

Lest we forget a tribute from a sister to her brother

Talita & Numair Choudhury are Alumni of BIT

I share the month of November in celebrating my birthday and Numair's, with his arrival just 11 months and 20 days after mine. We were inseparable and called "Tita Babu", a combination of my nickname and "babu" (little one), lumped together to imply "Tita and/or the little boy". Now it's just Tita on a journey, which I expected my brother to be there with me for all time. Although it was never a task I envisioned, bringing him on his final journey back from Japan to his homeland and our mother, after his untimely demise, felt like a responsibility that so rightly belonged to me.

I have been putting off writing to all those in Numair's world, after all my editor is gone. I understand things intellectually and yet it doesn't seem possible that he is no more. When my uncle, Bunty mama and I went to identify Numair in Kyoto, he looked peaceful and asleep. Numair loved water and when I initially heard news that he was missing, possibly drowned, I knew it to be true. I know that the adventurer in my brother wanted to eek every last minute of his short time in Japan. Knowing him, it makes sense that he went for a walk by the beautiful Kamo-gawa riverbank late at night, took a misstep, hit his head and slipped into the water never to return. Numair loved all things samurais, eastern philosophies, varied customs and cuisines. He was thrilled to be travelling to one of his dream destinations. My sister, Anika and I feel that it is poetically fitting that Numair would take his last breath in such a spiritual city surrounded by Buddhist and Shinto shrines, some of his deepest inspirations.

There were so many reasons why this literary conference Numair was to attend in Japan to deliver his academic paper almost didn't happen, but it did, despite all the hurdles. Inexplicably, I believe like the grains of sand in an hourglass, his time here had run its course. I hope to take my sons to visit Japan when they are older and walk through the cobblestoned Kyoto streets in what might have been Numair's last steps, as I did, when I waited to bring him home.

It was so good to be surrounded by dear friends and family in Dhaka and hear so many stories old and new. I was also grateful to attend his memorial at IUB where he had only been a professor for one year, but he had felt very appreciated. He had found a community of intellectually likeminded colleagues and students eager to learn. My family finds comfort that Numair has left us his literature to remember him by and that his book Babu Bangladesh is to be published this upcoming spring through his agent in India.

I am still processing, and it is tough to share all my thoughts on losing Numair. It is the daily things, like seeing my boys at their dance and recitals and not being able to share a video with him, which I know he would have appreciated as well as shared my sense of humor about it. Numair was a gentle soul and I hope we may honor his memory by always trying to learn a little more, be a little better, be a little kinder. May these words he wrote on Josh and my wedding day many year ago inspire you:

"True beauty lies in learning. It lies in trying in spite of everything; in spite of how we find ourselves facing skies that are not always infinite, oceans that are fenced, and winds we will never fly. In trying, we learn the beauty of our mortality, and that is infinite. The search for the perfect spring wildflower will not end this morning."

Happy birthday Numair! May you return as a spring wildflower somewhere someday!