

While Waiting

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Article

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I met her in the Masjid. No planning had taken me to that Masjid that night. It was just a matter of persuasion of my newly made friend at another Masjid that I should experience Du'a-e Kumail at this Masjid.

Our introduction was simple and short. Then wrapped in her white cotton chadar, which veiled her face, she busied herself with a long prayer. Sitting by her side, I heard her sober sobbing. We shared the booklet for the Du'a Kumail.

At some point she retired back into her chadar, cut away from the book and all else, she sobbed helplessly. Patiently, I sat by her as she was busied with a prayer once again, to know her a little before I was to leave the town. Mission was accomplished.

Within the weeks to come, my duties took me back to her town. It was during the Iftars that I would learn about her more. Energetic as a youth, warm and kind as a mother, I grew very fond of her. A physician, and a mother, she was recently back from Iran. It wasn't her country of birth.

She was a well established physician in the US at that time. She believe in Imam (ra) and his cause. Thus she left everything behind and went to be a helping hand. Not knowing the language, or anyone, was not enough of an alienation as was the active nationalistic attitudes of the people who were suspicious of her intents for coming from the US.

Disregarding all the alienation, and seeking comfort in her family of three she continued working and training for a very small fraction of what, I assume, she would get paid (financially) here. She had done her Hijra for the sake of Allah, neither respect nor business.

She chose Mashhad, to be at the side of her beloved Imam, to pay him frequent visitations in the little time she would get from her busy schedule. Her friends; other 'foreigners', who were there for the same cause from other parts of the world, volunteers awaiting, actively, the reappearance of the awaited one (aaf).

She would teach me prayers that I didn't know, guide me through the a'maal of Qadr night. Her goal, she had alluded was not to be a rebellious one to God. And in our spare moments, she would tell me her accounts that had not been heard before. Accounts of courage, faith, hope, and sincerity of those she had come to interact with.

I shall never forget that moment, when sitting by the wall she had no strength to hold her cup of tea as, her voice shattered and drops of tears embraced her sad face, as she described the enthusiasm of the

youth who would go for the cause, the courage of the families of the Shuhada. For what, she asked, so that they would be forgotten by a comfort seeking nation? She knew the answer, and I assumed that I knew it too.

Her question, and now our question was what to do now in waiting. Homeless, and very little or no particular country pulling us, we both felt at an advantage as well as a disadvantage. It gives us a less difficult time to choose where to invest our efforts, meanwhile it has the potential of diluting efforts for the same reason. But then, I realized that this is the reality of the lives of many Muslims residing in this country. And now the question became very prominent:

What are we to do now?

Driving back home, I had an answer for myself: 'exactly what she did.' Await, with no ties to here, there, this or that. A responsible human being, she didn't live a passive life. She objected to what seemed wrong in her judgement, taught youth in the Madrasa, involved herself in the despised communities other than her 'own', didn't take part in the division of Muslims, nor was she a conformist.

That is what gave her the courage to leave every comfort and 'security' behind, to go help 'others', or 'self' with little disappointment at the lack of appreciation, and in the face of painful alienation. For what she did, she considered it a duty, no one had to thank her for it. She had to thank Allah for giving her the opportunity to serve Him (swt).

Yes, to consciously await as she did/does, the thought remained with me as the objects outside the car, my immediate environment, lagged behind as it sped towards my destination.

Contributed by Mahwash Hirmendi, mhirmend@opal.tufts.edu [2] . An excerpt from "My Sisters"

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