

My Co-Mother-in-Law: Safia Khawaja Sahiba

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Relationships between co-mothers-in-law are often not mentioned positively.

It often reminds people of disputes, arguments, or at the very least, unpleasant words.

However, by the grace of God, I was saved from such an experience.

I had a co-mother-in-law who was not only my namesake but also shared similar thoughts.

I feel like writing about her virtues to refresh her memory.

My co-mother-in-law, Safia Khawaja Sahiba,

was the daughter of the late Muhammad Asghar Lone and the late Maimtaz Begum Lone.

She was born on March 3, 1947, in Tanzania.

Her family, comprising six brothers and six sisters, had lived in Tabora for a long time.

In my paternal family, my uncles had moved to Nairobi, East Africa, even before I was born.

My father also went there to be with them for work after the Partition.

My father frequently traveled between Africa and our home.

In those days, it wasn't common to send money through banks or money orders.

Instead, my father would often send money through acquaintances traveling from Africa to Pakistan.

Many visitors from Africa would come to our house, and we loved hosting them.

Among these guests, Sheikh Mubarak Ahmad (a preacher) and Muhammad Asghar Lone's family were regulars.

In those days, the journey from Africa to Pakistan was by ship and took about 10 to 15 days.

Passengers would travel from Mombasa to Karachi and then continue by train (Chenab Express) to Rabwah.

Once, when my father planned a trip to Pakistan, Asghar Lone's wife and children coincidentally traveled on the same ship.

Asghar Lone requested my father to look after his family during the journey.

Thus, my father spent several days on the ship with Lone's family.

The Lone children started calling my father 'Uncle from the Ship,' which became his nickname in their family.

When the situation in East Africa changed, most families migrated to London, Canada, or the USA.

My father held a British passport and moved to London.

My brother and mother also relocated there.

We Ahmadis, wherever we go, first seek out other community members.

This is how I met Safia Khawaja.

Our introduction was delightful, and we embraced each other warmly.

She was Asghar Lone's daughter and remembered my father as 'Uncle from the Ship.'

My father used to travel from Putney to Green Street just to buy vegetables from her store, simply because it belonged to the daughter of his friend, Safia.

He would tell her husband, Khawaja Sahib,

'This store is blessed because of this hardworking girl, Safia.'

Khawaja Sahib would smile and agree.

After some time, Safia and her husband transitioned from the vegetable business to the clothing trade.

Safia and I developed a close friendship.

She considered it her duty to drive me to Lajna meetings in her car.

Whenever she visited our house, she would bring her adorable little daughter with two ponytails.

For about four years, we lived near each other and stayed in contact.

Later, we moved to Surbiton, and life continued with our children's engagements.

I married off my four children,

but then my husband Sami Sahib suddenly fell ill and passed away.

The grief affected me deeply.

I lived with my youngest son, Okasha, who was still a student.

I thought about arranging his marriage to bring some life back into our home.

One day at a wedding, a friend pointed out a girl and suggested her for my son.

I asked whose daughter she was and learned she was Safia Khawaja's.

Memories of her as a little girl with ponytails holding her mother's hand flashed before my eyes.

I prayed and sent a proposal to my sister, Safia Khawaja.

She was delighted to hear it.

Our families, having known each other for years, were overjoyed by the match.

The marriage took place, and a new bond of love was established between our families.

Safia advised her daughter to ensure that her mother-in-law (me) would never shed tears because of her.

When she visited our house, she would bring bags of food,

tell me to relax, and take over the kitchen chores.

I often told my daughter-in-law, Arooge, that it wasn't fair for her mother to work here,

but Safia found joy in serving others.

She was a generous host, welcoming both her own relatives and her in-laws.

She was like a nurturing tree, providing shade to everyone.

She never missed an opportunity to help others.

Safia was an active member of the Redbridge South Jama'at,
devoting her time to religious duties.

Her husband, Khawaja Sahib, also served the Jama'at, often managing the kitchen at gatherings.

They contributed regularly to charity and never let anyone leave empty-handed.

Despite her responsibilities, Safia often visited us, even if it required changing multiple trains.

Unfortunately, her health declined due to her husband's illness.

He had undergone two open-heart surgeries,
and she would often tearfully ask me to pray for him.

She remained dedicated to him, not letting him drive alone.

Eventually, God relieved her of all her worries and called her back.

The couple had been blessed with both prosperity and generosity.

They kept their home open to all and were affectionate parents and grandparents.

Safia once purchased shrouding fabric for me from her store.

When I insisted on paying for it, she finally accepted.

We had promised to assist each other's families in the event of our passing.

However, she left before me, breaking that promise.

Shortly before her death, Safia attended a wedding in Pakistan.

After returning to London, she experienced severe abdominal pain and was diagnosed with late-stage cancer.

Despite the shock, she calmly reassured her children and husband, saying she had lived a fulfilling life and was at peace.

She passed away on April 15, 2024,

and her funeral was led by Murrabi Zawar Butt Sahib on April 18, 2024, at Roding Lane Cemetery.

Many community members and non-Ahmadi friends attended to pay their respects.

Khalifatul Masih V (aba) graciously led her funeral prayer in absentia on June 29, 2024.

This was a great honor for her.

Her virtues and services were recorded in Al Fazl International on August 13, 2024.

May Allah elevate her status. Ameen.