Title: I am a Clay Bowl
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Salam.¹ I am but a simple clay bowl. I was created in 2007 by a kind, hard-working man named Muhammad Aziz Dar, whom I call Aziz Sahib out of respect; for he is my creator and the one who gave me life. Aziz Sahib is also the creator of all of my cousins, who are clay bowls just like me. He moulded us out of clay in the yard of his small home on his pottery wheel. I was given life when I came out of the brick kiln he made himself. What a talented man he is.

Aziz Sahib had a stall in the marketplace, just outside of the Peer-e-Shah Ghazi Darbar, where he safely kept us on a table for everyone to see. We thought of ourselves as his most

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prized possessions. The darbar is a very respected Sufi shrine in Mirpur Pakastan, Azad Kashmir, where many people from around the world go to learn about Islam and pay their respects to great Sufi saints. It stretches all the way into the village. Five times a day, everyday of the week, I would hear the Adhan being recited from the masjid inside the darbar. There were other, smaller masjids in the village as well, but none compared to that of the darbar.

Over the weeks that I was on the stall table, strange things were happening. Aziz Sahib was trading us, his most prized possessions, for rectangular sheets of paper people called rupees. They were different colours and had different numbers on them. People would give Aziz Sahib a combination of these rupees in exchange for us. I saw this happen to dozens of my cousins. I was devastated and felt all alone. The only thing that kept me going through this tough time was believing that Aziz Sahib cared about me too much to trade for mere paper. Unfortunately, I misunderstood, for one day this all changed.

It was just like any other normal day at the marketplace; people came and left, trading paper for my cousins, old and new. However, this time something new happened to me. A woman named Touqeer Akhtar came to see Aziz Sahib’s stall. She chose me out of all my other cousins and traded me, a simple clay bowl, for four-hundred rupees. I did not know whether to feel flattered or wary. I was shocked finding out that Aziz Sahib did not love me as much as I thought he did. He traded me so easily. Just like that, I was no longer a part of my family anymore.

Whenever something like this happened to my cousins, they would be used for different things. Most of the time people used them to serve food, while other times people kept them on display. Although I was sad to be taken away from Aziz Sahib and my family, I was excited to find out what plans Touqeer Bibi had in mind for me.
She drove to a house, and throughout the whole ride she cautiously kept me in her hands, making sure I didn’t break. When we got there, instead of setting me somewhere, I was gifted to another woman: Aneeqa Butt. What Aneeqa Bibi used me for was slightly different than what I was used to. I had seen my cousins be used to drink water out of before, but this time something was different. Aneeqa Bibi was dipping a taveez (a small piece of paper with a Quranic verse written on it) into the water, and then drinking out of me. She did this a few times in Mirpur, and I began to get comfortable in that house. But the next thing I knew, she was travelling to Canada.

I had never been outside of the country before. I was travelling for the first time, so Aneeqa Bibi kept me very safe. She wrapped me in newspaper multiple times and carefully placed me in her pullman. Throughout the entire plane-ride I was terrified of breaking. I had seen this happen to my cousins in the past, and it was a traumatizing experience. Once they break, they have no purpose anymore. I was starting to like Aneeqa Bibi, and I was afraid that once I broke she would no longer have any use for me and would abandon me.

Alhamdullilah, I can say that I got to Canada in one piece. Once we got to her house, Aneeqa Bibi placed me on her bedside table. Every day, after each prayer, she would fill me with water, dip the taveez into the water, and drink out of me. She would then carefully place me back onto her table. This ritual went on for a month. Once she had run out of taveez papers, she would instead recite a dua, blow onto the water, and drink out of me. After another month or two, she decided to move me into a cupboard in the kitchen to avoid accidentally breaking me. I would not see her as often, but she would perform the ritual from time to time for the rest of the year. The loneliness I felt was slightly bearable, as I had made new friends in the cupboard.

Two years later, there was a fire in the kitchen. The oven and microwave beside our cupboard had caught on fire. Aneeqa Bibi and her family were screaming and yelling and
quickly left the house, while many sirens were going off outside the home. After all we had gone through together, I felt very close to her, even if I was not seeing her as often. She did not care about me enough to take me outside with her; knowing this made the pain much worse.

Ever since that night nine years ago, I have not interacted with Aneeqa Bibi or any of her family members. After the fire, some people came into the house to change the cupboard’s wooden door to one with glass, which allowed me to see into the kitchen. Unfortunately for me, I was kept so far back behind my friends that I could not see much, if anything. Every day I watch Aneeqa Bibi and her family members go into the kitchen, open other cupboards, and use the dishes. My cupboard is almost never opened, and on the rare occasion that it was, she and her family use my friends and ignore me.

When I was still with Aziz Sahib, I felt special because he loved me so much to show off to everyone. Then, when I was given to Aneeqa Bibi, I felt even more special because when she had first started using me, she was keeping me safe and using me in a way I had never seen before. I was given a sense of purpose that I did not feel before. I had just started to get used to this, until Aneeqa Bibi decided she did not need me anymore. Now, I am kept in a dusty corner of an unused cupboard, never seeing the light of day. Oh, how I wish to be used again.
Bibliography


