

Nasreen's Story – A Life of Love, Sacrifice and Loss

For more than six decades, Nasreen's life has been shaped by one thing above all else—love for her family.

Born into an Indian Muslim family, she came to the United Kingdom in 1971 as a young child. Her father, an ex-serviceman in the British Army, worked hard to give his family a better future. Like many immigrant families, they built their lives through resilience, faith, and strong family values.

As the years passed, Nasreen's world gradually became centred around one person—her mother, Rabia.

When Rabia developed dementia and later kidney failure, everything changed. At first, it was little things: repeating questions, forgetting names and moments of confusion. Those moments slowly became daily life. Nasreen quietly stepped forward, and what began as helping her mother became years of full-time caring.

She organised appointments, collected medication, prepared meals, managed personal care, stayed awake through restless nights and watched over the woman who had once watched over her. Every day revolved around her mother's needs. There were no weekends, no holidays and no clocking off—only love.

As dementia progressed, Nasreen experienced the heartbreak of losing someone little by little, even while they were still alive. Some days her mother smiled with recognition; on other days she no longer knew who Nasreen was. Each forgotten memory felt like another quiet goodbye.

While friends married, travelled, built careers and raised families, Nasreen remained by her mother's side. She never married and never had children of her own. Caring became her purpose, her responsibility and, in many ways, her identity.

Although she had brothers and sisters, much of the responsibility rested on her shoulders. There were moments she longed for someone to say, 'Let me take over today so you can rest,' or simply ask, 'How are you coping?' Caregiving can be deeply meaningful, but it can also be lonely. It often means putting your own life on hold as friendships fade and the world becomes smaller.

Yet despite the exhaustion and isolation, Nasreen continued because caring for her mother was never a burden. It was an act of love.

Then came the day she had feared for so long. Rabia died. The home that had been filled with medication, routines and conversations became silent. That silence was overwhelming. For years, Nasreen had always known what the next task would be. Suddenly there was nothing to prepare, no appointments to arrange and no voice calling her name.

Her grief was not only for the loss of her mother. She was also mourning the loss of the role that had defined her for decades. She had to rediscover who she was after years of putting someone else first.

Alongside the sadness lives pride. Pride that her mother was never alone. Pride that Rabia was cared for with dignity, compassion and unconditional love until the very end.

Today, by sharing her story, Nasreen hopes others living with grief or caring responsibilities will know they are not alone. At the Dil Sey Dil Tak Bereavement Café she has found a place where memories are welcomed, every story matters and healing begins through compassion, connection and understanding.

'I hear you. I remember with you. You are not alone.'