

July 12, 2017  
17 Shawwal 1438 AH

Alhaj Mohammed Bhai Dewji

Salaamun Alaykum

Today as a Muslim and a devoted mother who has had the privilege to serve our community institutions, I am being forced to resign by NASIMCO, World Federation of Khoja Shia Ithnasheri Muslim Communities and the regional bodies for the sole reason that my son has married a man, which I would like to point out is legal in Canada.

My stance today is not just as a devoted mother but as a human being who has painfully observed how the community has usurped the rights of God's creation in the name of Islam and passed judgement.

Ten years ago, when my son Ali Reza was 20 years old, he came to Firoz and I and told us that he was gay. He said he had known about it since the age of 16 and that he had spent countless hours praying to God to change this feeling in him because this was not a life he wanted for himself. He had talked to various Scholars and sought help in the Shia Faith and he tells me that the best piece of advice that he got was to ensure that he does not get married to a woman and ruin her life.

I still remember the feeling when he shared that news with us. We were shocked, devastated, and heartbroken. I went through everything from why me to countless hours of prayers, going to all the Ziyarats, consultation with Alims; to see the light and get guidance from HIM.

For us this is about standing up for Ali's God given right to live a life that would not be filled with the burden of religious guilt and compounded by communal scorn and societal shame. The guilt and the scorn could potentially drown anyone and effect the human character. Many turn to drugs and alcohol (social vices) and some commit suicide. They can't hold down jobs and end up with multiple partners and finally getting banished to the fringes of society. Let me point out that our community is not immune to this and I personally know of many people within our community that are suffering, stiffened and ostracised.

We chose not to have that for our son. We wanted him to be the best human being possible.

When he chose Paul, we agreed to support him to settle down. It has been a painful and challenging journey that only a mother can understand. Who can that mother then seek support from without being judged?

In moments of darkness, I realized that the only way for Ali to live an authentic life and not have to hide and fear rejection was to give him space to reach his human potential as God's creation. After that God knows best. The only person to judge my son would be God on the Day of Judgment. If a compassionate God provides sustenance to every human being, who am I to deprive my son of that sustenance?

I did this as a mother who carried Ali Reza in my womb for nine months and nurtured him. How could I as a Mother discriminate against my own Son and if my God is so just, then how could I not take on this value of Justice and act on it. When I reflect back through mine and my Son's journey I am convinced that his orientation is Nature and not Nurture. Like Ali Reza expressed many times, "that if he could flick a switch and not be Gay, he would do it in a heartbeat".

If Ali Reza was your son, what would you do?

My prayer are with you and our community and I wish you the best that Allah (s.w.t) can offer.

With Salaams and Dua's

**Siddika Jessa**

**Former Secretary General of NASIMCO**