligh, I am inspired not only by the message but by the tabligh efforts of communities around the world. I return home encouraged, motivated and spiritually rejuvenated. And I remain so very thankful to Allah s.w.t for allowing me to serve Him one more time.

Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us: For Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-knowing [2:127]

note: the above article appears in the May 2012 edition of World Federation's 'Insight' magazine (published and distributed to community members globally)
[Jul, 12, 2012; 70 likes]



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213. One of the most special miracles I experienced in Kerbala:

As my mother-in-law handed out flyers inviting all to my majlis in the shrine of Hazrat Abbas (a.s) she felt sadness that there were no Urdu speaking people in the crowds. Then she suddenly heard two young men speaking in Gujarati. She hurried to them and gave them my flyer.

One of the young men looked at the flyer and exclaimed:

"I know of this Zakira from Facebook! I cannot add her as she has too many friends but I read her posts all the time!"

The young men waited patiently for me as I cried at the Zareeh of hazrat Abbas (a.s). I walked back to our small group to find them waiting. They expressed their respects and admiration while I marveled at the miracles of Allah swt that strangers are united this way in Kerbala as if they are family members.

The young men were islamic students in Najaf and even though they had been in Kerbala for Ashura they had returned again, compelled to come for an inexplicable reason.

My Facebook friend then proceeded to bless us with a majlis in Gujarati. We cried and sobbed at his beautiful words and then he began to speak words of Urdu poetry penned by himself!! He was a "shaayer" and SUBHANALLAH he was awesome. He was animated, spiritual and full of life. I could see his passion and totally relate to his great need to share the word of God with us. His zeal and enthusiasm was admirable!

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We said our goodbyes and promised to keep in touch...but the miracle does not stop here.

The next morning we woke early to meet our guide for a walking tour of Kerbala where we would be shown the sites where the tents of Imam Hussein (a.s) were set, where hazrat Ali Asghar (a.s) had his neck pierced with arrows, where Ali Akbar (a.s) had his chest pierced with a spear and the place where bibi Zainab (a.s) witnessed her brother being beheaded. We were in solemn anticipation for the sadness ahead.

We arrived at the lobby at 8 am to find the Gujarati young man (from Facebook!) waiting patiently in the lobby. We were astounded to see him there and thrilled to be able to say goodbye properly.

Meanwhile our guide arrived. He spoke no English!! We were confused as to how to proceed and wondered how we would understand any of the special places he would point out. And then my Facebook friend offered to guide us. He also said not to send away the Arabic guide out of respect!!

I asked him whether we would be delaying his return trip to Najaf (2 hours away) but he said "I am here to serve you"

And he took us through the streets of Kerbala, our Arabic guide following silently, and recited majlis (urdu and gujrati) at every place, recited poems in urdu (sometimes only for me to evoke my tears--as we often became separated from the group of wheelchairs) and he translated with shopkeepers and waited patiently as I shopped for alam flags and tasbeeh etc. i gave him my money and he bargained with shopkeepers and paid them for me. He took me to have my money exchanged into local currency. He carried my bags, took pictures as i walked the streets and did ziyarah at the holy places ,escorted my family through the streets and back to our hotel safely. We felt as if our son and brother was with us. He was a jewel. He had a heart of gold and a piety that I could sense in a deep, intrinsic way. He was humble, patient and so devoted to me that I felt as if he had been sent only for me.

After hours together I finally asked him his name (I have great difficulty remembering names as I meet so many people around the world). When he told me, it all finally dawned on me:

Mohamed Raza

And I realized this was a special guide from Imam Raza (a.s) all the way from Najaf. He himself could not understand what brought him to me but I totally knew now. Those of you who have watched my award acceptance speech on Ahlul Bayt TV London Gala (2012) will remember the mojiza of Imam Raza (a.s) in my life.

I told brother Mohamed Raza about my story and told him that Imam (a.s) especially loved poets and gave them great gifts. I myself was a latmiyya and Nawha reciter whom Imam (a.s) had selected as his ambassador. And we had been brought together by the grace of Imam (a.s)

"You came here," I told him, "because imam knew I was coming and would need you"

This 24 year old young man (who I still can't add and tag as I have reached the maximum limit) has inspired me and stolen my heart in admiration for his total devotion to the Ahlul bayt (a.s) He told me it had been his lifelong dream to study in Kerbala and to live there forever!! He said "I have no money, no family name, nothing to speak of but I have a soft heart that cannot bear to see anyone suffering". And he expressed the dream that he would one day find a woman to share his life at the feet of the ahlul bayt (a.s)

I left with the promise that I would search for that fortunate lady for him and with a fervent prayer that Imam Hussein (a.s) would call me back to Kerbala to visit the holy shrines and to

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also once again meet this pious young man who had nothing worldly but was a millionaire in my eyes.

GEO MAREY BHAI geo

Syed Mohd Raza Gujarati (his fb id--he just messaged me in my inbox so that I could thankfully find him again!!)

My Duas are with you brother, always!! Ameen

Khuda tamey tarakee day, tamaree har ek hajaat puri karey and Imam (a.s) na mohibo ma shaamil karey ameen

[Dec, 9, 2012; 107 likes]

214. One of my most memorable nights of Ashura was in Toronto a few years ago when a group of 6 of us (myself, my brother, his friend, my husband, a Shia revert and a pious Shia Omani young university student) went from masjid to masjid for azadari of Imam Husein (a.s). Every mosque we went to was totally full--the snowy streets were lined with cars for miles! Mosques (we went to at least 6) were overflowing with men, women and children doing Matam, listening to majalises, serving Niyaz of Haleem and kebab haazri and roti and pink milk sherbet and cold water of sabeel. The air was fragrant with attar and rose essence perfume and the Alams and taboots were overflowing with fresh red roses, white jasmin and flowers and flowers. We heard majalises in Urdu English Arabic Persian and every mosque was alive and full of activity. We were in awe that it felt like Pakistan, Oman and Africa. I was transported back to my 6 yr old self when I tagged along with my older sisters in Karachi and it felt exactly the same! I remember waking up on my teenage sister's lap from deep sleep to hear loud Matam and the voices of women reciting Nawha--and the enticing smell of Niyaz at 4 am!!!! The scent of ylang ylang trees and jasmin buds lingered in the air as we walked in the dark streets of Karachi to the next imambargah and home mehfil. And now the azadari of Imam a.s had continued into every continent and our cultures brought their various ways of doing azadari whether it was Matam while standing in circles, or in lines facing each other or by moving in circles with arms linked. Or even latmiya in English!!!! My Iraqi friends do Matam with the lights dimmed and their long hair opened and covering their faces or by slapping their own faces instead of their chests. In Karachi we walk with zuljanah the faithful horse of Imam Husein a.s and in Iraq there are drums and dramas showing the events of Kerbala. And incredibly each ritual we have is a different expression of grief and of paying our respects. And there is place for everyone to express their love in their unique way. Subhanallah what an incredible homage to our imam a.s. and what a plan of Allah swt to send us to far flung (cold!) countries of the corners of the world so that the azadari of Husein a.s can reverberate in every language by every nation!!!

And then that special night ended even more beautifully as we stumbled into our beds totally exhausted and spent only to hear the sound of our young Omani friend Haider Lawati sitting down to recite the holy Quran loudly in a melodious voice in the next room. His voice lulled us to sleep as he awaited the time of fajr and we fell asleep remembering the melodious voice of the handsome beautiful son of Imam Hussein a.s shehzada Ali Akbar that would soon be waking up the small army of Imam Husein a.s in Kerbala on the day of Ashura.

Ya Imam! We are remembering you tonight and shedding our tears. We wish you can see the sincerity in the hearts of your sinful disobedient followers. Ya Imam accept our offerings of love and take us into your embrace. We are your lost children who have neglected coming to the

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mosques but ya imam on Ashura even we have the love and courtesy of your grief to arrive at your doorsteps. Do not turn us away ya imam, do not turn your face from us. Accept us, forgive us, give us another chance to try to be good again.

And may Allah swt curse those who hurt you, oppressed you, cornered you, imprisoned your womenfolk and killed you. May Allah swt curse them all ameen

[Nov, 24, 2012; 95 likes]

215. Millions of broken hearted, crying and pleading believers arrive every day at the grand haram of Imam Raza (a.s) Each has a story to share, and has crossed a difficult path to arrive at the doorstep of the King of Khorasan. I share the following personal email from Mashhad (with permission from the sender whom I have never met but who has written to me several times for advice and support regarding severe difficulties in his life) and my response, dear fb friends, because this touches the heart of each one of us and could be written by any one of us.

This email exchange shows the hope that each one of us comes with, the miracles that make it possible to go to ziyarat against the impossible odds, the helpers of Allah swt that one meets along the way (and shows us the importance of helping the musafir or traveller—and especially the pilgrim) and how Allah swt and Imam Zamana (a.s) himself aid the seeker on his path towards the ziyarat. My response (written quickly on my iphone) gives quick advice on how to approach Imam (a.s) and what thoughts and goals should be in one's heart as one does hajaat.

Assalam Alaikum my Sister Shyrose,

I am composing you a quick email, as facebook is banned here in Iran. Alhumdillah, I am in a net cafe directly opposite to the Harem of Imam Ali Ibn Musa Reza!(as) As I write to you, I am looking towards the Holy Shrine, Subhanallah! I don't know how I arrived here in Iran, now Mashad coming from Qum. Alhamdulilah! There were no tickets available, and by the time I did find a ticket for purchase I was told the visa application and approval would take a week. It seemed impossible but Alhamdulilah, I received it in less than 2 days! Honestly, it came down to a matter of 5 minutes where, if any more time had lapsed, I wouldn't be able to be here and to perform ziyarat in Iran.

Alhumdillah. I am so thankful to Allah(swt) for his many miracles. Once I arrived in Tehran, the money exchange was closed (I was not able to bring any Irani toumans with me) I had no money with me. But would you believe it, as I entered Iran, Alhumdillah a Shia brother from Qateef who I had met at the Abu Dhabi prayer room, was there in front of me. He knew very little English, and myself very little Arabic. However, somehow we had created a bond. Alhumdillah he purchased lunch for us, and knowing my difficulties arranged that his friend take me to Qum, (where he was not even headed) It was a 1 hour drive from the Airport. Alhumdillah. Once arriving in Qum, 14 hours later, the Maulana I had been recommended to contact looked after me, helped me with accommodation and money exchange, served me dinner, and then provided me with a sim card for my phone, and now then the following day took me to the Jamkaran Mosque for Dua Tawasal. Alhamdulilah! I have come to seek a miraculous cure for my relatives and to also make tawasal for all matters and concerns in my life, and the whole Muslim Umma. Insh'Allah, your family are in my duas.

Khuda Hafiz,

Your brother in Islam

Zakira Shyrose

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Wa Alaikum Salam my dear brother

Subhanallah what an email. I just read it first thing in the morning, groggy and sick from flu (all 3 kids, my husband and I are sick) and seeing your story made me sit up, open my eyes wider and reread the sentences.

I know God really loves you and He will continue to show u this again and again in your life--if u are willing to see His signs. And I strongly believe imam Zamana a.s has helped you during these tough times. To get a visa suddenly, to be helped with money, food and a ride to the airport. And then to get sim card etc if this is not a miracle then what is?

I see you as a hurt, weary, injured soul who has arrived here like a thirsty, lost traveller in the desert. You are face down on the hot sand, and if you raise your head and look up in the blinding sun, that is not the haram in front of you but the helping hand of imam Raza a.s which is extended out to you, offering to help you get back on your feet.

Go to Imam and let him be the mother you so desperately crave. Sleep on the floor and imagine that the ground is her embrace, the fragrance of the haram her sweet motherly perfume. Cry to him--you don't need to say a word. Just let him take your troubles and lift them off--he knows what they are and how hard it has been to carry.

You may feel like a destitute empty handed mortal but to Imam you are a hero. A martyr. He is proud of you. He has sent for you and he has arranged your safe passage and for his friends to meet you and to help you. That's how he does things as he is the king of hospitality and rewarder of martyrs

You have a pure heart my dear brother for I know your story and have read between the lines of your detailed thoughts and feelings. He won't let you down. I know you come with many Duas and rightly so. Ask for them. But I know that what you most need is healing for your broken heart and tired soul. Love has eluded you in every way—even the ones who do love you cannot express their love in a tragic twist of fate. You come seeking a cure for the ill and yet you are the one who needs healing right now for you have been the caregiver for so many. So let Imam put his hand on you--imagine it, close your eyes and let him give you the shifa you need.

Allow yourself to be totally relieved of your burdens. They are not yours to carry anymore.

Tawakul--total reliance on God. That's it. Let Him take it from here emotionally. I want you to seek emotional relief and feel it happening. And when you come back, you should already be feeling totally weightless. When you let God do the worrying and hard work, you will become merely a vehicle for His Plan to be executed.

I know my Imam. He is pretty amazing. I have experienced his help. And I know he especially rewards those who always return evil with only goodness. He loves the patient ones. The ones who do not harbour revenge or hatred. So keep being a pure human like you are and Imam will fix all your issues

My brother, understand that some imtehan is created for a lifelong test. Think of women hopelessly stuck with abusive husbands or caring for severely mentally and physically retarded children. There is no cure. There is no magic pill.

But there is strength to deal with it. Don't ask with only a set answer to your prayers. A cure is not the only way to see if God has accepted your prayer. Sometimes the strength He gives is the fulfillment of what you really needed!

Say “oh Allah if you have chosen this to be a test then give me the patience to deal with it. You are the one who sent it , surely only you can take it away. So grant me release and a miracle”.

Ameen

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You are in a precious place don't let that thought leave you. Enjoy every moment of nurturance you receive. You are his special guest. Ask him to accept your sacrifices and efforts. To help you keep your offerings and hard work pure from Shaitan. Do ask for your mom's sins to be forgiven because a mother is very special to God and Imams and they love those who remember their mothers in gratitude.

You are in a special place where hajaat comes true. And yet even from here I feel like I can pray for you with equally powerful results. For imam and God are with us in every Land. Oh Allah your servant has come to you, leaving his home and his family. Accept him and do not turn him away. Reward him, Master, with love in his life, with inner power to solve his challenges and with the miracle of healing for his loved ones that he so desperately seeks AMEEN

I pray for the acceptance of your hajaat and safe return to your home

Your sister Zakira Shyrose

[Nov, 8, 2012; 67 likes]

216. Why does the sound of your name, YA ALI (a.s) touch the core of my being? Why does it evoke so much love in my heart that it makes my tears flow with its sheer intensity? Why does simply saying the words YA ALI! give me the power to physically lift very heavy loads and emotionally carry painful burdens?! What is it about you Ya Ali that when I hear it is your birthday or the day you were announced as my Master, I feel like having the most spectacular festival and spending every penny I have to feed the poor and bring joyous smiles on the face of every human being rich or poor, young or old? Why does just HEARING your name on the day of your martyrdom make me cry inconsolably? Why do I constantly feel the need to defend your honour and why does an insult to you shatter my soul as if it is a personal affront aimed at ME or my own father? Why do I feel such deep colossal grief and regret that the King of Believers, the most loved one of the Prophet of God (s.a.w) needs to still be introduced and explained to the Muslims? Why do I want to stop anyone who will listen and to just share the greatest wealth I have--the GIFT of YOU--a gift that is so vast that no matter how much I give away, it grows and grows!!!

Why do I put you on such a high pedestal that you become my role model, your actions my litmus test for desirable behaviour, your life as a lesson to add meaning to my OWN life?

BECAUSE

I truly admire you as a human being who knew how to relate to others. Because you have taught me how to deal with jealousy and hatred and bitter enemies, how to learn and be humbly guided by a master, how to improve interfaith relations, how to deal with human beings with HUMANITY! How to be loving, polite, charitable, hospitable, a great spouse, a kind parent, humble, a devoted servant of God, brilliant, a seeker of knowledge and so much more that I cannot stop listing all the things you have taught me!

My master, my teacher, my role model, my Imam, my conscience, my guide, you are my EVERYTHING.

I am so so so joyous today that you were BORN and sent to this earth--even if it was centuries ago! I am so HONoured and PROUD that Allah Swt chose YOU to be my master on this blessed, fateful day so many centuries ago .

For you have left an incredible legacy and made the world a BETTER place and my LIFE full of meaning and you have left millions of eager students in your wake.

I remain forever your student and I hang my head in shame that I have not truly honoured you. I love you so very very much SINCERELY love you and yet I score 0 in acting according to what you taught and lived and died for.

I am a terrible student. And yet something wants me to learn and improve and i just KNOW that you may still give me a PASS instead of FAIL. Why? Because you never turned any sincere human being away. You even gave your ENEMIES a chance! And I, master, am an admirer and lover of the Ahlul Bayt a.s! You could never leave me helpless and neglected knowing how sincere I am in pleasing you!

Today, on this day of Ghadeer, when you were formally announced Master to whoever the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) is Master of, I begin with this following lesson you taught on HUMAN RELATIONS.

And I promise to obey and to ACT on these beautiful words of yours--and I ask you to bless me so that I can practice what you have preached. AMEEN

"For your brethren in faith, offer your blood and wealth

For your enemies, justice and fairness

For people in general, your joys"

Imam Ali (a.s)

[Nov, 3, 2012; 133 likes]

217. The Might and Power of Allah (swt) has brought us to our knees once again. The "city that never sleeps" has been shut down--airports closed, schools, businesses, subways and the stock exchange eerily quiet and isolated. Gigantic electrical transformers have been exploding--leaving the city in darkness and millions of people without heat. Huge powerful waves surge from the ocean, floods engulf the streets--reporters stand in waist deep water and hold on to metal poles as they struggle to report from the streets. Homes are flooded, entire cities evacuated and thousands are in shelters and have become refugees in their own city. A HUGE whirling, circling mass of wind spanning over 900 miles relentlessly passes over water, land and over millions of people along its path.

An act of God has shown us that Allah swt is capable of much and will and CAN show His Might so that we can understand the truth. Such chilling moments of life are for us to turn towards Him and for us to bow in reverence and subservience.

Namaz e Ayat is just one of the many ways, in times like these, to bring the fear of God into our souls so that we can bow and beg for Him to have Mercy and to Forgive.

In Surah Ad-Dhariyat (The Scatterers) Allah swt swears by the winds that scatter cities, people and objects helter skelter. He expresses anger at those who remain unheeding, neglectful and in defiance of His message. He curses those who lie about Him and who deny His Day of Reckoning. And then He reminds of earlier nations that He destroyed with rain, floods, high winds, high waves, earthquakes and firestorms. He Calls upon us to Heed His warning and to turn to Him. And for us to be reminded of His all-encompassing Power and to recognize His signs:

[51.1] I swear by the wind that scatters far and wide,

[51.2] Then those clouds bearing the load (of minute things in space).

- [51.5] What you are threatened with is most surely true,
[51.6] And the judgment must most surely come about.
[51.7] I swear by the heaven full of ways.
[51.8] Most surely you are at variance with each other in what you say,
[51.9] He is turned away from it who would be turned away.
[51.10] Cursed be the liars,
[51.11] Who are in a gulf (of ignorance) neglectful;
[51.12] They ask: When is the day of judgment?
[51.13] (It is) the day on which they shall be tried at the fire.
[51.14] Taste your persecution! this is what you would hasten on.
[51.17] They used to sleep but little in the night.
[51.18] And in the morning they asked forgiveness.
[51.19] And in their property was a portion due to him who begs and to him who is denied (good).
[51.20] And in the earth there are signs for those who are sure,
[51.21] And in your own souls (too); will you not then see?
[51.22] And in the heaven is your sustenance and what you are threatened with.
[51.41] And in Ad: When We sent upon them the destructive wind.
[51.42] It did not leave aught on which it blew, but it made it like ashes.
[51.43] And in Samood: When it was said to them: Enjoy yourselves for a while.
[51.44] But they revolted against the commandment of their Lord, so the rumbling overtook them while they saw.
[51.45] So they were not able to rise up, nor could they defend themselves-
[51.46] And the people of Nuh before, surely they were a transgressing people.
[51.47] And the heaven, We raised it high with power, and most surely We are the makers of things ample.
[51.55] And continue to remind, for surely the reminder profits the believers.
[51.56] And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should serve Me.
[51.57] I do not desire from them any sustenance and I do not desire that they should feed Me.
[51.58] Surely Allah is the Bestower of sustenance, the Lord of Power, the Strong.
[51.59] So surely those who are unjust shall have a portion like the portion of their companions, therefore let them not ask Me to hasten on.
[51.60] Therefore woe to those who disbelieve because of their day which they are threatened with.

Dear friends, As we see the videos and pictures of devastation from this storm (which to Allah swt is a mere puff but to us a gigantic blast that snuffs out our electricity and ability to function) let us be guided and be re-oriented towards the sirat e mustaqeem. Let today be the day when we turn to Him in obedience, with heads bowed in reverence whispering in awe, "Allaho Akbar, Allaho Akbar" My God you ARE the Greatest. You ARE the Greatest.
[Oct, 30, 2012; 50 likes]

218. Thinking of the millions and millions of fortunate and blessed Muslims who are right now walking on the sacred ground of the Holy Kaba.

Oh Allah, we too, who remain at home, love you and pledge our allegiance to you.

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We too hear your call, and rush towards you, pledging our love with much enthusiasm and sincerity, attesting to your Oneness, your Grandeur, saying with loud voices:

Here I am, my Lord here I am.

Here I am, You have no partner, here I am.

Praise, grace and the kingdom is for You.

You have no partner.

Labbaika Allahumma labbaik

Labbaika La sharika laka labbaik

Innal hamda wan ni'mata laka wal mulk

La sharika laka

oh Allah, please accept our love and smile upon us. We love you with all our hearts. Give us the courage and wisdom to obey you, My Lord.

Forgive us like a benevolent mother accepts her wayward and remorseful child.

Take us into your embrace and Protect us from the misguidance and whisperings of the cursed one.

Inspire us to love each other as if we are true family members.

Keep us on the Straight Path--the path that leads to Your Pleasure.

Do not let us forget you for even a moment, Ya Allah and keep us forever under the shade of the pure 14 Masumeen (as) Ameen Ya Rabil Alameen"

[Oct, 25, 2012; 34 likes]

219. 19 years ago today, on the shahadat of Hazrat Muslim Ibn Aqeel (a.s), my dear father Habib Moledina Jaffer passed away in his sleep. I had spoken to him on the phone just a few hours earlier (he was on a business trip with mom) before he went to bed but I had been too shy to end the call with "I love you". This article (click on the link) describes my thoughts, feelings and regrets during the first few moments (and then days) when I was awoken from my sleep to be told, "daddy's gone".

My dear daddy, I had just begun to change my life around during the last few months of your life. I had worn hijab only 9 months earlier and become engaged to marry the man of your choice. Today, 19 years later, Allah (swt) has blessed me with a happy home, 3 children and a purpose in life that has put me on the straight path, towards His Pleasure. I know you are with me and are inshallah proud of me. A few days ago, I saw you in a dream and you looked so very very very delighted and happy. You were so young (exactly how you looked at age 15 in your engagement picture with mom) I know you are in a better place. Subhanallah!

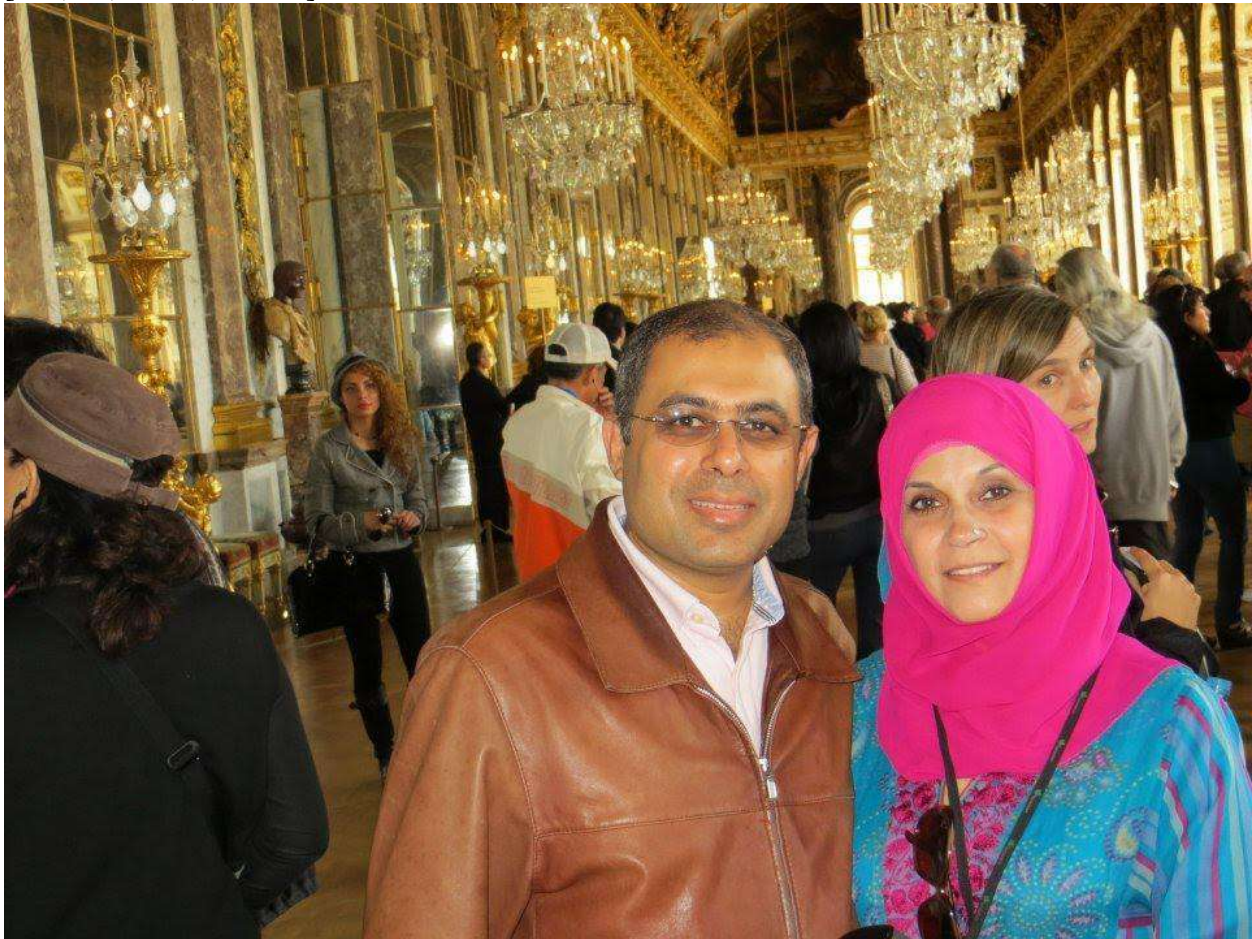
Every time you I sit on the mimbar-e-rasool and recite majalis I always ask Allah swt to give you any sawab I may earn. I always ask Him to send it all to you. For I could never really do anything for you when I was a little girl. All I can do my dear daddy, for all the education, love, tenderness, guidance, friendship and comforts of life that you have given to me, is pray for you and hope that the good I do is rewarded to you. AMEEN

fb friends, I ask you for a huge favour and will be forever indebted to you if you could take a minute and recite sura fateha for my dear father, marhoom Habib Moledina

Jaffer....jazakamullah khairun

[Oct, 24, 2012; 148 likes]

220. The trip of a lifetime!! We just celebrated our 19th Islamic wedding anniversary on Friday (Dahwul Ardh!!) and enjoyed a lovely 8 day trip to London, Paris, Switzerland and Italy!! Subhanallah it was simply amazing!! We left our 3 kids behind (aged 15, 14 and 6 yrs) and had the time of our lives (my son, 15 yrs, commented not-so-jokingly that we spent all his university fund in one go LOL) A lot like backpacking across Europe (as we had no plan, no hotel reservations and no idea what we were getting into!!!) Mohsin would book us into a place via internet and we would head off in trains, buses, taxis and yes, by walking and walking miles and miles. The landscape, people, local currency and languages changed dramatically and we were spellbound!! In Paris it was French, in Switzerland it all became German (in Berne, Interlaken and Zurich) and in Venice, Italy it was all Italian. AMAZING!! Every city was simply breathtaking and sooo beautiful. Thank you Allah swt for the gift of life, for the gift of a partner to share these things with and for such a beautiful world to see. Allah, you truly are GREAT!!! [Oct, 16, 2012; 85 likes]



221. Where will I serve this Muharram? Every year, I wait for Allah swt to Guide me and to Plan the course of my path. No matter how concrete my plans become, I am always humbled to see that it is always the Plan of Allah swt that prevails and I end up serving where I had never imagined. This year, my plans for Muharram are still not finalized due to unexpected, unforeseen

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circumstances--despite having received so many invitations. I struggle to understand why this has happened but have faith in His Wisdom. It saddens me deeply that I will not be able to serve Imam Hussein (a.s) in the way that I usually do but I still remain hopeful that Allah swt will Invite me and consider me worthy for this cause despite there being only 1 month left for the blessed month of Muharram. I am His servant and await His Call....

I ask you to please pray that I can serve again this year, my dear friends for I truly feel alive and that my life has true meaning only when I can serve Imam (a.s)

Allah swt is the Best of Planners and He only Plans what is best for us. May He make it possible for all of us to devote our lives in His way and may He accept our efforts to please Him ameen
[Oct, 15, 2012; 64 likes]

222. What an incredible story! fb friends, watching this episode has made my tears flow and inspired me greatly. Some people on this earth change their lives and courageously steer the path of their destiny towards the Pleasure of Allah swt. The story of brother Yusuf Yusufali is one such story. I have known him since I was 6 yrs old--he was married to my sister for a number of years and is the father of my nephew and niece. I have seen him turn his life around and watching these programs, I immensely respect him for what he has done to become a slave of Allah swt. I am in awe of the complete way he has given all of himself to serve Him. There are few who can have such dedication, courage, drive and devotion. He is my role model!! After being moved by the sight of hungry children in India, br. Yusuf gave up his corporate career in the USA to dedicate his life, full-time, to helping children in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and other places around the world. He tells his story in this video.

Can we make a difference? br Yusuf has shown our own family that we SURE can. A few years ago at my daughter Zaynab's 11th birthday party, we asked the children to bring whatever little money they could to give to an orphanage made by br. Yusuf's organization. We matched the money that was collected with a 100% and sent almost \$400 to orphans. And then we watched in amazement and disbelief as that money was used to feed, clothe, educate and house little orphan girls in India. It was simply mind-boggling how a little can go a long way. The pictures of these orphanages on the website open one's eyes to what can be done with so little!! It shows that just as we as parents matched the donations made by the little girls (and it became full of barakah) Allah swt also blesses the little we give with his OWN matching blessings--and a little suddenly becomes abundant!!

A little frog carried water in its mouth to douse the great great fire around nabi Ibrahim (a.s) When it was asked how it could ever put out such a huge fire with such little water, it answered, "on the day of judgement when Allah swt will question me for what I did to help ease the distress of the prophet of Allah swt I will be able to answer, with a clear conscience, that I did whatever was in my power."

my dear friends, let us collect whatever money we have and give to this organization. We need to do it not only for the orphans but to also motivate people like br Yusuf who await the support of people to carry on. A quarter, a dollar, a pound, a Euro, a dinar, a dirham. Together we can make a whole lot. Imam Ali (a.s) has said, "The very little you give still means a great deal to the one who receives"

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When we reach into our purses and wallets and hesitate because we are ashamed that we are able to give so little, remember what Imam Ali (a.s) has said: " Do not be ashamed of giving a little because not giving at all is less than that"

Please let us encourage each other and pledge right here. It will motivate the rest of us inshallah. I write this with great hope in all of you, my fb friends. Inshallah, you will delight me with your pledges!! AMEEN I want to be able to write to brother Yusuf and tell him that my fb friends also have joined together to help the oppressed, much like the faithful frog in nabi Ibrahim's story!!

I am starting the pledge with a \$200 contribution to www.comfortaid.org

Will you join me?!!!!

May Allah swt always keep you happy, fulfill your hajaat and accept your efforts ameen
[Oct, 10, 2012; 21 likes]

223. So joyful to be celebrating my birthday with you all, my dear fb friends!!!!!! You never cease to amaze me with your wonderfully loving hearts and caring souls that reach out across the world to offer me a hand of friendship. I am sincerely grateful for the gift of YOU all in my life: you give me a precious opportunity to share my thoughts with you and are always so responsive with your "likes" and thoughtful, encouraging feedback. You motivate me and fill my heart with joy. I notice and read the name of EVERY one of you that clicks on "like" and your comments delight me more than you will ever realize! Your words continually reassure me that the world IS full of pious believers who are striving to please Allah swt and I truly, honestly feel grateful to know wonderful people such as you.

I cannot tell you how joyous it has made me to receive your advance birthday messages over the last few weeks!! Some of you, in an effort to be the "first" to wish me, have written to me since the beginning of September!!! I am in total awe of your loving hearts for making such a sweet gesture! May Allah swt bless you and fulfill your hajaat ameen!

I want to thank you all, my dear fb friends, for making my life so joyful. And I mean this with all my heart. Last year, I was delightfully surprised by the hundreds of birthday messages you all went out of your way to send to me. I started trying to respond to each one but it soon became totally impossible!!!

By mid-day, my facebook account had CRASHED (I was sent a message that this was due to the "high volume of traffic" experienced by my account!!!) Many of you wrote to express frustration at having to visit my page several times during the day to post your greeting. It was one of the most delightful moments of my life LOL (I was thrilled at all the love that was coming my way but sad too that I was missing your messages as they came in LIVE)

I wish I could express how special you all made me feel; I felt so guilty to receive such undeserved love! May Allah swt make you as happy as you have made me, my dear friends. Please know that these may have seemed like "small" gestures to you, but to me they have meant the world. They have served to uplift my soul and made me raise my hands in prayer for each of you.

Many see the high number of friends and subscribers I have and dismiss it as just an effort to be popular. But you and I know that these are not chance, random connections. And subhanallah, I have rarely sent out a friend request!! Allah swt has brought us into each others' lives for a

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reason and every time I have accepted a friend request I did it with a bismillah!! There have been hundreds I did not add--and I pray they forgive me if they felt slighted in any way. Hope you will subscribe to my updates via:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Zakira-Shyrose-Jaffer-Dhalla/203597316321317>

Please also do forgive me for not replying to your emails or chat/skype requests. I honestly am having a difficult time keeping up with my correspondence!! Inshallah someday Allah swt will send me a secretary!!

When I have taken the time to write back, many of these "chance" facebook friendships have culminated into amazing, unbelievable things in my life. Simply through fb connections, I have recited majalises in your homes, visited your city, been connected to your local mosques, matchmade you with potential spouses (!) and even gone sightseeing with you when visiting your city. So many of you have hosted me, a total stranger, at your home for a meal or even for an overnight stay!!!--and the invitation has come via facebook!!

These are true stories and Allah swt has definitely blessed us with these amazing opportunities. I want to specifically thank a young man named Muntazir Bijani who convinced me to sign up for a facebook account 2 years ago. Muntazir is completely visually impaired and yet had the incredible foresight to understand the importance of my being on facebook. He urged me to be accessible to those seeking to come closer to Allah swt and I am forever indebted to him for introducing me to the gift of friendships via facebook!! Jazakallah khair Muntazir!!

my dear friends, I am going to miss receiving your birthday messages as they come in this year as I will be flying to London, England on my birthday (Sunday, Sept 23) Please accept my apologies in advance for not being able to respond for a while. Being the sentimental person I am who has a curious weakness for birthdays, it is going to be especially hard to be away from facebook all day!!! I am already suffering from the anticipated pain of the withdrawal symptoms!!! I eagerly look forward to hearing from you!!! 😊:)

Allah swt has been so Generous to me and I know that even if I spend a lifetime in sajdah, I will still never be able to adequately express my thankfulness to him. Loving Allah swt has made my life so joyful that it has made my spirit literally soar and my heart forever sing in an unbelievable, undying and exhilarating joy. My life is not perfect for I too am tested with great difficulty like all human beings have been promised. But there is this deep happiness inside me that overrides any hurt, any misery I am experiencing. When you have Allah swt in your heart, there is just no more room for anything else to have relevance in your life. He completes you.

On this birthday, I am so grateful for this precious gift of life that gives me the opportunity to seek His forgiveness and to worship Him each day. I am eternally thankful for His decreeing my birth to be in a Shia home in the arms of my awesome parents Habib and Shirin Jaffer. I owe all that I am to the upbringing they gave to me. My most precious siblings Fatima, Mehjabeen, Shabneez and Mohamed have nurtured my soul and lovingly raised me, their baby sister, with utmost respect and kindness. Their continuous love and unconditional support makes me strong and makes me feel so very precious and protected. My family has been my pillar of strength and my heart is filled with love because of them. Allah swt has blessed me with the most loving spouse, children, mother-in-law and extended family and in-laws. These are the precious gems of my life and I ask Allah swt to give them life, health and all the happiness in their lives; knowing they are okay makes my world brighter.

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I feel so complete, so blessed. I truly feel like the person who is impossible to buy a gift for, because they have everything!! (note to family--sorry but this does not absolve you from buying a gift LOL) What I want is more precious than any jewel or wealth--for Allah swt to forgive me for my sins, for Him to love me, for Him to never turn away from me in anger on the Day of Judgement for this will crush me completely.

I pray that He considers me worthy of His service and grants me many more opportunities to serve Him. I ask Him to give me the tawfiq to use each and every skill, ability, strength and creative thought in me to advance the cause of Islam.

"Let me live as long as my life is a free gift in obeying Thee, but if my life should become a pasture for Satan, seize me to Thyself before Thy hatred overtakes me or Thy wrath against me becomes firm!" -Imam Zainul Abedin in dua Makaramal Akhlaq

with all my duas and much affection
Shyrose (at 4 am in the morning!!!)

ps. wow just noticed! Just 51 'likes' left to reach a 1000 likes!! jazakallah my dear friends!! Love you all for the sake of Allah swt!!
[Sep, 22, 2012; 56 likes]

224. A WALK IN THE CEMETERY:

Remembering those who left this world in their youth:

Being a youth and then being suddenly confronted with the tragic death of a young friend can truly be a pivotal, life changing moment in a human being's life. For me, that moment was when I was driving to the funeral of young Muntazir Moledina of Toronto a few years ago. I was absolutely stunned to see a surreal sight of literally hundreds of people, dressed in black, walking hurriedly towards the mosque. The streets were backed up with cars in a traffic jam as motorists looked for parking spots and cars turned into the mosque entrance. It felt as if it was the day of Ashura. The mosque was the focal point and people were coming towards it in droves, from every direction imaginable!!

Looking closely at the people walking past my car, I noticed that these were not the usual, committed people who always make it a point to attend every funeral and can be counted on to faithfully represent the community. These were young people!! It was obvious many had missed school, new jobs and university classes to attend. Their faces were sad, some were even crying as they walked by.

Muntazir had been a model youth who had regularly recited nasheed and nawha (latmiya) at the mosque, taught madressa, volunteered and was head of the first Muslim boy scouts in Canada. Struck by an incurable form of cancer as a newlywed, he spent his wife's pregnancy praying to be able to see his new baby before he died. Allah (s.w.t) had granted this wish and his baby daughter was 40 days old that day.

"If I died tomorrow would people come to my funeral like this?" I asked myself as I watched the hundreds of people enter the mosque. Had I left a legacy? Would people truly shed tears and leave their commitments and really want to come and say goodbye?

The second death that rocked my inner soul was the death of an uncle (my maternal aunt's husband) who had turned his life around and become a devout believer. At his funeral, I wore hijab permanently (I was 22 yrs old) because I realized, life is short and only those who take

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control of their faith are truly preparing for death.

Over the years, I have attended countless funerals of young friends and acquaintances. And each death has opened my heart, my eyes, my soul even more. And I have noticed that Allah swt sends these tragic occurrences for people of various age groups so that each cohort, each age group gets profoundly touched. The dead, after all, are preachers for all us, as Imam Ali (a.s) has famously said.

And these young people are the martyrs whom Allah swt uses to jolt us into reality. Their deaths lead us back to the straight path. I have seen young sons become better Muslims after losing their young moms to cancer. I have seen young husbands become better Muslims after losing their young wives to cancer or childbirth. And if we wonder why the dead should pay the “price” of leading us to the sirat e mustaqeem, remember that they will be paid handsomely for this good deed. I remember reading a hadith that those whose deaths became an example, or whose death has led others to faith will be shown the amazing rewards Allah swt had kept for them in compensation for the loss they suffered on this earth and they will exclaim, “My Lord, indeed, we have lost nothing in this world! We have lost nothing!”

The recent tragic car accident death of 17 yr old Sakina Ahmed of London, England has left a global community grieving in its wake.

<http://www.standard.co.uk/.../family-of-girl-killed-by-car-pa...>

Touchingly written facebook tributes flowing in from every part of the world show the various ways different people, even those who never knew the marhooma, have been touched by the tragedy. There are great words of wisdom to help us all come to terms with this tragedy, to help us to reconcile our faith and submit to the Wisdom and Decree of Allah swt

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/386391481431990/>

Her death has reminded me of all the many young people I have seen leave this world before me. And a walk in the cemetery has brought home the fact that deaths of young people DO happen very frequently. Those of us who think we have forever just have to look at the dates on these tombstones to realize that these young people too, thought they had their whole lives ahead of them. And yet they managed to do such great things that we are able to say, “they HAVE led whole lives in such a short time!! They didn't need more time--they have actually proven to Allah swt that they are ready for His jannah! They have shown us what is good akhlaq, what is kindness, what is charity, what is obedience to parents etc etc” Truly, that is what life is about.

As I walked in the cemetery this past Eid, the graves of the young people profoundly touched me because each of them, in their ordinary, short lives had left extraordinary legacies! I could remember their stories, what was said of them, the newspaper reports about their death and the nuances of their personality. Some, like Sakina Ahmed left the example of her ready smile and bubbly personality to show us that the world becomes a better place for all when we have happy, charitable smiles to look at. Her habit of stopping everything and praying on time, as attested to by her close friends, is an incredible admirable quality that is an example for all of us. It will surely lead her to jannah (amen)

There is so much more I want to write but I must head off to recite a majlis in a few minutes. I just felt compelled to share that I envy these young people who managed to exhibit such exemplary manners and do such wonderful voluntary work in their short lives. I admire them. I honestly do.

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I ask myself what I was doing at age 17 yrs and the answer is not pleasant. These young people claimed their lives and made them for God!! They are heroes!! Absolutely! They are my role models!

These deaths are not for us to just shed tears for and to shake our heads in disbelief. They are certainly not for us to say "you only live once. so i better have more fun while I am alive"

Instead, they are for us to realize, "wow, you really DO live only once. So I better do as much good as I can while I am still alive"

Let us make a decision TODAY to use the short life we are left with, to also leave a legacy. A legacy that makes OTHER people want to become better Muslims, better daughters/sons/husbands, community members etc etc. The rewards for this will not only be for us, but also for the marhoomen whose deaths have shown us that life is short and precious and must be used to please one's Creator. Ameen

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[Sep, 21, 2012; 54 likes]



225. I was standing in a crowded doctor's office, responding to an important email on my cellphone when a lady paused beside me to use the anti-bacterial lotion on the counter next to me. I looked up distractedly; a million 'things-to-dos' urgently flashing in my brain (I am travelling overseas in 2 days). She was a very old lady and was leaning heavily on her walker. I smiled at her and said "hi" (a habit I have of talking to 'strangers' that my kids absolutely get irritated by)

The old lady's face wrinkled into a sad smile. And she said, "I can't believe I have been so stupid. I rushed to get here only to find out my appointment is not today!! My memory just fails me nowadays because of my medication."

I stopped texting and paid attention. She berated herself for being so dumb. She lamented about all the rushing around she did to get dressed, how she had to rush to get on the right bus and then, the disappointment she suffered when the driver let her off at the wrong stop.

"I had to walk all the way from the last intersection. It took me 15 minutes," she said almost to herself as she became totally lost in her day's difficulties.

I put my phone into my purse--the urgent email cast aside.

"Where do you have to go?" I asked. "I could drop you"

The words had NOT escaped from my lips without thinking. From the moment she started talking I knew what I wanted to do, and my mind had been reeling with all those stories of scams by old ladies who steal purses, who hold you up with handguns and who have a group of men waiting to rob you etc etc. And yet, I chose my words carefully and said them with resolve. In my mind, I had already decided that I would drop her wherever she had to go. Period.

She ignored my question and went on talking about how foolish she had been not to check the calendar etc etc. I asked again.

This time she paused. She didn't look at me. She took out her tissue--and I noticed how crumpled and wet it was--and she cried into it with both her eyes pressed to it.

She still did not answer me.

"Just tell me where I can drop you" I begged. She would simply not tell me. (another scam? was she a good actress? I ignored my mind's suspicions and kept asking her to answer where she lived)

I braced myself for her answer--maybe it would be a downtown location. How would I juggle my schedule, arrange to pick up the kids, finish my errands, cancel appointments? And again, a firm voice inside me said I would do anything. Period.

She told me she didn't want to bother me, that her walker was too huge for my car, that she would be ok, that she knew I must be busy etc etc. I took matters into my hands and ushered her out into the parking lot.

When she told me where she had to go, I realized it would not even take me 5 minutes to drive there!!! And would you believe, it was directly in the direction I had to go to!! But I knew by bus it would take at least 45 minutes before she would be at her place. (walking to the stop, waiting at the stop, sitting through all the stops etc etc)

Soon, I had folded her walker, put it into my car, settled her into the car, bucked her seatbelt for her myself as if she was my baby, put her purse on her lap and closed the door. She kept crying into her tissue. All she kept saying is:

"God has sent you. God has sent you. God has sent you"

I drove down the street as she talked throughout the drive. She explained that her daughters

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didn't live closer, how she had to prepare a meal as her grandchildren would be visiting in the evening, what medical issues she had etc. It was as if she hadn't had someone to talk to in a long time.

I told her she was like my mother and to please not feel guilty for the help I was giving her. I told her it is normal to forget, the best of us make mistakes. I told her to be nice to herself, not to overexert herself and "no more tears". At least it was not snowing, at least she was able to manage her own appointments, at least we have such great medical facilities here, etc etc. She listened intently and then asked,

"Are you an Indian? A Muslim? I am so happy I met you. You are good people. I will never forget you. I will always remember your name even with this bad memory of mine. I promise." She kept talking as I parked at her seniors' building. I unfolded her walker, helped her out of the car and guided her to hold on to the walker carefully. She invited me to tea but I politely declined. I told her I knew where she lived so I would visit if I ever could. She said,

"If you had not come, I would still be crying, you know. I would still not be here at my home. I would still be angry with myself. God sent you. God sent you"

That's when I answered,

"Actually, God sent YOU. He knew I needed to be blessed today. He knew I needed to meet such a lovely human being. He knew I needed to be reminded that everyone is like my mother. And He knew how badly I need good deeds."

As I walked away I realized that the only reason God had made me pause to send an email in the hallway (and not in my car which was just a few feet away) was because a dear old lady was pleading to Him to make her day better. She was begging Him to help, wondering how she would make it, asking for strength to walk to the bus stop and beyond.

And He paged me. He Pointed to me. And I had no choice. Suddenly, all my excuses, my errands, my fears felt totally meaningless. Because HE had muted them. He was overriding them!! I wanted to help, I was going to help and no one would stop me. Not even the fear of getting robbed or killed or the fear of being scolded by my family at home for trusting people without thinking!!

And I realized that it felt AWESOME to be the answer to someone's prayer. And not only had I made her day but I had made Islam, Muslim, Indians, Pakistanis, women in hijab and busy people with cellphones and SUVs look good in one quick instant!!!!!!! ha ha!!

Most of all, I had restored faith for someone that God DOES listen to prayers. I had made a woman feel that she was not alone. That the world is not selfish, that people are not cruel, that life is not one awful drudgery. In one instant, I had made someone's tears dry and made them able to face the day.

And that is why it is so important to keep doing good things. It is not only for reward from God but because it has multiple effect-s-on the soul, on someone's ease, on someone's outlook, on someone's faith etc etc And it feels GREAT too!!

I shared this story (again written in the parking lot as I make myself late for another appointment) not to show what a wonderful angel I am. I could easily be criticized for showing off--and believe me I hesitated to share this story for that very reason. But I shared this story to show how important it is that we keep being good, trusting and helpful no matter how appreciative someone is, no matter how futile it looks, no matter how sincere the seeker looks. To reconcile a believer with their Lord, to make them feel that He is listening (and He IS--he paged me to help!!!) is not only an incredible feeling but an important, urgent work that we must

all do. There are hundreds of lost souls waiting for a positive moment such as this to happen to them. Wouldn't it be great to be the one to guide them back to happiness? towards Allah swt? Next time we get paged, let us respond to it for it comes DIRECTLY from God. He selects us to respond. And then watches us. Let us answer with a loud,

"LABAIK ALA HUMMA LABAIK." like we do when going towards Him during Hajj. "Here I am, my Lord, here I am!" I hear, I obey, I submit.

And in a mundane, busy day, far far away from the Holy Kaba, let us earn the rewards of Hajj and earn His Pleasure from right HERE. AMEEN!!

May He accept His efforts. May He cleanse our soul. May He choose us as worthy servant to serve Him AMEEN

[Sep, 20, 2012; 254 likes]

226. I was sitting in my car waiting for the green light at a traffic signal when a young boy on a skateboard whizzed confidently past me. Suddenly he hit a small pebble and flipped in the air, landing spectacularly hard and totally flat on his back! The skateboard went flying off and landed a few feet away. I watched in horror as the boy lay there, flat on his back, for a moment-- he looked dead or passed out. Before I could react, I saw him open his eyes, gain composure and determinedly get up off the floor. He looked off to the right and saw his skateboard. He walked over, picked it up and got back on the skateboard as confidently as before and whizzed away almost nonchalantly!!!! I knew he must have been in excruciating pain and yet he didn't even take a moment to nurse his wounds or even to brush himself off!!!!

And it was the most inspiring thing I had ever seen. Why can't we deal with the blows of our lives in an equally matter- of-fact fashion?

A skateboarder knows that he is engaged in a dangerous sport. He expects to fall unexpectedly. And when it happens he knows that there is nothing else to do but get up off the floor and go on!!! Yes it hurts. Yes it is embarrassing. Yes it throws you off and makes you afraid to trust the pavement or even your own skills. But there is no choice but to go on. And to go on confidently--for if you hesitate you will set yourself up for yet another fall. You can't skateboard hesitantly--or you will lose your balance! It just doesn't work that way. You have to be confident and look ahead. At your destination....

Life is an equally dangerous sport. In fact the stakes are higher and the wounds longer lasting. But Allah (swt) has already warned and prepared us about the impending pitfalls and tests! In fact he has Himself promised them!

"Do men think that they will be left alone saying, 'We believe', and that they will not be tested? We did test those before them, and Allah will certainly know those who are true from those who are false." [29:2-3]

And yet we feel amazed and shocked when we hit a pebble and fall. And we lie there crying and hating the pebble, the one who created it, the people who let it stay there, the injustice of it all, hating the pain, etc etc

And crying in this way debilitates us. Getting up off the floor becomes harder. The pain feels more acute! Now we are embarrassed. A crowd has gathered. Now we realize we may have even cried too loudly and if we get up easily people will wonder what all the fuss was about!!

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And so we wallow in the pain. Life looks even harder. How to trust human beings again?

And God reassures us like a compassionate mother nursing the wounds of her child who whispers, "I am right here my love. I will never leave you":

وَاصْبِرُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

And be patient. Surely, Allah is with those who are patient. (8:46)

And He gives us reassurance and motivates us to go forward. To never give up. To stay on the path.

"So lose not heart, nor fall into despair: For you will be superior if you are true in Faith"(3:139)

Let us change our attitude. It doesn't mean we have to pessimistically expect falling all the time-- it means knowing that falling is possible. And when it happens, we will be ready with grace, with acceptance and with a willingness to brush ourselves off and to go FORWARD.

And with the knowledge and faith that this trouble too, shall pass. And our wounds will heal--if we allow Him to heal us. For Allah Swt applies the balm to our wounds Himself! And reminds us with a soothing caress over our hearts:

" So verily, with every difficulty there is relief:

Verily, with every difficulty there is relief"

[94:5-6]

May He give us the strength to

recover from our wounds and to trust in Him, always ameen

(written in the parking lot, entirely on my iPhone!! Subhanallah for the Help and Inspiration that Allah swt gives us!!) with duas shyrose

[Sep, 14, 2012; 142 likes]

227. Eid Mubarak my dear fb friends and may Allah swt make it blessed (and truly "Mubarak") for us with forgiveness of sins and acceptance of good deeds Ameen. Subhanallah, we have crossed one more important milestone in our journey of life and inshallah we have come further ahead and much more closer to Allah swt, who is not only the focus but also the ultimate aim and destination of our journey. A traveller who seeks his destination always keeps his goal in mind and never allows himself to go backwards. He pushes himself forward and rejoices with each victorious step as he painstakingly inches ahead. He remains steadfast and knows it is a folly to go back and waste his precious efforts.

The joyous day of Eid ul Fitr is our journey's milestone--meant to rejoice at the accelerated speed Allah swt has blessed to our efforts in this month and to marvel at how He has generously refueled our empty reserves. The travelers congregate on the highway of the Sirat e mustaqeem, congratulate each other on their great luck and to look happily at their achievements, to celebrate the Benevolence and Generosity of their Lord and then set off FORWARD to achieve greater purity.

And so, dear fb friends, let us look up at our final destination and not allow anything, anyone, any desire, any self-imposed obligation or excuse to set us back even an INCH. We have worked HARD for this state of purity. We have hungered, thirsted, held back, self-denied, stayed awake, begged, recited, followed every rule to reach this moment, this Eid, this celebration.

Let us not rip our hard-earned degrees at our graduation party by celebrating in a haram fashion.

Let us not take ourselves back to the start line. Let us keep Him always in sight and rush towards

Him saying "labaik ala humma labaik" here I come my Lord here I come hearing your call towards goodness and towards your pleasure!

O God,
we repent to Thee in our day of fast-breaking,
which Thou hast appointed
for the faithful
a festival and a joy
and for the people of Thy creed
a time of assembly and gathering,
from every misdeed we did,
ill work we sent ahead,
or evil thought we secretly conceived,
the repentance of one who does not harbour a return to sin
and who afterwards will not go back to offense,
an unswerving repentance rid of doubt and wavering.
So accept it from us,
be pleased with us,
and fix us within it!
-imam Zainul Abedine (dua on day of fast breaking)
[Aug, 20. 2012; 152 likes]

228. ABC of Islam as a way of life

A, Allah se daro
B, Bismillah se shuru karo
C, Chori na karo
D, Deen sikho
E, Elm hasil karo
F, Farz Ada karo
G, Gussa Mat karo
H, Haj karo
I, Ibadat karo
J, Jamat se NAMAZ parho
K, Kalma parho
L, Lailaha illallah
M, Muhammadur-rasulallah
N, Naumeed na ho
O, ALI ka lehaz karo
P, Parda karo
Q, Quran parho
R, Roza rakho
S, Shukr Ada karo
T, Toba karo
U, Umeed rakho
V, Vazu se rho

W, Waqt ki qadr karo
X, Xtra nafl parho
Y, Yaqeen ALLAH per rakho
Z, Zikr ALLHA ka karo.
[Aug, 16, 2012; 66 likes]

229. Bibi Khadija (a.s) is our role model for the perfect wife and we must learn from her life story. For her husband, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) this truly was the saddest moment of his life for the most loyal, loving kind and sincere best friend in his life, bibi Khadija (a.s) left this world. Theirs was a true love story built on much respect and faith in each others' abilities and goodness and a common goal of pleasing the Almighty.

He never forgot her and would feel intense love for even her relatives and friends after she passed away. Just knowing that someone was special to her endeared them to him.

Her story shows us that no matter how rich, successful or educated a woman is, she can remain humble and not let these wordly things make her arrogant or overconfident. That a woman can respect a man even if he has no riches--and that it is his piety, his truthfulness and his exemplary manners that set him above all the others.

She was ostracized for believing in him and her pregnancy was so lonely that her unborn child bibi Fatema (a.s) would speak to her from the womb and give her consolation for her tears!

When she went into labour not one lady in Mecca was allowed to assist her--so Allah swt sent her the most pious of ladies from jannah to be her midwives!!

When her husband would return home after a painful day of being ridiculed, mocked and having stones and garbage thrown at him, she would meet him with a loving, encouraging smile, tend to his wounds and tell him all would be well. She would pledge her loyalty and tell him she knew he would be one day successful. She kept all her wealth at his feet but more important than that she made him feel emotionally strong--and he went forth knowing she stood behind him a hundred percent.

Marriage is such a beautiful gift from Allah swt. So how do we let it deteriorate so much that it can become a living hell? Perhaps because we fail to nurture it and look towards the other to give US when it should always be about what WE can give to make the bond stronger.

When our nikah is recited the dua in the khutba is that our marriage be like the one shared by the Prophet (saw) and bibi Khadija (a.s) and the one shared by imam Ali a.s and bibi Fatema (a.s).

And those marriages were about respect, intense love and friendship

Today, in the memory of one of the BEST wives and marriages in the history of the universe, let us all, MEN and WOMEN pledge to nurture our marriages. Are we respectful enough loving enough kind enough appreciative enough? We can be BETTER. No doubt about it. Let us love each other more for the sake of Allah swt and He will make our bonds stronger ameen. Let us go forward with renewed strength and fresh motivation. May Allah swt make us all better

[Jul, 29, 2012; 98 likes]

230. Sitting in the mosque during the Holy month of Ramadhan, amid hundreds of my community members, I am often overwhelmed with a powerful sense of love and affection for the people around me. I look around and am inspired by the women who pray so fervently, by the pious ladies who exhibit exemplary manners, for the mothers who struggle with several small

children and who still make the effort to attend, by the intelligence and spirituality of people of all ages and for the amazing way that so many people can sit by side in cramped conditions and yet still make it work. The incredible moment is when we recite salawat together and when our lips move in unison to the duas being recited and then, amazingly, when we share food together. I feel a surge of love and awe and often get tears in my eyes because I feel so blessed to have such a huge family of people to call my own.

These moments and these feelings are surely the result of the barakah of the Holy month of Ramadhan. Twice a year (Holy Ramadhan and Muharram) one gets an awe-inspiring sense of how huge the congregation is and the realization that THESE are the people we have grown up with, prayed with, socialized with and eventually, the ones who will one day bury us....

It is so easy to get caught up in negativity and to focus on the opposite of the above--to instead bemoan the long line-ups, the quickly diminishing food, the one or two irate volunteers, the noise, the children who spill on us as they run by and, yes, feeling constantly overlooked and missed when the food is being served. But that is to stray far from the real reason we get together which is to build unity, learn about our faith, worship together, develop love for one another and to get inspired by others.

The holy month of Ramadhan, is not only about eating delicious food and certainly not about sipping tea quietly in the undisturbed atmosphere of one's home. Spend such a month at home and you may feel satisfied physically but your soul will remain totally un-nourished and your other senses untouched. And this month is about waking up our inner souls.

If we do feel irritated by the large crowds and find ourselves deciding to stay home it is time to do some deep inner reflection and ask ourselves what our priorities have become. Are we focusing on feeding our inner child that wants things perfect and FAST or are we focused on training ourselves to be more patient, to learn more and to worship more? Shouldn't we be actually encouraging ourselves to evolve into more sophisticated beings?

Maturity is about tolerating things and achieving greater goals despite the inconveniences one may face. It is about forcing oneself to do difficult things because one wants to be a better person. It is about seeing the positive when all we want to do is see the negative. It is also about not being swayed by the opinions of others and to, instead, look at what is the right thing to do (ie. what Allah swt would want us to do)

Anthropological and psychological studies have shown the great benefits of communal eating and worshiping. From the beginning of time, human beings have understood the power of chanting together and the intense oneness that is experienced when large groups eat together. The communal meal has been known to be THE mainstay of societies that have been historically known to be the most cohesive.

No surprise, then, that our Holy Prophet (s.a.w) taught the believers to pray together, to congregate for teaching sessions, to break bread together and to NOT become recluses. He taught that Islam is about living with others AND worshiping with others--it is NOT about living as a hermit and doing worship alone.

Best of all, he revealed the infinite blessings that shower upon the believers from the heavens when they pray together in jamaat, when they take the time to speak to a fellow believer, feed the congregation or invite one another to break the fast. Worshiping and eating together causes multiplication of thawaab (blessings) the forgiveness of sins and fulfillment of requests to the Almighty.

Zakira Shyrose

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Let us remember this the next time we feel discouraged about coming to the mosque in the days ahead and whenever a 'friend' suggests staying home to avoid the crowds. This is the month to befriend ALLAH swt and the 14 masumeen (a.s) and there is no better way to please Him than to attend His place of worship, love His creatures and to become ONE with the ummah.

Seeking isolation can be a dangerous, slippery slope. The more one stays aloof, the harder it becomes to mix with others. One begins to feel like an outsider, like an ineffective social conversationalist and as if no one likes them. It is important to break out of such a dangerous cycle for it can lead to depression too.

Our ultimate goal is to be one big family, comfortable and united with each other so that when our Awaited Imam, Imam Zamana (may He hasten his arrival) comes, we are ready to serve under him, our heart already synchronized and beating as ONE. AMEEN
[Jul, 23, 2012; 96 likes]

231. Allahu Akbar! A true sign of barakah for the blessed month of Ramadhan!! And the truth shall prevail AMEEN

Ahlul Bayt News Agency) - Sunni mufti and head of the Sunni scholars in France have embraced Shia Islam at the age of 68 years old. He stated that at the age of 68 he is very unfortunate to have being in complete coma about Shia Islam.

Sheikh Sankoh Muhammadi is the imam (prayer leader) and head of the Fatwa Center and head of the Sunni scholars in France. Sheikh Sankoh Muhammadi is originally from Cameroon and have spent 43 years in France and holds french citizenship. he is very popular for the number of mosques he has built. Sheikh Sankoh visited the holy city of Karbala recently. He and Sheikh Walid al-Baaj (a Shia scholar) dialogued in the presence of a Tunisian researcher Muhammad Saleh al-Hinshir who acted as translator from Arabic to french.

Sheikh Sankoh was very impressed with his visit to the holy city of Karbala. When asked on his impression on Shia Islam, he said that Karbala and Imam Hussain (as) are amazing discoveries for him. He said now he has discovered (in Karbala) the reality of Shia Islam. He said his discovery of Shia Islam liberated his brain, senses and he has become a free human being. He also stated that what he has discovered is incumbent upon him to propagate it to the world that is veiled from this truthful reality.

He stated he was in total coma about Shia Islam and at age 68, that is very unfortunate. But now he shall become a soldier for 'Tashayyu' (propagating Shia Islam) to the world and they should inform Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Sistani (Iraq's most senior and prominent Shia Muslim scholar) about his plan. He stated that now he has found true Islam as he shed tears visiting the (burial sites) of the Ahlul-Bayt of the Prophet (sa) in Iraq. He said that the Ahlul-Bayt (as) of Prophet Muhammad (sa) have been concealed from the eyes of Muslims and he visited the holy city of Madina (Saudi Arabia) and did not find them there until he has discovered who they are in Karbala.

He was adviced to read and research more about Shia Islam in order to spread the message of true Islam to the world. He replied by saying that he is in need of more books and literature in the french language for him to propagate the message.

[Jul, 21, 2012; 43 likes]

232. Notice a sense of dread at the thought of the month of Ramdhan approaching? A sense of regret that summer is "ruined" and words of defiance escaping the lips? This is the evil work of the accursed Shaitan who is feeling us slipping out of his vise-like grasp. If he loses us, we will become God's again and so he attacks the sincerity of our intentions to nullify our good deeds. A prayer done listlessly while feeling forced to kneel down, a fast done begrudgingly as we look longingly at food and wonder why God enjoys us to be hungry, reciting Quran with a bored tone and wondering if it even means anything--These are all the whisperings of Shaitan. Beware the Open Enemy. And run for your life!!!!

Let us spend the next few days changing the dread into a joyful anticipation and tie up each of our own shaitans into chains that we angrily and willingly put upon him ourselves.

[Jul, 16, 2012; 14 likes]

234. Working on my writing at a local library, I saw a curious thing. A man (aged 50 or so) arrived at a nearby table and then proceeded to spend the next 10 minutes spraying the table (with stinky windex) meticulously wiping the table and chair, cleaning everywhere before he sat down. While he obviously had an OCD (Obsessive compulsive disorder) it still got me thinking about how human beings make so much of an effort to be clean. We use bacterial soaps and creams and are so careful about contaminating our bodies with dirt. While that is important, isn't it ironic that our impure inner state doesn't disgust us? So much inner dirt has clouded our spirituality and made it impossible for purity to even tiptoe into that mess. And yet, we sit in that inner filth, absolutely comfortable with that stench of bad deeds that makes even angels fear to come near us.

Oh Allah, please forgive us our sins. Cleanse us and make us pure once again. Alert us and sensitize us to our inner impurities so that we can begin the journey towards attaining your forgiveness, ameen

[Jul, 11, 2012; 84 likes]

235. If you ever want to feel humbled, go into a library and glance at all those books and titles (as I just did over the past few days while working on some article submission deadlines) It is awe inspiring to see that there is so much to learn about in this world--that no matter how much we know, it can never amount to even a drop in that vast ocean of knowledge. The world has seen some amazing geniuses and much has been discovered, and so many people have actually taken the time to write down what they know. People have taken upon themselves to write about the most obscure of topics--and have managed to write hundreds of pages!!! wow. what have we done to contribute to these discoveries? can our work ever compare? how can we think we are "all that" in light of all that there is out there to learn?!

If Allah s.w.t accepts me into heaven, I will request a huge library like this one to spend my days in. I would absolutely LOVE to read all these books!

[Jul, 11, 2012; 34 likes]

236. Are you at home with your family around you? Are you at work, earning an honest living? or at school, earning an education that others can only dream of? Are you outdoors enjoying a

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summer day? Wherever you are, take a look around you and see the beauty--of smiling faces, of beautiful landscapes, delicious food, wonderful electronic gadgets, amazing opportunities.

LIFE....Isn't it just awesome???

Take a moment to STOP...to really appreciate the HERE and NOW and to just take it all in. Now speak to God and express your appreciation to Him. If you can, go into sajda right now, wherever you are! And like a neglectful apologetic child who has suddenly realized how wonderful their parent has been all along, thank Him and tell Him how much you love Him...
[Jul, 10, 2012; 31 likes]

237. The cynic in us often wonders why Allah s.w.t would suddenly open the doors of Mercy on certain days and offer blanket pardon and immunity from punishment for all of us sinners and neglectful servants. Why tonight? why Lailatul Qadr? why any night, in fact? These thoughts come to us from Shaitan who can never have the generous, loving, forgiving heart that Allah s.w.t has. We believe in a benevolent God who feels compassion for his weak servants. He knows how much we love Him and knows of how temptations can make us slip. And like a loving parent who forgives a naughty child--no matter how terrible the mistake was, Allah s.w.t forgives too--and His Mercy is oceans and oceans deeper and wider than any human can have (or even fathom)

Allah s.w.t looks for opportunities to forgive us. He is not in the business of punishing and destroying. He Creates, he Loves, He Heals, He Nurtures, He Blossoms dead trees and dead hearts. He delights in growth, in success, in the flourishing of His slaves. He sees our decaying faith, our neglected spiritual gardens that are overgrown with weeds and He wants to give us a way out, a fresh start. That's his awesome style. He is looking for an excuse to forgive us, because He WANTS us back in His arms. Because He loves us.

Allah s.w.t tonight is offering us His Hand. But we do not feel worthy, we have no hope in our salvation. We know we have transgressed too far. And yet, there it is. An invitation from the King Himself!!! How foolish it would be to deny ourselves this opportunity!! We may not believe in ourselves, but He believes in US. We may not believe in His forgiveness, but He is showing us He, indeed, can forgive.

Many nations offer sudden pardons to criminals. In some parts of the Muslim world, the prison doors are opened at certain happy days of the Islamic calendar and remaining sentences are forgiven!! At some times of the year, the celebratory atmosphere of certain national holidays makes some rulers forgive business penalties, dues etc (in Dubai for example, if your business licence has not been renewed, you can accrue thousands of dollars in fines. And then at random times of the years, these are sometimes forgiven in total!! I have seen this happen myself and watched the people rejoice at their sudden luck)

And yes, some department stores offer unbelievable 80% off sales at certain times of the years. And people wait for those moments to go shopping. They wait in long line-ups all night to enter shops. Some give freebies to the first 1000 customers. Some get special scratch cards that give them free large screen TVs, cash etc.

Doesn't this happen in this world? Don't people get opportunities and make a windfall? So it IS POSSIBLE. But the point is, to be at the gates when the doors are open. The point is to send an application--and maybe win a free entrance!! The point is to ASK.

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Tonight, and for the rest of this blessed month of Shabaaan, let us drop to our knees and put our heads in sajdah. Let us ask, let us weep, let us come home like lost children. And when the month of Ramadhan comes, let us begin spiritually ready to fill our empty bowls. God is giving us a fresh start to cleanse ourselves--so that we can change our destiny in the coming month of Ramadhan with great acts of worship.

Let us take His Hand and earn our jannah....

[Jul, 5, 2012; 60 likes]

238. Want to pray for yourself AND each and everyone on this blessed night of 15th Shabaaan? Recite this amazing dua written by Imam Zamana (ajtf) himself!!! Imam (a.s) prays for obedience, knowledge, control on hands/tongues/eyes, the protection/guidance of scholars, health/dignity for seniors, humility for rich, justice in rulers etc etc. SUBHANALLAH!! O Allah, Grant us the good fortune of being obedient [to You], and keep us away from disobedience, Let us be sincere in our intentions, Provide us with the knowledge of what is sacred.

Honor us with guidance and honesty, and direct our tongues to what is right and wise, fill our hearts with learning and knowledge, and cleanse our stomachs from what is forbidden and of doubt.

Prevent our hands from committing oppression and theft, lower our gaze [out of modesty] from immorality and disloyalty, and block our ears from hearing foolish talk and slander.

Oblige our learned scholars with piety and sincere advice, and those who are learning with restrain and desire to learn, Bless those who are with desire to follow the religious teachings, impart recovery and comfort to the Muslims suffering from illness and bless those dead among them with kindness and mercy.

Award dignity and peace of mind to old people, Confer repentance and turning away from sin to our young people, Bestow modesty and chastity to our women.

Supply the rich with humility and abundance; and the poor with patience and contentment.

Let those fighting in Your way be victorious, and the imprisoned be freed.

Let the rulers be just and kind and the ruled receive just treatment and good character; bless those who are on pilgrimage with adequate support, and helping them complete what is obligatory on them

With Your Grace and Kindness, O Most Kind!

[Jul, 5, 2012; 29 likes]

239. THANK YOU MOM FOR TEACHING ME HOW TO FORGIVE

[17.53] And say to My servants (that) they speak that which is best; surely the Shaitan sows dissensions among them; surely the Shaitan is an open enemy to man.

The most precious blessing Allah s.w.t gave to me is the living guide that He blessed me with in my life--my mother. It was truly my mother who showed me, through example, what the principles of Islam looked like in action. She was (and is) a real human being, with many flaws

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and desires yet her deep love for God has always been evident and it has been an awesome force to behold.

Watching her, I learned that to be a Muslim means to continue to strive, that it is never too late, that life is about fighting one's desires and constantly trying to be the person God wants us to be.

Through the years, my siblings and I would get exasperated with one particular quality of mom that she stood very firm on: forgiving people. It was so hard for our hot-blooded, youthful hearts to understand how we could be nice to relatives who had been unkind, why we should be generous with mean friends, why we should go out of our way and be very hospitable with community members who had gossiped about us etc etc.

Mom would always stress the idea of keeping the peace, doing the "right thing" being overly nice especially to those who had been downright cruel to us!!! We would fight with her, sometimes even not talk to her for the way she would let people "walk all over her and US" We expected her to hate those who had been mean to us, at least. But no, she would always place cordial social relations above everything. It was downright infuriating.

Now that I am older and wiser, I realize that it is this quality that mom instilled in us that has brought each of us (my siblings and I) this far in life. Mom taught us to not burn ANY bridges, to get along with people even after a huge fight. In fact, even us siblings were not allowed to take an argument beyond a few minutes. No matter how huge and explosive the fight had been, we would be expected to eat together, go out together, smile for pictures, share clothes, sit beside each other in the car etc etc.

Mom never allowed us to sulk and she would never allow us to bully each other or anyone else. She was the one who would insist that we invite each kid in the class to our parties (no matter how much we didn't like a particular kid) and that we especially say "salaam" to those aunties that we were really angry with. It was so humiliating, and we hated her for it.

Today I thank her for it.

For it is this that has made our marriages survive, our jobs last despite office politics, our community work prevail despite difficulties, our relationships with community members survive over 40 years, our family ties with extended family stay strong and our friendships endure despite huge misunderstandings. I look back at my life and am grateful to mom for there are so many, many instances in my life when I have been able to resist getting into HUGE fights with people. I have bit my tongue, smiled even if I have been insulted, and been able to sit and eat beside those who have publicly humiliated me just a few minutes earlier!! Why? Because mom had taught me well. She has taught me endurance and humility. She has taught me the importance of keeping the peace, the importance of choosing my battles and the importance of preserving the sanctity of the mosque, of family, of relationships.

Now that I know more about my faith, I realize mom was teaching me what the Holy Quran had said all along!!! She would remind us "this is shaitan that is making you fight" and we would roll our eyes at her. She would say "We must get along with everyone, no matter what" and we would storm out of the room angrily. She would invite people who had cheated us of money or said mean things about us or denied us our rights and then she would make elaborate feasts for them! and to add insult to injury, she would make US come and serve. We would have to smile and hug them. And it would make us soooo angry. And now I realize that it was those feasts that

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reconciled us with many many people--some have apologized and some have even become our most closest friends!!!

And then I saw that this phenomenon is described in the Holy Quran!!!

"Nor can goodness and evil be equal. Repel (evil) with that is better: Then will he between whom and you was hatred become as it were your friend and intimate!." 41:34

Mom taught us to win people and arguments with love and kindness. And this is exactly what Islam preaches. When I read Dua Makaramil Akhlaq (by our 4th imam a.s) I am struck by how mom made all those words come to life in our home ** to read this dua visit <http://www.duas.org/sajjadiya/s20.htm>

Now that I am a parent, I find myself teaching my kids the same things that my mom taught me. And yes, they react in the same way we did when we were kids: with anger and disbelief in this style of treating people. My kids too question (like I did) the merit in being nice to those who are backbiting, in the value of getting along with those who are bent on making the fight grow and grow.

Recently, I found myself feeling very guilty for encouraging my child to reconcile with those who were hurting her. I assured her that if she kept no grudges and smiled and just treated them beautifully that they would reciprocate. When she returned heartbroken and asked me "mom, why did you make me do that? why did you make me put myself through that? things just got worse!" I questioned myself.

Was I making my child a wimp? was I making her let people walk all over her? was I teaching her an ideal that cannot work because the rest of the world simply doesn't function this way?

After deep introspection I have come to an answer. And that is NO. Surely it is disappointing to see things backfire, to see my child hurt, to feel responsible for making her do what my mom used to do. I may even risk making my child hate me like we used to hate mom for the humiliation we used to suffer when she would make us be good to mean people!! At least we learned a positive lesson at the end--what if she never does??

But in the end, I realize, it is NOT about whether our good behaviour results in mean people ultimately becoming our friends or even in them reciprocating some goodness. Yes, it can sometimes end up that way but it really doesn't have to, necessarily! The important thing is to do the right thing, to be a better human being in the eyes of Allah s.w.t, to always resist the call of shaitan, to always extend a hand in friendship, to try and neutralize evil with goodness, to strive for unity.

No matter what the outcome.

Because this journey is about elevating OUR conduct (our akhlaq) about being the best that WE can be. Regardless of whether others do the same or not. It is about regulating OUR behaviour OUR reactions OUR ethics.

Because if we all stopped being good simply because others are not, then the entire world would become evil. And our mission is to prepare a loving, united army for the coming of Imam Zamana a.s And if we cannot hold hands, forgive and look past the petty differences, how will we fight the big war against our nafs? How will we work as ONE under his command? How will we change the world into a loving, better place?

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Being an army means looking out for each other, for taking bullets that would have hit our comrade, for not leaving anyone on the battlefield unprotected, for fighting for the SAME principles. How can a fractured army ever succeed?

It simply cannot.

This 15th Shabaan, on the birthday of our beloved 12th imam (ajtf) let us come together as one. Let us put down our weapons. For those weapons should only be lifted when HE tells us to, and they are definitely not to attack EACH OTHER!! We are one, we are united in our love for the Ahlul Bayt a.s Let only THAT join us, and let nothing, nothing NOTHING--no personal hurt or grievance divide us. AMEEN

[Jul, 4, 2012; 47 likes]

240. Car flips over on quiet residential streets Yorkland and Bernard (near Crescent village on Yonge and Elgin Mills) One person taken to hospital in a stretcher by ambulance. Please everyone drive safely and let us remember to love and hug each other when we say goodbye at the front door each morning. We often leave our loved ones by casually calling out "I will be back in 10 minutes" but can we ever be sure we will return alive? Let us remember to make each day count by doing something that will please Allah swt and to ask for forgiveness for sins. And let us be thankful for life, for each day He gives us on this earth. Life truly is a precious gift.

[Jun, 30, 2012; 60 likes]



241. On this blessed day of Friday, I am delighted to see that my account has hit the maximum number of friends allowed on facebook-- 5000 friends!!! SUBHANALLAH!! (and 454 subscriptions mashallah!!) And I don't even accept every friend request that comes!! So grateful to Allah s.w.t for His Generous Blessings and for bringing you all into my life, dear fb friends. Your "likes" amazing comments and lovely private messages fill my heart with joy. There is so much I want to share about Allah s.w.t, our 14 Masumeen a.s and the valuable lessons that life gives us--and you give me a much needed outlet and forum to express myself. I am drawn to posting an update on my wall, no matter how busy life gets, because I know you are waiting!! So thrilled and absolutely delighted that you read my posts despite the fact that they are often long!

Please forgive me for not being able to reply to your personal messages promptly--I have a huge backlog of emails that I haven't been able to get to. I do read them all--but there are just too many to respond to subhanallah!!! And I apologize for being unable to come on chat/skype or to share my phone number. It is impossible to find time for that!!

It is amazing how close I feel to all of you and the conversations we have on my wall makes it feel as if we are an extended family of 5000 loving hearts! We feel united and so very strengthened in love and faith.

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This, my dear friends, is a valuable gift from Allah s.w.t. For sincere, loving hearts are truly priceless--and can never be purchased, even if one spends everything to attain them. These are the gifts that we truly need to be thankful to Allah s.w.t for. Sincere hearts can only come into our lives from Allah s.w.t for He is our rightful owner, the King of our hearts and our souls.

"He it is Who strengthened you with His help and with the believers
And united their hearts; had you spent all that is in the earth, you could not have united their hearts, but Allah united them; surely He is Mighty, Wise. (8.62-63 Holy Quran)

My sincere apologies to those of you who have sent a friend request and are awaiting my response. Facebook wont allow me to accept 😞:(but there is another option: please join my other page (click on the link) There is no limit to the number of friends allowed there and you will get all my updated posts inshallah. You may also visit my website: zakirashyrose.com for my video lectures, articles, puppet shows, upcoming events, international visits etc.

So thankful and grateful to Allah s.w.t for the gift of you, my dear fb friends
I ask Allah s.w.t to protect you all, fill your hearts with happiness and your lives with love, forgiveness of sins and acceptance of hajaat, AMEEN
with much love and affection to all my brothers and sisters around the world,
Zakira Shyrose
[Apr, 27, 2012; 92 likes]

242. Today, as on every sacred day of Juma, Imam Zamana a.s (ajtf) awaits eagerly for the command of Allah s.w.t to allow him to emerge with LIGHT into this bleak, dark world that desperately needs justice. Allama Majlisi says that Imam a.s looks towards us, his followers, with love and affection and prays fervently for our piety and safety. Amazingly, it is said that much as we wait for him with lamenting and tears, he too waits for us with the same longing and affection!

I have often tried to understand this deep love between the Imam and his followers. It has been easy to understand the love we feel for him for he is worthy of our love and has a right to our devotion and allegiance--but why would Imam a.s love us, the sinful, disobedient and heedless followers? Why would such an exalted, pure, infallible personality give us a second glance? Surely, he is only interested in the most pious of us, the ones who truly merit his acknowledgement.

But now that I am a parent, I am beginning to understand what love is. I am beginning to understand the unconditional, all encompassing feeling of deep attachment and responsibility that one can feel when one knows one is in total charge of a helpless, naive being.

Each child is so inexplicably precious to a mother--no matter how old, how beautiful, how intelligent or how inadequate that child may be. Have you ever heard the phrase "he has a face only a mother could love?" That explains it totally. A mother loves all her children. She sees beauty in them and can only see their potential, innocence, and helplessness. She forgives knowing they had a moment of weakness. She loves, for she can only see their worth, no matter how low they may think of themselves.

A mother feels so connected to her child that their pain becomes her own pain, their victories her own victories, their joy her own joy.

Thus, when that child makes wrong choices, a mother cries so heartrendingly. For she grieves that her child is heading on the wrong path, is going further away from her (where true love is) and is setting the stage for his own destruction. She feels the impending loss as deeply as if it is her own loss. And she prays to her Lord to guide Him, to bring his heart where salvation is. And she never gives up on her child. She pines for him and waits patiently that the goodness she knows that is in him will one day make him open his eyes and realize his mistakes. And when he returns home, it is that same mother that awaits with her arms wide open in love and forgiveness.

When I try to understand my Imam a.s (ajtf) in this context, I realize that my love for him is nothing compared to his love for me!!!! For we love him KNOWING that he will deliver on his promises and that he will never let our hope go unfulfilled. But he loves us despite the fact that we have yet to show our own worthiness. We have not been lovable enough to warrant such love from him. And yet he loves.....

Today let us return home. Let us come back on the sirat e mustaqeem and find our way back to Allah s.w.t and His living representative and guide on this earth, the Mahdi, Imam Zamana a.s. Let us blossom in this love he sends our way and let it motivate us, strengthen us and reorient us. Let us call out to him and say Ya Imam, here I am! Forgive me ya Imam. Please take me and show me the way towards your obedience and pleasure! And do not ever let me turn away from you again....

Imam Zamana's dua for his Shias:

'O Allah! Our Shias have been created from our light and the remainder of our earth (teenat). They have sinned in the hope of our love and benevolence. If their sin is related to Your Exalted Self, then You forgive them. We will be satisfied with Your forgiveness. And if their sin is related to the rights of their brethren, then You correct their shortcomings and grant them from the part of Khums which is our right so that they may be satisfied with it. Protect them from the fire of Hell and do not gather them along with our enemies in Your punishment.'

-referenced by Allamah Majlisi (r.a.) and Mohaddes Noori (r.a.) as narrated by Sayyed Ibne Taos (r.a.)

[Apr, 20, 2012; 91 likes]

243. Sometimes life gives us priceless lessons in ways that we can never understand. Pain is one of those things. In my experience I have seen that the hurt I have received from others (in the form of words) has helped me understand the unbelievable power that the tongue of one human being can have to inflict everlasting hurt to another human being. And this has taught me what NOT to do others. It has made me vow to never hurt someone the way someone has hurt me. If I had not experienced that pain, I would not have understood that lesson. subhanallah for such blessings--the silver lining, sent by Allah s.w.t and wrapped around the clouds of our lives.

Imam Ali a.s has said:

Your speech is under your firm control as long as you do not speak, but if you speak, you come under its control;

so guard your tongue as you guard your gold and silver, for many a word is a blessing but leads to indignation.

-Imam Ali a.s

fb friends, please take a few minutes to read my latest article from Federation Samachar magazine. My column appears on page 86. I am also providing a cut and paste version of it below for those who have slower internet and difficulty downloading large files.

Your comments and likes give me much needed feedback and motivation to continue the work that I do. I look forward, as always, to hearing from you. May Allah s.w.t reward you AMEEN.

FORBIDDING THE EVIL

The memory of a fellow human being's hurtful words can cut like a knife and make one's heart pound with anxiety, even years after the hurled insult. It truly is a testament to the fragility of a human heart that a few choice words uttered in a matter of seconds can leave an indelible scar that can last a whole lifetime.

Without doubt, words have the power to shatter a soul, crush one's spirit, create immense psychological pain and result in irreparable damage to one's reputation. Think back to those cringing moments of childhood humiliation when a teacher or parent criticized us publicly or someone verbally attacked us in front of a large group of friends. No sincere apology or genuine explanation for the rude behaviour can undo the damage this causes to one's social dignity and to remove the suspicion this causes to one's reputation. Words have been known to destroy relationships, sever ties of kinship and break marriages. No wonder, then, that Imam Ali a.s has cautioned that "the tongue is a beast, if it is let loose, it devours".

Believers are persistently commanded by Allah s.w.t in the Holy Quran to "speak which is best" (17:53) "speak the right word" (33:70) "speak to men good words" (2:83) and to "restrain their anger" (3:134). Rude words, no matter how justified they may seem, are in fact, influenced by Shaitan who makes it "fair seeming to them (8:48) in an evil ploy to cause animosity between believers: "And say to My servants (that) they speak that which is best; surely the Shaitan sows dissensions among them; surely the Shaitan is an open enemy to man (17:53).

Imam Zainul Abedin (a.s) in Dua Makaramal Akhlaq sheds further light on how rude words are uttered due to the direct influence of Shaitan: "...everything he causes to pass over my tongue - the indecent or ugly words, the maligning of good repute, the false witness, the speaking ill of an absent man of faith, or the reviling of one present, and all things similar". The one who spews hateful words, therefore, is temporarily possessed and under the influence of that accursed jinn, Shaitan, from whom believers are enjoined to continually ask Protection from.

Indeed, piety (taqwa) cannot exist in a human being when one's tongue is (mis)used to lash at others. Allah s.w.t in Hadith e Qudsi strongly cautions, "O, son of Adam! your religion is not going to correct you until you straighten your tongue and your heart. And your heart is not going to be straightened unless you straighten your tongue. And your tongue is not going to be straightened unless you are humble towards your Lord. When you see the faults of people and don't see the faults in yourself, then indeed, you have pleased Satan and angered your Lord. O, son of Adam! if your tongue is (like) a lion and if you leave it alone, it will destroy you, your destruction is because of your tongue."

The "destruction" that Allah s.w.t refers to above is not just social but also spiritual for He warns in the same hadith: "O, son of Adam! when you find that your heart has hardened and there is disease in your body and you don't find sustenance, then you should know that: indeed, you have said something which has not benefited you".

This chilling explanation for many of the troubles we face in our lives becomes more terrifying when we consider another hadith e Qudsi where Allah s.w.t promises that “the one who disgraces a Muslim, I will disgrace him 70 times.

So what becomes of those of us who witness rude and offensive humiliation of others and remain “politely” silent? Do we not, as well, in our compliance of the flagrant disregard of the teachings of our faith, become part of the criminal behaviour? Does this not, then, include us with those from whom Allah s.w.t has promised the removal of His Mercy?

Until we as communities do not sanction rude and offensive behaviour, firmly give a strong message and publicly stand up against inappropriate behaviour, we risk continued moral decline, removal of Blessings from the Almighty and a further delay of the return of our Awaited Savior, Imam Zamana a.s (ajtf). We must sensitize ourselves to what is meant by courtesy and discourage public displays of humiliation in an unrelenting quest to do amr bil Maroof and nahy anil Munkar. We must tremble in fear of the Wrath of God lest the oppressed complain to Him on the day of Judgement that “we don't remember the words of our enemies but we do remember, the even more painful, silence of our friends.”

[Apr, 6, 2012; 50 likes]

244. Amma yujibul muztarra iza da-aahu wa yakshifussuu...

[27.62] Who answers the distressed one when he calls upon Him and removes the evil? And He will make you successors in the earth. Is there a God with Allah? Little is it that you mind!

Truly, Allah s.w.t has saved our community members from a huge calamity in a recent fire and shown us that no one but He, indeed, helps the distressed ones. Click on the link for raw video footage of the fire at the Jaffari Crescent Village (also known as "complex") where hundreds of our community members live. The fire started in a pot of oil (used to cook bhajiyas etc) and quickly went out of control and went through the front doors as well as out the backdoor into the backyard. The aunt who was cooking suffered burns to her face and was taken to hospital. The fire could easily have ignited the nearby trees and adjacent houses or exploded after spreading to combustible things in the area. Alhamdulillah, the fire was contained in time and we are thankful to Allah s.w.t for His Mercy and Divine intervention.

Seeing fire burning like this inevitably reminds one of the fire of Hell which will be a million times worse....May Allah s.w.t give us the wisdom to mend our ways and ask for forgiveness; Let us pray together that He saves us from calamity and fire on this earth and saves us from the fire of Hell--wakina adhaban naar AMEEN

Fb friends, this is also a timely reminder for us all to fire-proof our homes. Let us ensure our smoke detectors are in working order and that the batteries have been recently changed and that fire extinguishers are available throughout the home (not just in the kitchen) Please do not leave burning stoves and ovens unattended (even chicken fat can spill and ignite inside an oven) and do keep small children out of the kitchen. When cooking, do not wear long sleeves or loose clothing that can catch fire and do keep hair tied back. Never reach for things in cupboards above the stove-top as hot liquids can splash on you and/or fire can ignite on your clothes easily.

If you are doing "bukhoor" or "ood" remember that coal gives off carbon monoxide and is a silent killer. Coal can also catch fire very unpredictably. Do not endanger your family (especially

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small children and seniors) and take any chances. Act responsibly and be alert for any potential mishaps.

Jazakallah to all who have shown concern for the residents of the area and have called, emailed, visited and prayed for their safety. May Allah s.w.t reward you for your efforts and sympathy ameen. Please continue to remember the injured aunty in your prayers and for patience and courage for the family to face the loss of their home and belongings.

[Mar, 15, 2012; 36 likes]

245. Sunday morning and I am enjoying a quiet moment before my busy day begins. Soon the kids will be needing breakfast and to be dressed for madressa etc. I have to give a lecture today at Centre Madressa and then drive on to the opposite end of the city to recite a Milad and Darss. But first, I have to shovel myself out of the front door so that i can make it to my car door LOL-- it has snowed a few inches last night. And then to brush off all that snow off the entire car, warm it up, load it up with my sound system (microphone, speakers, etc etc) and drive on the slippery roads to my various destinations. May Allah s.w.t accept these efforts and pave the way ahead for me with ease and inner satisfaction. Ameen

[Feb, 12, 2012; 55 likes]

246. Every year the blessed month of Rabil'awwal brings with it an unbelievable gift from Allah swt to me: countless invitations to visit the homes of my Sunni sisters to recite nasheeds (Milad) and to give lectures. Over the years I have recited in hundreds of homes and met hundreds and hundreds of women and i honestly don't know how they find me sometimes! It is an annual miracle in my life and i cannot express what a blessing it is to touch their hearts and evoke tears of love for the holy Prophet s.w.t and his holy progeny. I give to them the gift of the introduction of a love of the Ahlul Bayt a.s and in return they shower me with so many gifts and flowers and so much love, respect and honour. Whenever i receive such tokens and love I am reminded again and again that Allah s.w.t truly IS the Generous One who rewards His unworthy slaves abundantly in the most precious of ways. Fb friends I just had to share these beautiful roses with you that I received today. This year i have been getting bouquets at every home! Subhanallah!! I am so so thrilled over these that i cannot sleep lol. For me these are not just beautiful flowers but a message of love from my LORD--and believe me no flowers from any man in my entire life have given me so much joy! To love God and to feel loved by Him is the ultimate high and the perfect Valentine's day feeling! I feel so special so validated so loved so worthy. I want to be in Sajda all night in thankfulness and joy! Thank you my Lord for filling my life with so much color, so much fragrance so much love from YOU.

Is karam ka karu shukr kaysay Ada

Jo karam mujpey mere nabi nay kiya...

Me sajata tah Serkaar ki mehfiley

Mujey her gham se apney barree kardiya!

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Milad un nabi Mubarak mere fb friends! Khuda aapki sab hajatey poori karey ameen
[Feb, 12, 2012; 16 likes]

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Milad un nabi Mubarak mere fb friends! Khuda aapki sab hajatey poori karey ameen
[Feb, 12, 2012; 18 likes]

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247. Subhanallah I felt an extreme sense of elation and utmost joy as I woke up to the most precious of days bestowed upon the earth by our Merciful Lord: the birth of His most beloved Messenger, Muhammad Mustafa s.a.w

Throughout the day, as I prepared my children and myself to celebrate this day with flowers, fragrance, the finest clothes, the most elaborate dinner and glittering lights, I was aware of this bounce in my step and an exhilarating song in my heart. I asked myself why I was so thrilled over a day that happened 14 centuries ago? Wallahi, it felt like the joy I would feel if a hundred of my birthdays, all the Eids, every Valentine day, every graduation, every milestone of my life were all happening in ONE DAY!! LOL what was going on with me????!!!

And as I searched my heart for the source of this euphoria (which was more profound this year than any year) I realized that it was because it was the birthday of the most precious source of influence in my life, my TEACHER, my ROLE MODEL, my FATHER, the NOOR in my heart, the GUIDE and LEADER of each of the 12 Imams a.s that I look up to so much.

I realized that this was such a happy day for me personally because he has made such a personal mark on my own life. It was when I researched about HIS life, submitted to HIS teachings and recognized Allah s.w.t in the way that HE understood him, that my life took on this amazing, incredible mind-blowing journey into the core of my spirit.

This pure NOOR of Muhamed Mustafa s.a.w that Allah s.w.t blessed the entire EARTH with, has lit up my life in such a spectacular, dazzling way that no matter how dark life gets, I am always able to see in front of me, I am never lost, never afraid, never alone!! Ya Rasulallah, you have blessed my life with LIGHT!

Ishq e nabi me aysa, mila he suroor ke

ab dhook na dard hay, na sitam

khairiat se hoo....

Jab se huwa he unka karam

khairiat se hoo

Throughout the day, I kept realizing how LUCKY I am to have a role model who has, in fact, influenced the greatest of famous personalities on this earth (including our great Imam, Imam Ali a.s who has always presented the role model of the Holy Prophet s.a.w as an example throughout the lessons he has taught in the prolific Nahjul Balagha)

I am so proud to have you as my Prophet, ya Rasulallah for you were not only a Messenger but also a Charismatic Leader, an Orator, a Reformer, An Educator, A Liberator of Slaves, a Feminist, A helper of Orphans, A warrior on the battlefield, the King of an entire nation, an astute Politician, a Negotiator and Mediator, an exemplary

Father/Husband/brother/grandfather/uncle/friend etc, a military strategist, an ascetic, a Judge and Arbitrator, a businessman and so much more! With those mindbogglingly endless list of titles, you were also the one who was the most mannered, cultured, loving, forgiving, compassionate, understanding, diplomatic, congenial, humble, generous, kind, respectful, soft-voiced and sympathetic individual human beings had every encountered.

No wonder Allah s.w.t the Most praiseworthy, who has the highest of standards of Perfection, praises YOU in the Holy Quran. For you merit the highest honour and are certainly the ashraful Makhluqat, the best of Allah s.w.t's creations.

Glory be to Allah s.w.t for His Wisdom, Mercy and Compassion in creating the Best of the Best for us to look up to. For bestowing unto the entire universe a Mercy upon Mankind, Rahmatulil Alameen, Mohamed Mustapha Salalaho Alaihey Wa aleyhi wa salaam

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And so this day of joy brings tears of happiness to my eyes for how can I forgot the praiseworthy Messenger who brought to me such a priceless Message?

Thank You Ya Rasulallah! May Allah s.w.t CONTINUOUSLY bless you and your holy progeny a.s with the greatest of blessings forever and ever, until the end of time and beyond ameen. We rejoice today for the gift of YOU on this earth!

Eid Milad un Nabi mubarak to every single person on this earth!! Ameen

[Feb, 10, 2012; 76 likes]

248. My dear fb friends jazakallah for your continued support, emails and wonderful messages. I truly am so blessed to have such an amazing family of friends such as you and would like to extend my apologies for not being able to write back. It has been just been 12 days since I returned from reciting Ashra Zainabiya majalises in Karachi and life has gotten even more hectic!! In the midst of unpacking, cleaning house/daily chores/laundry/homework with the kids/cooking etc, making up for lost time with the family and getting over the jetlag and fatigue of 2 months of lectures and travelling, I can barely find a moment to respond to the huge volume of mail I get each day. Please do not feel, for even a moment, that I am ignoring you or am uninterested in your questions, queries and notes of support and appreciation. I just cannot find enough hours in the day to even keep in touch with my close friends and extended family members.

Allah s.w.t is so very Kind to me and has blessed me with the opportunity to serve. I need your prayers that I can do justice to the many tasks He has placed before me to complete.

Subhanallah! My schedule for the NEXT MONTH AND A HALF (ie into the first few weeks of March!!) is solidly booked each and every weekend (and even some weekdays!!) to recite Milads and Lectures in celebration of this sacred month of Rabil Awwal and the birthday of our Holy Prophet s.a.w

With such a busy schedule ahead of me, I would like to apologize, in advance, for being unable to be in touch with you all. I pray that you will understand and not take it personally in any way. When you send me a question marked "urgent" please consider that almost 10 other people on the same day have also sent me a question marked "urgent"!!! And when I answer a question, I always want to support it with references, send links to websites and give related philosophical discussions--and this can be extremely time consuming.

The good news is that all answers to common questions can be searched on the websites of most Marja e Taqleed. Most also send personal replies (and have a full staff to take care of queries) For example, Agha Sistani's website (link attached to this message) has a wealth of information. Also, for most frequently asked questions regarding Shia beliefs, visit the following website <http://www.al-islam.org/encyclopedia/>

My favourite website for biographies of the 14 Masumeen a.s, stories from their lives and from the Holy Quran and complete information on almost any topic is:

<http://www.ezsoftech.com/islamic/default.asp>

I do hope the above information proves useful and will empower all of us to seek answers independently. These are life-long skills that are essential for all of us to cultivate within ourselves.

May Allah s.w.t bless you, accept your sincere efforts to attain nearness to Him, forgive any sins and fulfill your hajaat. My duas are with you all and I am so grateful for the gift of you all in my

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life. sincerely, Zakira Shyrose Jaffer Dhalla
[Feb, 3, 2012; 38 likes]

249. I woke up this morning to read the sad news that a young friend of mine, a mother of 2 young children, has been diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia. CANCER. That scary word again. A word that we have become desensitized to because we hear it so often. But every so often, the disease hits close to home. And then, that word, a death sentence of sorts, sends chills down our spine--of sheer fear--and yes, to be honest, a rush of relief that the bullet has missed us this time.

And then the question comes to mind "What if it DOES hit me next time?"

As I read the various pleas for duas for this young soul, for donors to step up and give their bone marrow to save her, I, for a moment try to imagine how it would feel to be this young lady. It is impossible to truly feel as it would feel to be in her hospital bed--and yet, one can surely imagine it.

I imagine how it must feel to be so recently diagnosed (just a few days after Ashura) and the whirlwind of events after-- of suddenly being overwhelmed with feelings of fear, helplessness, anger, confusion etc and then assaulted with the onslaught of aggressive chemotherapy sessions. The difficulty of being hospitalized, to crave to hold one's babies and then to cry for those same babies' future--who will hold them after I am gone? The pain of having to and wanting to comfort others (my parents, my spouse, my friends etc) when I need comforting the most. And grasping, falling, getting up again, and holding on again and again to FAITH and to HOPE. How would it feel to know that there IS a scientific cure, and yet I have to beg others to help me get that. How would it feel to realize that even if others did try to help, then the chances of finding a true match for the Bone Marrow I need are simply mindbogglingly against my favour. How helpless and powerless it would feel--to have to educate others, to plead my case-- that I deserve a chance to live.

There was a time that the simple act of donating blood was something that people did not understand. And our community was the first and foremost to rise to the occasion because of the inspiration of our maula, our King of Martyrs, Imam Hussein a.s Subhanallah, every Ashura, our mosques are taken over by Blood Donor clinics and the faithful line up in hundreds to GIVE, to GIVE, to GIVE. their precious blood. The local Red Cross organizations across the world have a special deep respect for our mosques because of this amazing phenomenon they see in the Shianey Ali. They count on the blood they will receive from us every year--because it makes a significant addition to their blood bank reserves.

And now, Science continues, through the inspiration of Allah s.w.t to find new cures, new ways to save the human life. And this relatively new cure, Bone Marrow, will one day become commonplace, much like how giving blood has become. But the reserves are not filled yet. There is much we, as a society, need to understand and much for us to feel--in order for us to be galvanized into action.

For now, in order for us to even be considered as a donor, we have to give a cheek swab (a q-tip is used to gently wipe the inside of our cheek) After passing the vigours of testing of that sample, we may receive a call that we may be eligible to donate. After that, if we pass more tests, our marrow is donated from our bodies and THEN, if there is a match, the Cancer patient FINALLY receives it. Meanwhile, the clock is ticking, ticking, ticking, and hundreds of hopeful, helpless

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Cancer patients are rapidly dying. Dying as they look towards us for help, dying as they beseech us with their eyes and their prayers "dear brother, dear sister, please step up and at least take the first step to donating something that you have so much of--and we so desperately need".

Reading about the process of actually donating was an eye-opener for me. At times I cringed and wondered if I DID pass the eligibility test, would I be able to go through with it? Even after giving birth to 3 children, the prospect of receiving a small needle made me cringe. And then I asked myself, "And you think you are courageous enough, and selfless enough to fight in the army of Imam Zamana?"

These are the small tests in our everyday life that reveal to us what we are truly made of. When the picture of a hungry orphan, video footage of a flood victim, life story of a dying cancer patient does nothing to us but evoke mere sympathy in our hearts, it means that we have a lot of work to do within ourselves. For our Imam a.s needs more than for us to merely shed tears for others, to even just pray for others--that is just a first step in our journey. True piety is when our concern for others is manifested into ACTION. And who says that action is easy? Action WILL require us to lay down our fears, to become selfless, to risk our own lives, to think of the greater good, to slay our inner demons and dragons. And those are the kind of companions our 12th Imam a.s is looking for.

My FB friends, life is also about broadening our horizons and learning about that which we had no idea about. I invite you to learn right now, as I did just a few minutes ago, about what this whole Bone Marrow donation is all about-- by watching this video. Inshallah the knowledge we gain can empower us, and motivate us to make the world a better place. The video is 6 minutes and 36 seconds long. I ask you for those minutes, knowing that your time is precious. For me, the most poignant moment was just 17 seconds before the video ends (6.17 into the video) I pray it will have the same impact on you as it did for me.

May Allah s.w.t Guide us to have the qualities that He expects in His true servants. Ameen
[Jan, 30, 2012; 43 likes]

250. oh God, these street urchins followed us relentlessly. I promised them we would give them money when our car came to pick us up (the money was in the car with our host) The crowd of kids grew and grew and we were like the pied piper. Some tried to sell us useless toys, others gave us sad stories of not having shoes/parents/breadwinners etc. I promised them all I would give them money but they had to stop begging so heartrendingly. So they would stop, and then they would start again. When we got into our cars, the group had become a mob of 7,8,9, 12 yr olds. They cried, they banged, they hung onto the car. Our driver was LIVID because things could go awry very fast. I opened up the window a slit and began slipping 100 rupee notes out the window. My host was flabbergasted that I was giving so much. So I hid the amount from her LOL. I kept throwing the money and the mob began to fight for it. They pulled, slapped, yelled, cried. I realized I had made a huge mistake. The car rocked back and forth and the driver was so worried. He began to drive but no one would get off the car!!!! We were trapped. I kept apologizing to my host for my stupidity--I only wanted to give charity but it had made things dangerous for all of us!! The driver managed to zoom out but we were soon caught in traffic. The mob followed and now adult beggars had joined. Every few metres they would catch up with us!! The driver was driving like a mad man to lose them. It was actually very scary. I felt so sorry for those little children. What a life to have to beg and to be helpless. I could still see the tears of one boy as he yelled at the other "you took 2 notes!! that one was for me!! you took two notes you betrayer!!!!!!!!!!" Oh Allah please help these children. Please help every beggar, please

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help them!!!

I leave home not with my mobile phone but with a wad of rupees in my hand. I know I will see these kinds of beggars and I cannot bear to look away. We in the West feel sympathy because we rarely see such sights while those here have been desensitized and disillusioned (since you don't know if someone is begging for trade or for true helplessness) The liars have made it hard for the true mohtaj to get help--so I give to all, just in case ONE is the true one who needs it. Allah s.w.t looks not at the amount we give, at how many we give to or whether it actually helped a true beggar but at THE NIYYAT inside us, THE COMPASSION, THE IMPORTANCE WE GIVE TO HELP THE ORPHAN AND NEEDY. If we give with the hope of helping poor, we get the sawab of helping poor--whether that person was actually poor or not. AMEEN

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[Jan, 16, 2012; 27 likes]



251. Ya bibi Fatema a.s Centuries ago, you asked Allah s.w.t to grant you a community that would never forget the sacrifice of your beloved son Hussein a.s for the cause of Islam. Today, Oh our dear Queen of Jannah, that community, those Muslims who came as an answer from Allah s.w.t to your prayers, will be busy AROUND THE WORLD, doing what YOU asked for. They will shed tears, beat their chests, pledge to be good Muslims, prepare for the 12th of your progeny and keep the grief of Imam Hussein a.s forever fresh in their hearts. Bibi, we beseech you to grant SAFETY for those Muslims. Bibi, we beseech you to remove dangers and obstacles for those Muslims so that they can continue in this worthy task--a task that you yourself want accomplished. Please keep them safe, keep them alive and GRANT HIDAYAT to those who do not understand how precious this act of ibadat is. Bibi, today we entrust ourselves to Allah s.w.t and to His 14 Masumeen a.s and go forth BOLDLY to express our love for Imam Hussein a.s in various ways. We will feel safe knowing that we are busy doing something that pleases Him and therefore whether we live or die, it will be in His way, and He will take us into his LOVE and MERCY. Oh Allah, accept this ibadat from us. May we LIVE and may we DIE saying only one thing: YA HUSSEIN! YA HUSSEIN! YA HUSSEIN!
[Jan, 14, 2012; 67 likes]

252. This uncle's name is Mehboob Farishta. And he has lived up to his name (farishta: angel) When we were living in very difficult financial conditions in Karachi he (a young man in his 20's) would often visit our home. My mom says that it happened often that there would no money for food and he would suddenly show up on those specific days and ask if she needed money. He would insist on leaving cash--not knowing that his help allowed her to use that for groceries and feed us kids for the next few days. She says he would be like an answer to her prayers and somehow knew when to show up!!! We remain indebted to this great man with a heart of Gold and pray that Allah s.w.t gives him a long and healthy life and that when he passes away that He makes him a billionaire with a huge palatial mansion beside the homes of the 14 Masumeen a.s AMEEN

[Jan, 13, 2012; 17 likes]



253. Subhanallah the last few weeks have been truly breathtakingly rewarding and I am so grateful to Allah s.w.t for giving me this unique opportunity to serve. I have met angels from all walks of life who have made my trip to UK to recite Muharram majalises so smooth. I cannot adequately thank my various hosts, their families, people of the communities I visited, jamaat administrators, ladies who took my mother and I out to eat/shop/run errands and visit relatives, people of all ages who did me endless favours and wonderful people who encouraged/motivated and gave me so much love. All I can do is pray for all these people who have touched my life in various ways with my most sincere and fervent prayers. We have become so close over the last few weeks and I cannot ever forget you or the ehsaan you have done for me--if you do not hear from you over the next few months, please do not mistake this for ingratitude. Mashallah there are simply too many wonderful people to keep in touch with--and I can barely keep up with my daily commitments!!

Mashallah I have so many emails, phone calls and fb comments/messages and queries to respond to. Please accept my apologies if you do not hear from me right away. I have come back home to a very busy (and messy lol) home, 3 children, a full schedule of majlis reciting, and an upcoming trip this weekend (for 2 and half weeks!) I do read each and every email (and even see each name on the list of "likes"!!!!) but writing back is going to take a long time--so please do forgive me.

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It has truly been a fantastic and surreal time of public appearances, TV shows, lectures etc. Subhanallah, I have experienced more than my share of love and fame and I am truly grateful to Allah s.w.t for His many gifts to me--which I truly do not deserve and He knows how truly undeserving I am. But honestly, coming home to being a wife and mother is the MOST spectacularly special gift I have from Him.

I came home to my 3 children (aged 14, 13 and 5) running to hug me, my husband's welcoming smile (despite all the hard work he has gone through lately!! lol) and my mother in law's hug of sincere love and support. Each of them handed me a rose (under instruction of my mother in law!!) Hearing the words "mummy" brought me down to earth and back to where my greatest rewards rest.

As I immediately get down to the fast paced life of being a mom and I scrub floors, cut nails, drive kids to haircuts, prepare lunches, wake them up for school, cook meals, fold clothes (all the while fighting jetlag lol) I feel so very blessed to have THIS opportunity to serve. There is nothing more rewarding, more satisfying and more precious than this.

SHUKRALLAH! Thank you Allah s.w.t for each and every blessing you send down to me. I cannot ever do anything to ever be deserving of these. Truly You are the Most Generous, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind!!

[Dec, 14, 2011; 49 likes]

254. Jazakallah for your duas FB friends. The event was extremely well-attended, well-presented and well-organized. It was a fantastic opportunity to be able to speak about our beloved Imam Hussein a.s in front of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. A reporter from the local newspaper Leicestershire Mercury took my business card and enthusiastically congratulated me on my speech (I was the only female speaker) and said he was "extremely impressed" and that my speech was "brilliantly presented" He told me a reporter would be calling me for an interview (inshallah!!!!) BBC reporters covering the event estimated the crowd at 400 people!!!

[Dec, 4, 2011; 17 likes]

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255. Today at 10:00 am Sunday Dec 3, busloads of community members from Leicester's Masjid-Al-Husayn will be transported to the City Centre to hold an Ashura Assembly. We will gather under the famous Clock Tower (a place where 5 streets converge) a well-known place for large assemblies, activists and revolutionary speeches. The purpose will be to spread awareness about the message of Imam Hussein a.s to all the hundreds of passers-by who typically come downtown on a Sunday. We will be right under the BBC screen and give speeches in English, recite English elegies to honour Imam Hussein a.s and hold up the flag of Islam, banners and posters. Hundreds of families with seniors in wheelchairs and babies in strollers are expected to join us as we do tabligh and share the precious gift of Islam with our fellow countrymen. Inshallah I will be giving a 10 minute speech and the visiting Maulana Safder Jaffer (of Dubai) will also address the crowd (both of us will speak in English) Inshallah the media (newspaper and TV) will be there to cover the event beginning with a 10 minute slot on BBC radio at 8:00 am to announce the event.

We need your duas that this event will be well-attended, well-received and well-presented. The community and jamaat leaders have worked so very hard to gain permission for this event (after several years of completing paper work and fulfilling conditions) and they have worked hard to ensure all city guidelines/rules and tedious specifications are adhered to. Much is at stake as we want to continue this tradition for many years to come.

If we can touch one heart, we will be successful in responding to the call of our dear Aba'bdillah Hussein a.s when he asked on the lonely plains of Kerbala "Is there anyone there to assist us?" Please join us, spread the message and remember us in your duas. Inshallah I will post pictures as soon as I am able to.

The link below is just to give you a visual picture of what City Centre looks like and the crowds of people who walk by near the clock tower.

[Dec, 3, 2011; 47 likes]

256. oooooooooo! SUBHANALLAH! It just started to rain outside (the famous rain of England! LOL) it is 3:45 am) and it is a BEYOOOOTIFUL sight and sound from my bedroom window. The Holy Prophet s.a.w has said that rain is a sign of Mercy from Allah s.w.t and that it is the best time to supplicate! (LOL the people of England get many such opportunities don't they?? fortunate!!)

So let us do HAJAAT--as the Mercy of Allah s.w.t spreads across the world

42.28. He it is Who sends down the rain, useful in all ways, to rescue (them) after they have lost all hope, and spreads out His mercy far and wide (to every being). He it is Who is the Guardian, and the All-Praiseworthy.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا قَنَطُوا وَيَنْشُرُ رَحْمَتَهُ وَهُوَ الْوَلِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ

[Nov, 30, 2011; 38 likes]

257. I have understood what the strength of a woman looks like after meeting hundreds of women over my tenure as a Zakira of Imam Hussein a.s Women have hearts that feel STRONGLY and it is that inner passion that not only brings tears to their eyes for the tragedy of kerbala but also makes them fight the odds to find a way, ANY way to get to the masjids during

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the Holy Month of Muharram.

It is this emotional strength of a woman that gives her the miraculous physical strength, despite the fact that she is in her advanced years, to enthusiastically come to the masjids in rain, snow or shine. Over the years I have watched countless seniors struggling to get out of their cars and into a wheelchair, seniors who can barely walk due to old age and illness, those who can barely sit without excruciating pain make their way into the azakhanas. I marvel at their love for Imam a.s and envy them this passion that makes them face physical challenges, inclement weather, reluctant relatives who have to drive them, English lectures that they do not understand or enjoy and cramped and uncomfortable conditions just to come to the blessed imambargha and hear the name of HUSSEIN a.s

And then I look at the young mothers who bundle up newborns, toddlers, sullen preteens and teenagers and see them struggling to hear majlis while nursing, taking children to the washroom, wiping vomit, breaking up fighting siblings, keeping little ones distracted with colouring, scolding teens to stop texting--all this as people give those same mothers disapproving stares for taking up too much space, making too much noise and not keeping their children in check. And yet they keep coming. Yet they suffer in the noisy baby rooms and sit there, surrounded by crying and bored children, facing humiliation, and yet ecstatic to catch just ONE sentence of the majlis that can fill their thirsty souls and sustain them.

The ladies who take buses, beg people for rides, who have to deal with angry spouses that forbid them to go to masjid, the ones who came go majlis during work lunch hours and rush off to make it back to work, those who cook early in the morning so that they can make it to morning majlis, who rush off to pick up children from school--all these women show me what the strength of a woman can do. And humble me with the intensity of their love for the Ahlul Bait a.s

The women who toil in the kitchen at our mosques, who sweep, mop, unclog toilets, organize events, drive zakiras to majalises, cook for the visiting scholars, prepare the taboot and alams, who organize programs for people of all ages, serve niyaz, clean up long after we have gone home, who unlock the masjids in the morning and lock them at the end of the day. These are the soldiers of our 12 Imam a.s and provide the strength to the forces.

I am amazed at the women who have to placate angry, unrelenting husbands to allow them to keep just one majlis at home. Those who collect money over the year to pay for a majlis, order food and prepare their homes for azadari. I meet such women who cry when they tell me how hard it was to convince their families to let them do this and I wonder at the inner strength that makes a woman face so much humiliation just for the love of the shaheed of kerbala.

If women did not force families to get up and get into the car to make it for mosque, if they did not train children to recite nawhas and marsiya, if they did not lovingly prepare food all night, if they did not decorate the masjids and POPULATE them, would the azadari of Imam Hussein a.s truly be possible?

I daresay, that all of us children and male spouses are at those mosques because some woman in our lives (mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, wife) showed us the importance of it with her strength of passion, love, fearlessness, physical energy, persuasiveness, sacrifice and knowledge.

Ya Bibi Fatema a.s I see what the STRENGTH and power of your duas for an ummat that will shed tears for Imam a.s has done. I see it manifested in our women and realize why we needed a role model like Zainab a.s to lead the way. For only a woman can do what has been done. Only a

woman's strength and softness of heart can keep the heat of azadari in our hearts. I bow my head in reverence and acknowledgement: the azadari of Imam Hussein a.s continues due to the strength of the women of our communities.

May Allah s.w.t give these women more strength, more passion, more love, more enthusiasm, more knowledge, more eloquence, more confidence, more inspiration to keep the flag of Islam forever fluttering high up in the air. AMEEN

For we are truly indebted to them.....

[Nov, 30, 2011; 64 likes]

258. When we fall in love, the thoughts of our loved one consume us, day and night. Everything reminds us of them. We feel restless when apart and we plan intricate ways to simply catch a glimpse of them. We crave to spend time in their company just watching them from afar, just thrilled to breathe the air they breathe. We are not "alive" until we are with them. Nights are spent awake dreaming about them. When we look at them, nothing else is visible--we can't hear what others say, what distractions are around us. Only the loved one attracts us, only he or she is the centre of our universe. When they glance at us we are filled with unbelievable delight. Allah s.w.t wants the same kind of love from us and the same kind of reaction from us when we He glances at us with love. He wants His remembrance to permeate our thoughts--so much so that nothing, nothing can give us peace but He. He wants us to wake up at night remembering Him, He wants us to punctuate our day with His remembrance. He wants us to find ways to make our existence about Him, about pleasing Him, about serving Him. He wants us to be so connected with Him that nothing, nothing else takes precedence. Nothing is consequential. He is our everything. We are nothing without Him.

"Thou art my object, none other;
to Thee alone belongs my waking and my sleeplessness.
Meeting Thee is the gladness of my eye,
joining Thee the wish of my soul."

- Imam Zayn al Abideen (a.s.) Whispered Prayer of the Devotees

Oh my Lord, I love you. Please give me the strength, the wisdom and the inspiration to express it. AMEEN

[Nov, 28, 2011; 44 likes]

259. I saw the innocence of bibi Sakina a.s in the faces of the children in the crowd I addressed today. Subhanallah their intrinsic goodness, their willingness to be guided, their soft hearts that melted when the tragedy of Kerbala was narrated was an inspiration to me. They listened intently, with their little hijabs covering their hair, the bewilderment at the cruelty imposed upon the ahlul bayt a.s visible on their innocent faces. And it brought home the fact to me that bibi a.s was also confused at the same way when she saw evil. For a small child the world is about love, hugs, kisses, soothing little cuts and being protected from loud noises and scary sounds. It is all about toys and rainbows and family togetherness and awe at the colourful things the world has to offer. And when evil is done to them, their world is shattered forever. They are shaken forever...

My crowd of little angels cried at the grief of bibi Sakina a.s Little boys (ages 4-8) also covered their faces and cried for the little pure daughter of Imam Hussein a.s They grieved at the separation faced by Sakina, they wepted when they heard how she held onto the leg of zuljanah, they sympathized at the promises Sakina made to her father that she would be an obedient little girl and not upset her mother with her tears. They cried when they heard how her father promised that soon he would call her to be with him in heaven.

I was so so touched to see their pain, their sympathy, their love for the little girl who was just like them. Their tears were real, pure and true. And they were not ashamed to show their pure grief. Subhanallah, they really understood the whole story of kerbala and their questions afterward were really thought-provoking and intelligent.

I go into sajdah and thank Allah s.w.t for this unbelievable opportunity He has given me. Ya Allah how do I make myself worthy of this huge gift you give to me each day? I know those children will never forget today. I know it had a huge impact for them. I feel so honoured, so blessed to have been the first person to bring tears to their eyes for the love of the bibi Sakina a.s Oh my Lord, accept my efforts. Forgive my sins, make me worthy of these gifts you bestow upon me.....and protect our innocent children. Keep them on the straight path and by the sadqa of bibi Sakina a.s let them not ever face yatimi and mazloomiyat like our little princess faced. Khuda koi gham me na rulaye siwaye ghamey hussain....

Ameen ya rabil alameen

[Nov, 27, 2011; 54 likes]

260. Imam Hussein a.s found himself surrounded by evil people, betrayers and liars. As the oppression against him began to mount, he said these very poignant words in an effort to explain the psychological impact on a pious person when human beings inflict pain and to explain how Allah s.w.t reacts when "zulm" is done to an innocent person.

“Those whom I loved have gone away and I remain among those I do not like.

I find myself with one who denounced me on my back while I do not say anything against him.

As much as they can they try for my destruction although I try my best for their well-being.

The evil trait person defames me continuously while I do not say the same for him.

He sees the dirty flies around me that they are humming and he does not chase them away from me.

Whenever the malice of his heart is cured, he tries to fan the flames of hatred.

Does he not benefit from his intellect and does he not seek help of reason?

Does he not see that how bad his deeds are and how due to this evil is turning towards him?

O my Lord! In front of those I fear, He is sufficient and the oppression is sufficient for the oppressor.

And it is rarely that he is oppressed and that the help of the Lord does not reach him”

-narrated by Irbili, [1] Kashful Ghummah 2/34, Raihaanatur Rasool, Pg. 48

The words above not only show the deep sadness imam a.s felt when the world became thirsty for his blood but also give a unique glimpse into the darkness of human nature (when misguided by shaitan)

When evil is done on a human being and friends do not do anything to help--the oppressed person feels isolated and as if no love exists in the world at all (what a terrible position to put someone in--and what a crime to be responsible to make someone feel so helpless)

The oppressed feels confused and hurt. He wonders why people speak ill of him when it is not warranted. He feels so hurt and wonders why they do this when he has only wanted the best for his fellow human beings (such is the evil of shaitan that makes us hurt those who have done nothing to deserve it; who, in fact, have tried to do good to us!)

The oppressed feels the suffocating effect of being defamed continuously and the pain worsens especially when he is doing his best not to react in the same evil way.

Imam a.s ponders over the evil nature of oppressors. He is amazed at their evil behaviour. How can they not do a thing to clear his name? (*showing us that our duty is to HELP an oppressed person when negative words are said about him)

how can they watch while a reputation is being shred? why do they keep increasing hatred and fanning the flames of hate (instead of removing hate why do people make it worse?)

He wonders how a human being does not realize that bad deeds are ruining him and will become the cause of Allah's wrath. Does a human's intellect not help him?

The last few words that Imam a.s then says after this, should chill us to the bone. For they remind us that when Allah s.w.t sees oppression it is enough for Him to punish--and that such is the promise of God. It is RARE that God sees such behaviour and does not react with severe punishment for the oppressor and much help for the oppressed.

For you and I these words of Imam a.s are a huge lesson. They caution as us to how sad we can make a fellow human being (and truly, deep down we are all good people. we really did not intend to hurt someone so much. we had no idea how our actions would destroy them psychologically) They show how ghibat can kill someone emotionally and how the complaint of a hurt person shakes the Heavens.

How we, in our foolishness, can bring the wrath of God upon us (for He defends His lovers completely) and how our hatred of someone can not only bring punishment upon us, but also bring lots of happiness and success to those whom we trouble.

Like a mother who gives a lot of gifts to a hurt child, in order to placate and soothe Him, Allah s.w.t sometimes rewards us so much in order to reassure our hearts when others give us pain.

For those of us who hurt others sometimes the worst punishment is to see the ones that we were jealous of being given even more and more of Allah s.w.t's Grace and Mercy and Gifts. How ironic, that we, ourselves become the cause of our "enemy's" continued protection and benevolence of God. God definitely is the best of Planners and knows how to provide the best of Retribution.

May Allah s.w.t give us the tawfiq to not do zulm on anyone. To fear Him and to reflect constantly on whether we are turning towards evil or goodness. AMEEN

[Nov, 27, 2011; 22 likes]

261. Much like the trepidation that builds up before a huge exam at school, my heart goes through much anxiety and anguish every time I leave for Muharram majalises. The emotional

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weight of leaving my 3 children, my responsibilities, my comfort zone weigh on me and self-doubt threatens to drag me down. I frequently ask myself if I should be doing this, if I am good enough for this huge responsibility, will I be able to do justice to this task? These thoughts almost paralyze me-- when a huge spiritual power surge propels me forward--and NOTHING seems important but IMAM HUSSEIN A.S

My love for him makes me forget everything and I want to serve him no matter how inadequate I am, no matter how important the other things in my life are. How can one explain to others (who also ask me how I can do this and leave behind everything each year) what this love for Imam Hussein is? How can one adequately describe his virtues, his piety, his pure love for God, his incredible sacrifice? How can one find a way to express the love that pours out of one's heart for the grandson of the Holy Prophet s.a.w?

Listening to this manqabat always gives me goosebumps--for it is the cry of my soul that silences all my other doubts. And gives me strength to put aside everything and drown myself in the love of the Ahlul Bayt a.s

[Nov, 20, 2011; 34 likes]

262. Life has placed us in different parts of the world but for the first time in many years, us 4 sisters (Fatima Jaffer Sagarwala Mahjabeen Daya Shabneez Siwjee and myself) went to lunch and celebrated our birthdays TOGETHER with our beautiful mother Shirin SS Jaffer. As I looked around at the accomplished, beautiful and pious women that my mother has brought up I realized that she gave us the best gift of all: an immense love for Allah s.w.t and the 14 Masumeen a.s THANK YOU MOM for all the trips to madressa, majalises, lectures, processions and azadari (instead of piano, ballet and singing classes) I am today what I am because of YOU. [Sep, 28, 2011; 46 likes]

263. Love is such a powerful energy and should never be UNDERESTIMATED--notice how we respond to it, how it makes our heart fill with happiness, how much it makes us REALLY want to love the person who expresses their affection for us! This is one of the reasons Allah s.w.t puts great emphasis on greeting others, hugging them, showing love for fellow believers, for thanking others etc We only have to look at how this type of love feeds our own soul and changes our own behaviour to understand --receiving love changes our intentions, gives us hope and a reason to live. Today, let us GIVE LOVE A TRY! and watch how it changes people and brings blessings upon us!

[Sep, 24, 2011; 30 likes]

264. fb friends--just had to share the hilarious way my birthday ended last night. I didn't realize my exhausted husband (a family doctor) had fallen asleep as I thanked him for wonderful day and listed all the lovely things he did for me. He answered: Very good. Order a CT scan and send a detailed report to the laboratory in the morning --I wan to see what the technician sends back asap" HAHAAHAHA I went to sleep laughing out loud!!!!

[Sep, 24, 2011; 32 likes]

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265. fb friends--your loving duas for a "happy" birthday have made this such a blessed day! Alhamdulillah I have woke up today with so much joy knowing there are wonderful people like you in this world who take the time to wish others and put a smile on their face 😊:) Life is a GIFT--birthdays are not about worrying about age and wrinkles they are truly about celebrating the gift of LIFE. And when one is striving to be on the straight path, there is tremendous satisfaction that it is a life WELL SPENT. The biggest wealth I have is to be a follower of the Ahlul Bait a.s to have the presence of my dear mother in my life, my loving family I woke up today feeling SO THANKFUL!! My phone kept buzzing with texts, ringing with phone calls of "happy birthday!!!!!!", my facebook account kind of crashed LOL because of the huge number of messages coming in SUBHANALLAH!!!!!!!!!! I couldn't access it all day because it had crashed 😞:(but it made me smile too.

This day was not about just the fact that I was born many (many!) years ago one day. It was about realizing that God really loves me. I woke up with the roof of a beautiful house over me, with my children waking me up with birthday kisses, with my spouse bringing me coffee to bed 😊:) with my doorbell ringing (and my lovely sister bringing me a gift!!) I woke up healthy, alive, with the promise of a new day, with the promise of my life still before me. I woke up with my family members, my siblings, nephews nieces etc all happy and settled in their lives, careers etc. I woke up knowing all is well with my extended family--there was great joy in knowing that.

I woke up with my family ALIVE, with our daily sustenance sent by Allah s.w.t in the form of employment/food/light/electricity/car etc. I chose clothes out of a closet full of wonderful choices.

I say this not to show off--it is to make us all realize that we all have these things in many forms (and in different amounts) But we all have much to be thankful for. GOD IS SO WONDERFUL!!!!!!!!!! So kind! So merciful!!!!

The day got more and more special as I went to visit my mother, kissed her and hugged her. The woman who gave birth to me is alive for me to hug and thank. Her heavenly fragrance, loving smile and encouraging words are the nourishment to my soul. She brought me presents (even though she had already given me one in ADVANCE for my birthday a few weeks ago LOL)

We spent the day in our gorgeous mosque's beautiful Armaan Spa (beauty parlour!!) My mom,

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my 13 yr old daughter and myself. Three generations of women enjoying a fun-filled morning together. We got manicures and pedicures and talked and laughed and reflected over life. We ate amazing food from the mosque's Salaam cafe (rib eye steaks, burgers, mishkaki, shawarmas etc)

I gave to charity, vowed to make changes in my life, asked God to guide me, to forgive me. I vowed to make my life count for something. To make God happy that He chose to bless me so much--ameen

We attended juma namaaz and it became a spiritual day!! We weren't hungry anymore (so lunch date has been postponed to dessert date tonight with my family!!) My husband took the 2 older kids for an errand and so I went home with my 5 yr old daughter to her SURPRISE tea party!!!!!! She got her dolls and teacup set and got the pretty picnic tablecloth. It was raining outside but we had an amazing picnic indoors!! Just her and myself. She laid out napkins, little plates, forks etc. We took pictures, drank "tea" in little tea cups, made funny conversation in British accents (LOL) and talked to the dolls. Shireen Fatema even brought a balloon and candle to celebrate my birthday!!!

WHAT JOY!!!!!! It was so wonderful. She even did a "drama" for me and sang songs. I sat back and was entertained by her cute announcements ("ladies and gentlemen!!! Welcome to the BEST drama in the whole wide world. For the birthday girl Shyrose!!!")

Your birthday messages and well-wishes were awaiting (along with complaints from many that my account had crashed and they were unable to login all day!!!!!! LOL i feel so special my dear friends!!!) I am truly grateful to you all for this love--I don't deserve it but am so thankful that God has inspired it in you. God bless you all!! ameen

We are now getting ready to go to the mosque to commemorate the shahadat of Imam Jaffer Sadiq a.s (tonight) It is a perfect way to end the day--with knowledge and tears over the sacrifices of our Masumeen a.s

May Allah s.w.t bless you all for your love. I thank Him for the gift of you, of all that He has given me. I feel so blessed, so happy. ALHAMDULILAH SHUKRALLAH!!!!!! God truly is

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Great, Merciful and Kind.....

[Sep, 23, 2011; 29 likes]

267. Every year as Muharram approaches I wonder if Allah s.w.t will invite me once again to the honour of reciting the majlis of Imam Hussein a.s It is a blessing that inspires ME the most and gives ME the most knowledge and I live for those moments. Truly, there is a Divine plan in where (and if) I will get the opportunity--despite confirmations and definite plans one still finds oneself ultimately on a mimbar in a city one never dreamed of being in! Subhanallah! "And Allah is the best of Planners"

[Sep, 17, 2011; 48 likes]

268. Eid Day: My dad and brother would return from Eid prayers to a home scented with the fragrance of "oud" and "attar". My mom would have the house sparkling clean, with our best bedspreads on the beds, our best plates and cutlery on the table, the aromatic biryani already cooked. She and all of us would be dressed in our finest--mom having prepared everyone's outfits. And then dad hug each one of us, kiss us and give us a little money in envelopes. And WE FELT LIKE MILLIONAIRES!!!!

[Aug, 30, 2011; 50 likes]

269. What would Eid be without family and friends? No tasty food, no fancy clothes, no entertaining activity, no travelling to an amazing place is fun without people to share those lovely things with. Let us say "Thank You Allah, for this most precious gift, for surrounding us with loved ones" -and not get bogged down with HOW we spent our Eid but WHO we spent it with. It is so important to give our children the best Eid as possible--with nice clothes, little presents and happy times. The memories and wonderful feelings these things evoke are priceless

But we must be careful when we notice evidence of too much commercialization and ungratefulness of family members. People from all faiths (Christianity, Jewish etc) lament this downward spiral of holidays becoming more about celebrating and less about the essence of celebration

When we find ourselves criticizing restaurant choices, the type of gift, the amount given to us in envelopes, the clothes that are not "in fashion", the "boring" party and "lousy food" the alarm bells must start going off in our heads

Eid is MUBARAK for those who have earned it after a whole month of patience, worship, forgiveness, charity, contemplation, thankfulness etc. So why should celebration NEGATE all

that?

True joy is feeling more connected to God this day, for having run a marathon and reaching the finish line, for having wonderful family and friends to spend the day with.

Ask those who are remembering their deceased mothers, fathers, young children, teenage sons and daughters, relatives, spouses etc. They would tell you that even if there was no sparkling new dress to wear, no tasty scrumptious eid dinner, no party etc--that just 10 minutes with their loved one would be like having a MILLION dollars

Let us make the first stop after Eid prayers, the cemetery. Let us visit those in the graves who await us, who can pray for us like we pray for them! Let us spend a few minutes with those who are crying at graves and offer them comfort--maybe even invite them over to share the day with us. Let us make Eid special for someone lonely, someone poor, someone neglected

Perhaps then, our day will be spent in quiet understanding of what it means to truly celebrate.

Eid Mubarak to all of you my FB friends and may Allah s.w.t bless you all my loving family of friends. It is an honour to be your friend!
[Aug, 30, 2011; 19 likes]

270. DOES IT SEEM TOO DRAMATIC? THIS ONLY HAPPENS IN THE MOVIES?

When we hear stories of people being caught unawares by tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes etc we should let those moments remind us, again and again, that no matter how much advancement, technology and preparedness we have that human beings are still fragile creatures who can become totally humbled by the forces of nature and Acts of God.

As we become immersed in our lives and laugh, sleep, play and work and become oblivious to the fact that the end can come any time, consider these chilling ayats from the Holy Quran:

[7.97] What! do the people of the towns then feel secure from Our punishment coming to them by night while they sleep?

[7.98] What! do the people of the towns feel secure from Our punishment coming to them in the morning while they play?

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[7.99] What! do they then feel secure from Allah's plan?

But none feels secure from Allah's plan except the people who shall perish.

Let these moments , wherever they are happening in the world, OPEN OUR EYES, GUIDE US and bring us to our knees in submission. In moments our lives can change and we can become homeless, widows, orphans and disabled. Or lose our lives altogether.

When we stand in front of Allah s.w.t on the Day of Judgement, and we plead ignorance, He will remind us of his SIGNS, of such moments in our lives when we read or saw things, felt goosebumps and trembling and then went on our merry ways, ignoring the opportunity to CHANGE OUR SELVES and to obey Him.

The time to act is NOW. The time to start praying is NOW. The time to quit drinking is NOW. The time to wear hijab is NOW. The time to stop gambling, abusing family members, being promiscuous, eating haraam, earning through haraam means, looking at haraam things, listening to haraam, doing haraam IS NOW. RIGHT NOW.

Let us, NOW, you and I make a pledge to God. Let us take a cleansing shower or wudhu, do 2 rakat namaaz and put our heads in sajda and confess our sins. With tears in our eyes, in this Holy Month of Mercy, let us plead for salvation and for strength to kill our inner demons. And then let us make a promise to change FOREVER ameen

We all know what our individual weaknesses are, what those habits are that enslave us to shaitan, what destruction which things are causing in our lives. Let us give those things up today

And ask Allah s.w.t to put us back on the Straight Path, on His Sirat e Mustaqeem. Let us take that one step. And watch as He takes three far-reaching ones and takes us in His Mercy and Loving embrace—AMEEN

[Aug, 28, 2011; 11 likes]

271. Being a true believer means obedience in worship, abstaining from evil and perfecting one's manners (akhlaq). This dua highlights the MORAL TRAITS, CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOUR that we must strive for--and reminds us that there is much that we need to work on in our personalities. Thus we are advised to ask for the help of Allah s.w.t on the powerful night of Lailatul Qadr to make us how He wishes us to be HOW DOES A TRUE BELIEVER RESPOND TO SOMEONE WHO HURTS THEM? Imam Zainul Abedin a.s shows us in this beautiful

passage:

9 O God,

bless Muhammad and his Household

and point me straight to

resist him who is dishonest toward me

with good counsel,

repay him who separates from me

with gentle devotion,

reward him who deprives me

with free giving,

recompense him who cuts me off

with joining,

oppose him who slanders me

with excellent mention,

give thanks for good,

and shut my eyes to evil!

IT IS NOT EASY TO BE KIND TO THOSE WHO HURT US. No doubt it is one of the hardest things to do--and that is why Allah s.w.t promises the reward of paradise to those who restrain anger, refute evil with goodness and love His creatures regardless of whether they are lovable or not. Consider this beautiful Hadith E Qudsi when Allah s.w.t reminds us how our morals and behaviours should be:

indeed you are not good to a person, unless he is good to you.

and you are not kind to your relatives, unless they are good to you. and you do not talk to a person, unless he talks to you.

and you do not feed a person, unless he feeds you.

and you are not just to a person, unless he is just to you.

and you do not respect a person, unless he respects you.

no one is superior over the another. indeed, the believers are:
those who believe in allah and his messengers,
do good to those who are bad to them,
are kind to those who break ties of relationship with them,
give to those who do not give to them,
just to those who are unjust to them,
talk to those who isolate themselves from them,
respectful to those who don't respect them
[Aug, 24, 2011; 21 likes]

272. Tell your spouse you care about them. The example of the marriage of bibi Khadija a.s and the Holy Prophet s.a.w is a model for us to follow--to be always supportive and to always be appreciative of each other's efforts. They have shown us love comes with sacrifice, understanding, steadfast belief in each other Marriage has so many dimensions and requires so much of an individual. The maturity, selflessness, forgiveness and compassion it requires of a human being is so huge that it is no wonder that the 2 rakat prayed by a married person has more value (according to hadith of the Holy Prophet s.a.w) than an unmarried one. The challenges are immense, and therefore the rewards are greater.

The book I have recommended in the link is one of the best ones I have read about the kind of wife and husband this prolific couple in Islamic history was. It shows us more than the wealth bibi Khadija a.s shared (which is a huge generosity in itself) but also shows the love her husband reciprocated her with. He always spoke of her lovingly, cried years after her death (much to the chagrin of some wives who were surprised that he had so much love for her that he even loved her relatives and friends--because they reminded him of her-- when they would come to his door)

such a marriage cannot happen overnight. It is not like magic. Yes, the initial attraction to the goodness of a person sustains us for a while, but after that is a lot of hard work to keep loving them despite realizing they are ordinary after all.

Theirs was a marriage which exuded respect, sympathy and a deep knowledge of each other's motives/goals/values/dreams/challenges and much more. There must have been a lot of communication there. And a lot of expression of love. Here is a description of a slice of their life from the book by Razawy (may Allah s.w.t bless him--I had the honour of meeting him. He was a gentle, humble soul and passed away of cancer. I stood by his hospital bed and all he did was give us duas and advice)

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" As soon as he stepped out of his house, he put himself in the line of fire. The pagans tormented him with their invectives and they hurt him with their hands. Bristling with difficulties as his work was, rowdy and uncouth neighbors made it even more difficult. But as soon as he entered his house, Khadija greeted him with a smile that routed all his sorrows. She spoke words of cheer, hope and comfort and all his anxieties and fears vanished.

Khadija's smiles and her words acted like a balm upon the wounds which the idolaters inflicted upon Muhammed every day. And every day Khadija revived his spirits and restored his morale. Her cheerfulness "cushioned" for him the devastating pressures of external events, and he was able to face his enemies again with new confidence. The only happiness that he ever found in those years of horror and terror, was when he was with Khadija. Sorrows and tribulations came in waves, one after another, threatening to overwhelm him, but she was always there to rebuild his courage and resolution in overcoming them. She was, for him, a psychological "shield" against the trauma of the constantly escalating violence of the Quraysh.

Khadija had the same sense of mission as Muhammed had, and she was just as eager as he was to see Islam triumph over paganism. To her eagerness to see the triumph of Islam, she added commitment and power. This she did by freeing her husband from the necessity of making a living. She thus enabled him to focus all his attention, all his physical energy, and all his time to the advancement of Islam. This is a most significant contribution she made to the work of her husband as messenger of God. She was the fulcrum that he needed, in the words of A Yusuf Ali, "all through his years of preparation." The years before the Proclamation of Islam, were his "years of preparation" for the prophethood."

MY DEAR FRIENDS, what BIBI KHADIJA DID IS EVIDENT HERE, helped give him the confidence the support he needed to go out there each day after facing so much heartbreak and rejection. She built a fortress within which there was love to gave him safety. She helped him prepare for the work ahead... The love expressed by a husband is so precious. And our Holy Prophet s.a.w not only described bibi Khadija's qualitties to others but also has shown us how a husband must appreciate the efforts of his wife. His words illustrate that he was always aware of how she stood by him, and how this was an act of "ehsaan" towards him.

Muhammed Mustafa said: Allah never gave me a better wife than Khadija. She believed in me at a time when other people denied me. She put all her wealth at my service when other people withheld theirs from me. Allah gave me children through Khadija."

(notice how he honours her by realizing she has given him the gift of children, she has fulfilled all his dreams and he is indebted to her with his heart and soul) A man must honour and publicly respect his wife especially for this gift--that she is the mother of his children

Words of love and appreciation are truly the nourishment a woman needs to keep giving all that

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she can to her husband and family. They act like a magic potion that light up her eyes, fill her heart with even more love and give her unbelievable strength to do more. If you are a man and reading this, see the amazing effects of a few words of love--say them to your wife today and realize the power you have in making her even more loving! Ask for forgiveness, say thank you, say "I love you" and watch the years of bitterness melt away. Words do have that power. Especially for a woman.

For us women, it is important to remember that even men need to hear that they are special. They need to be told they are lovable, attractive and precious to us. It is important to say these things out aloud and to also appreciate the fact that he is a good provider and that his efforts to be a good father, husband or son in law are being noticed and much appreciated. The little things our husbands do (agree to buy something a child wants, play sports with them when tired, say salaam to our mothers lovingly etc) are ALL worthy of mentioning and appreciation. These little things are what make the difficulties of marriage worthwhile--and they must be acknowledged. Say them out loud even if it sounds strange to thank for something so "trivial" and watch the happiness on your spouse's face. They may look embarrassed but those words have touched them. Guaranteed.

Allah s.w.t is so pleased when we love our spouses and do so because He has commanded it, because it please Him and because we want reward only from Him. And He gives back a million-fold for those efforts

It must have been so hard for a wealthy princess, famous in all of Arabia to suffer hardship, ostracism and social exile. Even when she gave birth to bibi Fatema a.s she was alone--the women of Quraish were forbidden to help her. How hurt she must have felt, how lonely. And so Allah s.w.t sent the women of paradise to help her in those moments. This is how Allah s.w.t repays a woman who is true and faithful, always loving and kind.

Bibi Khadjia a.s' s love and sacrifice impressed Allah s.w.t so much so that he sent a special salaam to her in the hands of Jibrael:

"O Messenger of Allah, Khadijah is coming towards you with a bowl of soup and food and drink) for you. When she comes to you, give her greetings of peace from her Lord and from me, and give her the good news of a palace of jewels in the Garden, where there will be neither any noise nor any tiredness."

[Aug, 11, 2011; 27 likes]

273. FB friends--you have shown me the power of the loving word. When I receive your loving responses, your "likes", your comments that show that you have been reading my status updates, it gives me so much joy! Meeting many of you at the mosque today and hearing that you appreciate and look forward to my updates was truly incredible! I am indebted to all of you for

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motivating me and for giving me so much love. Feeling so blessed!!!! We have always been taught that Islam considers the act of thanking someone a highly noble and necessary act. I did not understand it's importance as completely as I have now--when I have been able to experience the joy of being thanked, of getting to know that someone was touched by something I wrote, that something I said triggered something positive in them and made them do a good deed.

I have realized that a positive word of encouragement can make a person want to do more and more positive things, that it can make their whole life worth living. Truly, we do have the power to change a life with a positive word

Knowing that people want to read about Islam, feeling the love that people have for the Ahlul bait a.s is sooo wonderful. I am always worried that no one will have the time to read what I write, always afraid I will overwhelm/overload with all the amazing things I want to share. But when I see your responses, I feel so reassured that there ARE people out there who ARE enthused to read these updates. It gives me so much joy knowing there are good people like you out there--that there are people who won't get bored when you start talking about God.

When you click on like or express appreciation for these updates, you are actually clicking "like" for Islam. And that is an amazing, wonderful out of this world feeling to experience.

God bless you all--thank you all for being so wonderful and making me feel like I have a huge extended family out there to share so much with.

with duas shyrose

[Aug, 3, 2011; 31 likes]

274. Control our anger. "Those who spend (benevolently) in ease as well as in straitness, and those who restrain (their) anger and pardon men; and Allah loves the doers of good (to others)" (3:134) From this day on-wards let us keep our anger in check and think before we speak and react. So many of our relationships would be in better shape if we had just controlled our anger (regardless of whether it was justified or not) Let us exercise control over our anger with those who are nearest and dearest to us. Love and charity must begin at home. Let us bite our tongue when we want to retort a snappy comeback. Let us breathe and think for a moment before saying anything. Let us choose our words carefully. Let us pick our battles--and then just decide to put down our weapons.

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Let us be extra loving and kind to our spouses, our parents, our children, our relatives and all those who we come into contact with us. This is what Islam is all about--that we spread happiness around us and that no one, and not even a thing (plant, object etc) is injured because of us. Let those who see us and know us feel safe in our presence and safe in trusting their hearts and souls to us.

[Aug, 3, 2011; 35 likes]

275. When I was a teenager I made a long list of things I was especially thankful for in my life. I kept this list in my prayer mat and when it was time to do my tasbeeh, I would first read the list and then proceed to say "allahu Akbar" "alhamdulillah" "subhanallah" bringing visions of happy things in my life into my mind's eye. This practice became so special for me that I no longer needed my list, and the items on it would come into my consciousness whenever I did my tasbeeh. Eventually I could invoke the list at any time of the day! This not only made me thankful all the time but also made me feel intense joy and enthusiasm for being alive and so blessed.

I share this because the practice had a profound effect on me--inshallah it might inspire. Surely, it is the little things like this in life that can have a huge impact and enhance one's spirituality bringing one closer to Allah s.w.t

[Aug, 2, 2011; 34 likes]

276. As we look forward to tasty food and special family recipes that we especially get treated to in the Holy Month of Ramadhan, let us take a moment to reflect on the fact that the ENTIRE Muslim family on this planet will ALSO be fasting--those in abject poverty, earthquake/flood/war-stricken areas and yes orphans and single-parent families who sit right beside us at the mosque. Let us begin this month with CHARITY Let us help those families prepare for Ramadhan too--so that they too can eat meat, sweets and food that satisfies their hunger. It is reported that many such families sleep hungry after breaking their fast. That often the men of the family are given the bigger portions for they need energy to earn the bread for the family. That many of these families eat meat only once a year because it is so expensive.

[July, 30, 2011; 44 likes]

267. Oh Allah, I beg of you to guard over my tongue and give me the self-restraint to stop it from hurting any of your creatures. A few hurtful words said even in jest take just a few seconds to utter but can leave a lifetime of hurt in someone's heart. Let us walk into and past people's lives treading softly as if their hearts are lined with rose petals that can be crushed if we step too harshly....

[Jul, 24, 2011; 47 likes]

277. To all the youth who attended 16 yr old Sabrina's funeral today--your presence, your tears, your sad faces touched all of us so much. God bless you for attending, for paying your respects, for your prayers. For some of you it was the first time you had ever stepped into a mosque and

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even though you did not know what to expect, you conducted yourselves so respectfully If Sabrina's death has caused us to reflect upon our own lives and inspired us to prepare for our own hereafter, then her death will not have been in vain--for God will reward her for being the cause of our seeking nearness to Him. Let us not waste a moment to make a positive mark on this earth and to strive to earn God's pleasure. Let us cherish our parents and receive their blessings--for their prayers for us are the best intercession we could ever ask for (after the Holy Prophet's). Let us ask for forgiveness from all (especially our parents) let us connect with God and let us live each day as if it is our last (by giving to others, by doing good deeds, by not hurting a soul) For we all have come from God and to Him we must all return, very soon, to account for our time on earth. As parents we end up taking a lot of guilt for what happens to our children and it is not always justified. It is so hard to watch our children every moment of the day.

Sometimes they get injured right in front of our eyes and we cannot do a thing to stop it. I remember when my daughter fell off the monkey bars (she was 4 yrs old) and i could not save her--she got stitches and i cried more than she did because I felt so responsible. I have even been in the water with my children and been unable to get there in time to save them from losing their footing (inside the water) My husband had to dive in and rescue (my 2 kids had gone a bit far from my reach despite my warnings and I had the baby in my arms in the water)

Drowning can happen in seconds (as it said in the article, it took the gentleman 30 seconds to go after the teens but it was too late, they were gone under so fast) These types of occurrences happen more often than we realize We have to really be extra-cautious with children and teens as they can be impulsive but even in the best of circumstances tragedies can occur--the water can suddenly become choppy, we can drift too far from shore, we can get caught in a whirlpool etc. May Allah s.w.t keep all of us in His Protection and Mercy and give sabr to the grieving parents of these young teens ameen

[Jul, 21, 2011; 26 likes]

278. Alhamdulillah back in town from a hectic weekend of presenting at NASIMCO conference, participating in executive meetings, facilitating a workshop on "Women's Involvement in Regional jamaat work" and a powerpoint lecture on findings from our project on Women's Needs in the Community. And now back to housework, children and preparing for wedding houseguests and upcoming majlises. LOL A woman's work is NEVER done!!

[Jul, 27, 2011; 32 likes]

279. years ago, when i was a young teenager, my father was walking by my room and caught me and my sisters laughing uproariously over some silly joke. He stood there and watched us for a while and then he said "this is all I want. for you all to be happy in my home, to feel safe, carefree and content. Always laugh like this--it makes me so happy" And really, that was the essence of what my father, who had 4 daughters (and one son) worked for all his life. He lived to make us happy....

May Allah s.w.t make HIM happy in his grave, in barzakh and in his afterlife. He was a gem of a man. Never spoke harshly at us, never hit us, never belittled us. And most of all--HE LOVED OUR MOM. And that increased our respect for him. For the best gift a father can give to his

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children is to love their mother--it makes the whole home such a fantastic place to be in. My young friends, please remember to SMILE when you are around your parents. It gives us soooo much pleasure to know that our children are HAPPY. I know you have hormones that make you moody and the sulky face is not because of us, but STILL it grieves us when we see our daughters, our sons angry all the time or hurt or bitter. These carefree days of your youth are days of sunshine. Please be happy, enjoy these moments while the responsibilities are lesser than what they will be as you get into highschool, university, jobs, marriage, kids etc. When we see you burdened with the troubles of the world weighing your little shoulders, when we see you angry--and then you take your anger out on us. It hurts. It really hurts.

[Jun, 20, 2011; 44 likes]

280. Subhanallah, my life is full of miracles and blessings. I ended up taking my mom to the hairdresser (for a facial and hair style) instead of doing major urgent spring cleaning (houseguests expected soon) on Wednesday (wiladat of Imam Ali a.s). The VERY next day, God sent me helpers (all strangers) who did such incredible work (heavy lifting, assembly of furniture etc) IT WAS LIKE A MAGIC WAND!!! Truly, when we make our parents happy and put a smile on their faces--the rewards are UNBELIEVABLE! I spent the entire day picking up mom, dropping her back home, buying her lunch etc. I knew I was doing a good deed but visions of my messy home and the lack of time I had remaining to do my work made me feel as if I had "wasted" my day. I was disheartened imagining how much I had left to do....

I never imagined that all that I had set out to do AND MORE! would be accomplished--AND I WOULD NOT HAVE TO LIFE A FINGER!!! I found a phone number and dialed....The 18 yr old young man who helped me was an incredible sight to behold--he carried ENTIRE cupboards (which would take 4 people to carry) by HIMSELF!!! Down the stairs!!! His father assembled furniture and did repairs in the house that would take DAYS to do. I was watching a miracle unfold in front of me!! I went out for a few errands and came home to see MIRACLES!! I am not kidding! I had to do a sajdah in thankfulness!!!

Truly, the reward from Allah s.w.t comes in tenfold. Our limited thinking imagines one reward for one deed but God gives beyond and above what we deserve, every single time. And the intention we had in our heart when we did the deed is WHAT COUNTS THE MOST. When it is for the pleasure of Allah s.w.t then ALL that we do becomes infused with barkat, with blessings Allahs s.w.t says that not one good deed, not even the size of a mustard seed will be ignored in the account taking.

Let us continue to do good deeds, and especially make our parents happy. The rewards and satisfaction are IMMENSE!!!

Mom looked so great and was so happy on the birthday of her beloved Imam Ali a.s--I didn't have the heart to say no to her request. And Allah s.w.t filled that heart with happiness and rewarded me so much that I am humbled in realization of how generous He is. Truly He is the

GREATEST Because we are here to make you smile. We have done that since you were babies and did not even know what a smile was!! We clowned around, made funny faces and noises all for you to break into your sunshine smiles Now that you are older, you smile less and less. And we worry it is because we have done something to hurt you. We worry that we cannot take your pain away. We worry we cannot protect you. We worry that something really awful has happened Father's Day, Mother's Day, Eid or whatever it is, the biggest gift you can give us is to look at us with love. To not snap at us at the smallest provocation. To not be irritated when we forget something or don't buy what you had asked. Please smile. Please be happy. Please let us make these few moments we spend together in life COUNT and be great memories we can remember together with affection My father has passed away now for 18 years. And I would give anything to call out "daddy" to someone. To hear him call me (something which used to irritate me as it meant he wanted something) But I have our memories. The way he loved me, the way he stroked my head, the way he would blush if i ever dared to kiss him, the way he would ask me if all was well with his soft, concerned voice. And thank God I loved him back during those times, thank God i brought him a glass of water or smiled at him or sat with him for a few minutes as he ate (after a long day at work) if i had not been a good daughter, how would i spend all these years after his death? how would i look in the mirror and face myself? how would i look back with a smile?PLEASE love your parents. Smile at them. Be the best you can be. I say this not as a preacher or even your mom (yes i know my kids are reading this) But as a daughter who has been there, done that. May Allah s.w.t give us the courage, the wisdom to be the best kids we can be. HAPPY FATHER'S DAY!!!!!!

[Jun, 17, 2017; 29 likes]

281. It was such a fantastic day at the spa with my mom and sister and then an evening with my husband and 3 children. Alhamdulillah!! God is so kind to me! I don't know how to thank Him for all that He blesses me with!! Shukrallah! Had a FABULOUS Mother's Day by treating my mom and sister to a day at Armaan Spa (9000 Bathurst--inside Jaffari Islamic centre) They had a manicure, pedicure, waxing, threading, haircut and style--the WORKS!!! We ordered from Salaam cafe and the food was fabulous (zanzibari mix, shawarma, burgers) Thank you Shaina, Amal, Mansura aunty, Sayeda and Mehjabeen for your kind and courteous service, friendly attitude and hard work. We can't wait to come back! The coffee, juices in champagne glasses, fancy refreshments and roses for all moms were a perfect touch to a perfect day. Can't wait to come back!!!

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[May, 9, 2011; 28 likes]





282. My dearest Bibi Fatema a.s, I love you! I want to thank you for teaching me what is hijab. When I leave the house, I ask myself if you would be pleased with my dressing if we met outside my door. And I conduct myself accordingly. The barkat and peace of wearing the hijab has changed my life. I feel blessed! I am proud of myself--my clothing says "I obey my Lord. I submit to His command"

ya bibi Zahra a.s---please accept my efforts. I feel ashamed to even say your pure name with my sinful tongue. I want so much to be worthy enough to even say your name, for you to be pleased with me...

Please know that I want with all my heart to please you so that on the day of judgement, you will call out to me and say to Allah s.w.t: "she is one of my students, one of my followers. She is one of MINE!" Inspire me to become worthy of your intercession, bibi.

Ya Allah, forgive me for those times when I have not been modest, when I have transgressed, when I did not understand that my beauty is a gift from you that must be preserved. Ya Allah, inspire me, guide me, show me how to conduct myself as a true follower of your deen. And help me understand, with love and true faith, the true modesty as practiced by the ultimate Role Model of women, bibi Fatema Zahra a.s

[May, 6, 2011; 57 likes]

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283. The best thing my mother did for me was to ALWAYS praise me--in detail-- and she would tell me each and every thing that she liked about me. This encouraged me, motivated me and made me want to out-do my own achievements! She did this without ever criticizing me, comparing me to others or making me feel inadequate

FB FRIENDS, WOULD LOVE TO HEAR WHAT AMAZING QUALITY OF YOUR MOM HAS HELPED YOU BE THE SUCCESS YOU ARE: my mom always hugged us. She still does. The warmth of a mother's touch, the caress of her hand over one's head, her lap under one's head--is unlike any other comfort in the world. It makes all the troubles in the world just slip away. I am indebted to her for all the comfort she continues to give me. May Allah s.w.t bless her with all her heart desires, ameen

[May, 2, 2011; 28 likes]

284. As the days commemorating the life of bibi Fatema a.s wind down and Mother's day approaches, I find myself marveling at the example of the Lady of Light who managed to be such an amazing mother in her short life. I ask myself if I have done justice to this role that Allah s.w.t has blessed me with... Motherhood has been the most challenging role in my life. Allah s.w.t has blessed me with much opportunity in life--all types of achievements. And I have pushed the limits of my talents in many difficult endeavours. But nothing, nothing can compare to what motherhood has asked of me. It has asked me to give every little ounce of strength, virtue, quality and skill in me.

I share this especially because we can be so hard on our parents. It is so easy to blame them for our inadequacies, our emotional traumas, our negative memories. Somehow, their imperfection gives us reason to criticize.

Now that I am a mother, I realize how human we all are. Especially mothers. I look back at the "mothering" I have done over the last 14 years (and with 3 children aged 14, 12 and 5) and I cringe at how much my children can hold against me already. And much as I wish I could defend myself, I know that it doesn't undo the damage one can cause as a parent.

There is much more I want to say here. But first, I want us all to take a moment to make a pledge to be better mothers. To realize we have these innocent lives that are looking up to us for guidance, love, understanding and knowledge.

As well, let us take a moment to pledge to be better sons and daughters too. Let us forgive, let us understand that just as we make mistakes, so have our parents. They have personal histories that we may never know about or understand. They may have had shortcomings, lack of knowledge, or certain emotional stages in their lives that made them act a certain way. Just as we do right now.

Let us let go, and look forward. Let us love, cherish and plan for a better relationship. Let us be thankful for these relationships, however imperfect they seem. And let us live each day as a precious one.

Something to consider:

Some reasons why our mothers may have acted a certain way over the years:

SHE WAS:

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1) TIRED

-overworked, exhausted, stressed, overwhelmed by the SHEER WORKLOAD

2) GOING THROUGH EMOTIONAL ISSUES

-going through postpartum depression

3) HAVING MARITAL TROUBLES

-facing marital crisis (details of which she rightly couldn't share with your young heart/ears) this includes in-law trouble, a husband's infidelity, intimacy issues, unresolved conflicts, spouse's anger management issues

4) WORRIED ABOUT MONEY

-dealing with lack of finances, huge debts, husband's unemployment, (details of which she couldn't share with you as well)

5) FEELING UNLOVED

-feeling unappreciated, neglected, abandoned, insulted

6) DEALING WITH MIDLIFE CRISES

-dealing with her own midlife crises--unrealized dreams, career aspirations, lost love

7) CONFLICTED OVER HER OWN CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

-dealing with her own unresolved issues of childhood (abuse, abandonment, sibling rivalry etc) which effected her treatment of you

8) DISAPPOINTED

-her own perfectionist image of her life had been shattered (whether it was over her own ambitions, her husband's choices, the image of a perfect house and perfect children, your career choices, your marriage partner choice, etc etc)

THE POINT IS Mothers are human. They are going through stuff. Some of which we will never know about (ie. her spouse's unfaithfulness etc) Much of how people deal with us is not about US but about THEM.

Often we walk away saying "i was never good enough, she never loved me, she chose my sibling over me, she was never THERE emotionally/physically etc, she was selfish, she pushed me too hard etc" but we must comfort ourselves with the very real possibility that this was often the result of a person's own personal issues

[May, 2, 2012; 21 likes]

285. Easter is an important time to ponder over the life of Prophet Jesus a.s In his lifetime, Jesus NEVER claimed to be a son of God--and this fact is accepted by Christians too. In fact, the Holy Bible refers to other Prophets of God as sons too. The role of Paul of Tarsus in shaping this belief and the belief in Trinity

Paul (originally named Saul), is considered by a number of Christian scholars to be the father of Christianity

He NEVER ACTUALLY LIVED OR MET with Jesus.

The notion of Jesus as son of God is something that was established under the influence of Paul

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of Tarsus who had been an enemy of Jesus, but later changed course and joined the disciples AFTER the departure of Jesus.

The original followers of Prophet Jesus opposed these blatant misrepresentations of the message of Jesus. They struggled to reject the notion of the Divinity of Jesus FOR CLOSE TO 200 years.

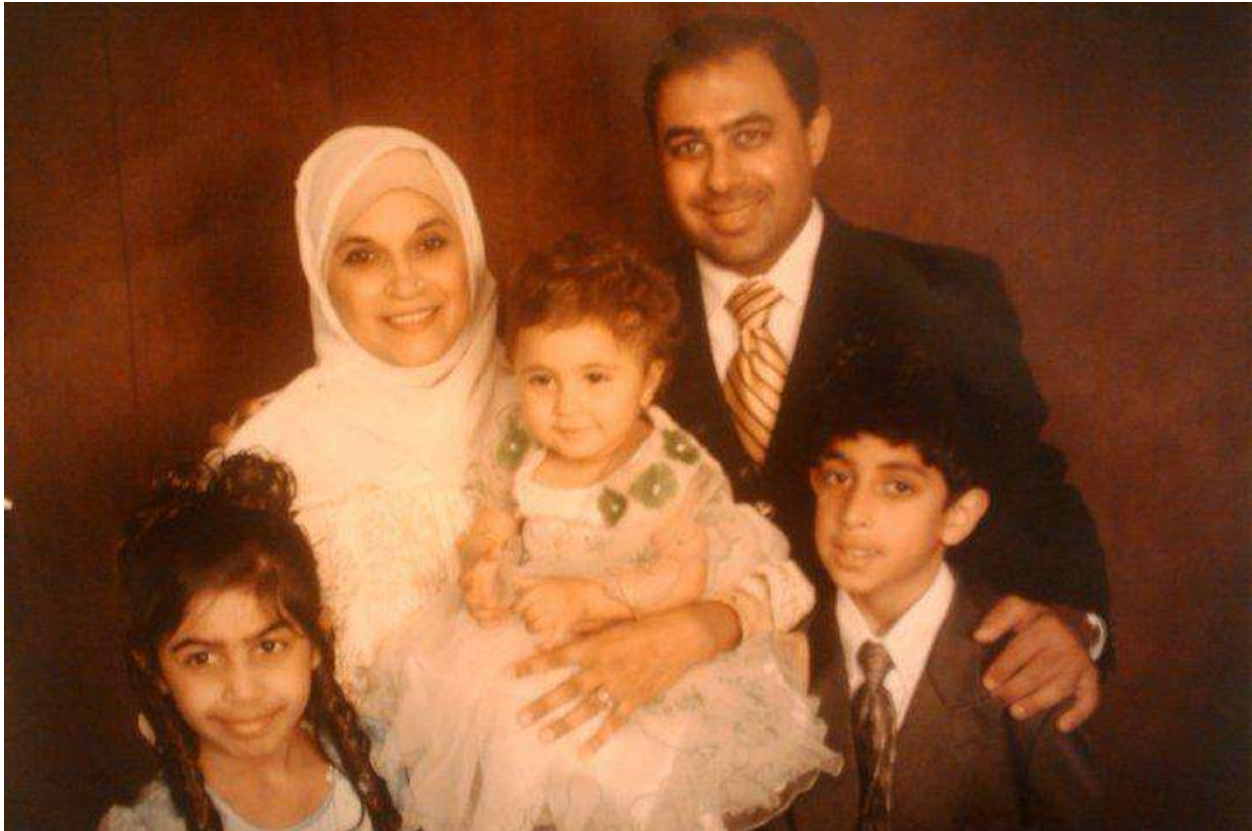
[Apr, 22, 2011; 17 likes]

286. Surgery brought an additional blessing this weekend: I realized what a wonderful husband Allah s.w.t has given me. From trays of healthy food, tea and cut fruit, serving my visitors, bringing medicine and assistance out of bed to feeding our 3 kids, showering our 4 yr old, putting her hair up in pony tails and getting everyone ready for school!!!! Totally unexpected after 17 yrs of marriage!! Shukrallah!

[Jan, 31, 2011; 27 likes]

287. Shukr Allah!! I have returned so rejuvenated, so happy! I have met angels every step of the way! Returning home to my children's tight hugs and the duas of all my loved ones is heaven on earth!! As i survey the mountain-loads of laundry (!! the sticky floors, my children's long-hair and long nails (!! I am thankful that i am needed--that a mother/wife cannot be replaced no matter how many people step in and work their hardest!! My touch has been missed here! And i am forever grateful for that!!!!

[Jan, 5, 2011; 111 likes]

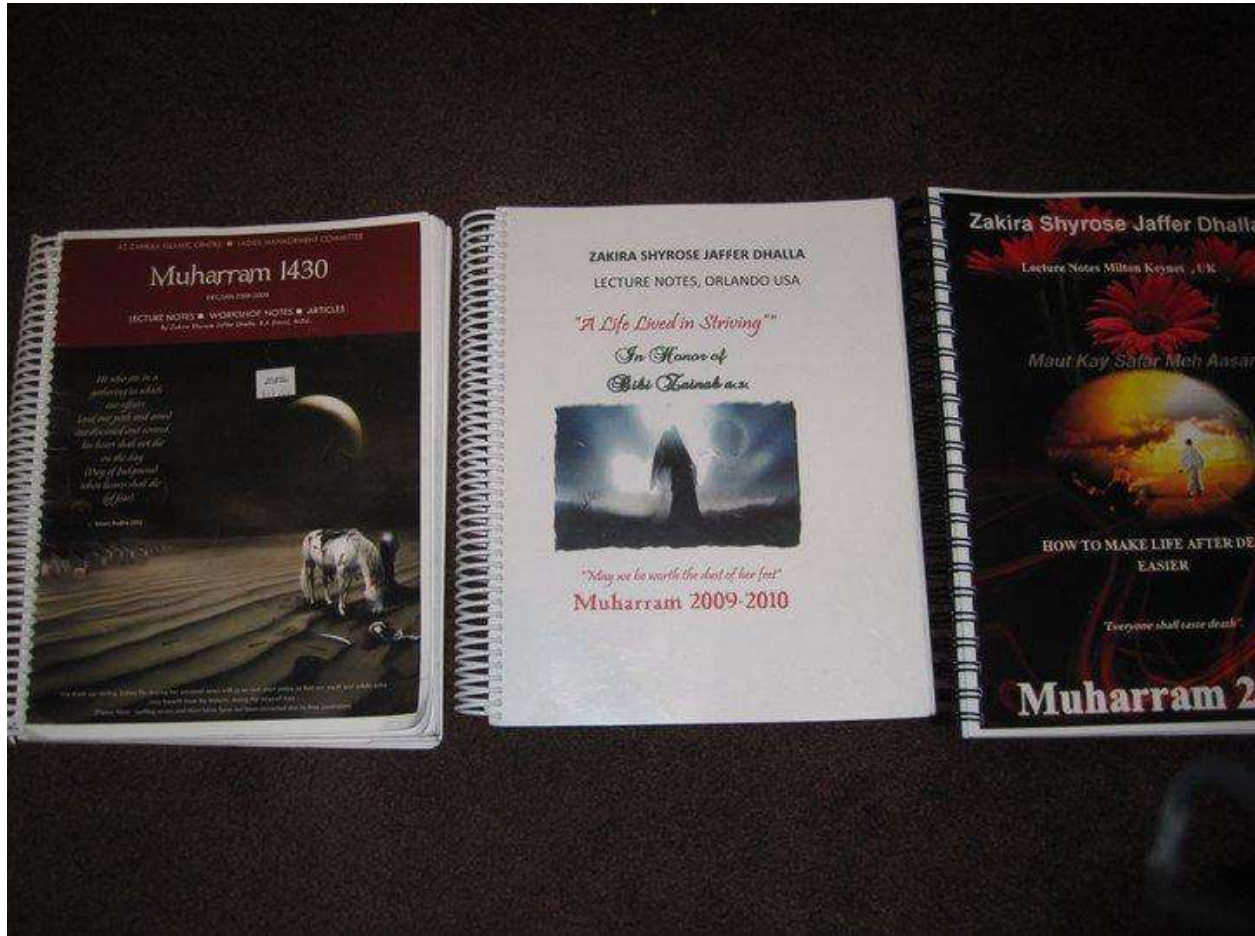


288. ALHAMDULILAH!! My lecture notes for MUHARRAM 2010 have been published. Let me know if you'd like a copy of this year 2010's notes (Milton Keynes, UK) or 2009 (Orlando,

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USA) or 2008 (Vancouver, Canada). Inshallah will mail you a copy for a nominal cost (printing/shipping/handling) God bless the ambassadors of Islam who have undertaken these projects over the years--I am forever indebted to them
[Dec, 31, 2010; 20 likes]



289. Reciting LIVE majlis on TV was an amazing experience and then at London's Stanmore jamaat. Alhamdulillah, the feedback and kindness of the UK community has been overwhelming--it has made me fall in love with England!! I can totally understand why people love it here so much!!!
[Dec, 30, 2011; 2 likes]

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290. I HAD TO SHARE THIS!!!! THE EXIT SIGNS IN UK show a guy running for his LIFE!! And the arrows that indicate straight ahead are actually pointing downwards!!! It's like the sign is saying run for your life and jump NOW into this huge hole right here (ie. the llght) !!! LOL LOL LOL I just can't get over this every time i see it!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
[Dec, 23, 2010;3 likes]



291. Went on the guided tour bus (sat on the open deck and FROZE but it was worth it!) visited the Notre Dam Cathedral (beautiful!!) Visited the Grevin wax museum and "met" George Clooney, Michael Jackson, Shah Rukh Khan etc etc, then walked and walked on the streets and took in the sights, did some shopping. Had coffee at Starbucks (it had chandeliers and intricate, ornate ceilings!!! LOL) then dinner and onto the the cruise (sat inside the glass enclosure but boy

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was it COLD--but very romantic and beautiful to see the lights reflecting on the water etc)
Ended the evening by going to the only tallest building in Paris (56 floors) and enjoyed seeing a Panoramic view of the Eiffel tower and lights of the entire city glimmering around us! Planning to come back in summer weather inshallah! Want to see the Versailles castle and visit the Louvre (ran out of time as we were too jet lagged on our first day to do much!

Heading to the airport in an hour! Off to London!!
[Dec, 1, 2010; 71 likes]



292. Shukrallah! Thank you Allah for this wonderful day of Eid when I wake up to a lovely life with a loving husband and 3 naughty, rambunctious kids! Wonderful siblings, amazing in-laws and a HUGE extended family! Caring friends, every type of material thing I could ever dream of and good health too!! What more could I ask for my Lord? "You are just as I want, so make me just as You like me to be"Imam Ali a.s
[Nov, 17, 2010; 12 likes]

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293. HAVING SUCH AN AMAZING, WONDERFUL TIME IN SEATTLE!! heading to Vancouver today! Will miss our hosts who made our trip so unforgettable and gave us a royal, red carpet treatment! We have been enjoying the sights, the food, the company and the lovely people--totally loving the city!!! If you ever visit Seattle--make sure you do the Duck tours! The guides are total hyped up, stand-up comedians who sing, do impressions, play loud music and make passers-by stop and take OUR pictures instead of the other way around!!!

OMG the mountains are majestic, the landscape changes every few seconds and it is GLORIOUSLY beautiful!!! We went to a place called Leavenworth where they have decorated the place to look like a Bavarian village. It is sooo beautiful, totally nestled in the mountains and full of cutesy gift shops, people walking around in Bavarian clothes and artists painting the sights. Awesome!!!!!!!

[Oct, 13, 2010; 6 likes]

294. My faith in the goodness of people increases everyday. Just witnessed the generosity of our community members when they came forward to help fellow humans who need our emotional and financial support. Feel overwhelmed when I see such goodness and it makes me want to do sajda of thankfulness to Allah for inspiring love in the hearts of people. What a beautiful world, what an amazing Lord we have!

[Jan; 17, 2010; 3 likes]Top of Form
