

I am blessed to know Kazi bhai.

Introduced by a friend some years ago, I knew that he was special from our first conversation.

Kazi bhai was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer more than 12 years ago while he was studying a Masters at University. Originally from Dhaka, he lives alone in a flat not far from his campus. Throughout my life, I have not met anyone who has embodied such depth in good character and proactivity, of which I would like to highlight five characteristics.

## **1. The most charitable smile**

Despite removal of most of his lung and a number of ribs during treatment, which undoubtedly causes immense physical pain, I always remember Kazi bhai's smile. His capability to recognise that life is full of beauty enables him to live his life to its fullest potential. Rarely does he share any insights into his personal pains, instead deciding to share his radiant smile and learnings with everyone he meets.

I love those who can smile in trouble, who gather strength from distress and grow brave by reflection.

Leaving his good company, I remain amazed at the potential of human spirit and ask myself what reason I have to turn a smile into a frown. Every time I leave his company, I begin to appreciate how much you can give to others through a smile. The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Every good deed is charity. Verily, it is a good deed to meet your brother with a cheerful face..." [Sunan al-Tirmidhi 1970]

## **2. Wounds turned to wisdom**

Kazi bhai has an insatiable desire for knowledge, whether related to his medical condition or his spiritual state. Having worked in the health profession, I began to appreciate early on how much research and insight he had gleaned from independent reading, personal interactions and deep reflection.

Moving between local hospitals, private care centres globally, UCL cancer institute and the UK's largest specialist heart and lung medical centre at Royal Brompton, he acquired medical acumen seldom achieved by qualified clinicians. At each opportunity, he cross-examines consultants and recommends they gain further detail from scans and results often

times resulting in them changing their diagnosis and recommendation. On a visit to Royal Brompton, I personally witnessed his mobile pharmacy stuffed into a suitcase with a range of medicines and equipment, which he would use to moderate his condition, without reliance on others.

He is prolific at sharing his knowledge with online forums and engagements with other patients, advising and guiding with his wise approach, despite his relatively young years. I always liken him to Doogie Howser M.D. - a TV show of a fictitious boy genius which I recollected from a young age.

When I would visit at his flat, he would share reflections from Islamic scholars, ahadith which he had memorised and often complete my stories from a tafseer class or khutba which had recently been delivered.

### **3. Record-breaking optimism**

UCL enlisted Kazi bhai as a research case due to the complexity of his condition and his resilience through numerous treatments. He received more than 80 radio and chemotherapy treatments, far surpassing the Guinness world record for the most treatments ever received. He had flown to India for private treatment and travelled the UK meeting global consultants, and he can still pinpoint conversations, dates and details from many years prior.

Throughout his travels, he is always optimistic and even the Prophet said, "I am amazed by optimism, the good word, the kind word." [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 5422, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2223] Without complaint he truly believes that there is no illness without a cure and has set out to find it, despite early prognoses from leading consultants.

He is living proof that in this world there is no such force as the force of a man determined to rise - his indomitable human spirit is powered by a deep conviction in Allah(SWT). It is this belief that enables him to look through fear and adversity, neither dwelling unduly on the past or accepting others opinions of the future, rather he trailblazes his own path, despite it never being trodden before.

### **4. Superhero grit - courage and resolve**

It is a rarity to witness increasing courage in the face of increasing challenge. Most of us are fuelled by our environment and friends who keep us motivated and keen. Despite not

having the ability to socialise extensively due to his personal circumstance, it seems every time I meet him he has progressed to a higher level of resolve and determination.

This grit is founded in hope - trust that Allah(SWT) truly is greater than any creation and a belief that He(SWT) has placed us on this earth for success, not defeat.

Driven by a passion to learn, grow and succeed, every day and moment presents an opportunity and his daily workout only increases exceeding the size of the challenge which any other person would be overwhelmed by. Superheroes are never perfect, but they are authentic, often discreet and continue to display true bravery.

## **5. Dependence on Allah(SWT), not others**

Most of his adult life, Kazi bhai has lived alone. With hardly any family in the UK, until recently he looked after himself, speaking to his dear mother and siblings via video-chat regularly.

Every time I ask him if he needs anything, he shows gratitude but politely remains aloof. He is always welcoming whenever I call or visit him, which is often irregular and spaced out, due to life's commitments and forgetfulness. It is only of late that I have received a call from him and often its a chance conversation from common friends which awakens me to the fact he has been admitted into hospital again.

For the last year or so, he has had limited human contact due to the risk of spreading infection and when his lungs collapsed recently, this put real challenges to his personal independence but he continues to make his own choices.

Kazi bhai has taught me what it means to be a man, through his example, gentle character and boundless strength.

Muhammad ibn al-Nadr (RA) would say that "The first part of manhood is a cheerful face. The second part is loving kindness to people." [al-Mujālah wa Jawāhir al-'Ilm 828] I have experienced both at the hands of my friend and pray that Allah(SWT) continues to grant him 'aafiya (ease) and acceptance in all his efforts.