Coffee time with Ouma Dua'a (Grandma the Blessings)
Healing Our Community Spiritually and Socially

It was coffee time with *Ouma Dua'a* (Grandma the Blessings), a cherished moment filled with warmth, wisdom, and the rich aroma of tradition. There is so much to learn from our elders, our mothers, fathers, grandmas, and grandpas, whose lives are woven with stories, lessons, and timeless blessings. In Toronto, we gathered around Ouma Dua'a, not just to sip coffee but to be immersed in her legendary oral history, a treasure passed down through generations.

On the sacred Day of Ashura, three generations of relatives, including children born in the diaspora, came together to celebrate her presence. We shared traditional dishes like *Hulbut Markh* and *Shur*, savouring each bite alongside coffee and an array of sweet delicacies. The day became even more special when we learned that Ouma Dua'a had gracefully reached 101 years young, *Masha'Allah*. May Allah bless her with enduring health and many more years of life.

What truly amazed us was her sharp memory, as she recounted every detail of our conversations with precision, weaving in historical anecdotes, cultural insights, and spiritual reflections. Her stories are a vibrant tapestry of community wisdom, timeless facts, and profound messages that resonate across generations. And her spiritual guidance? Nothing short of a divine spectacle, illuminating hearts and minds with every word she shares. Along with her sense of humour, here are some of her wisdom and insightful messages we want to share with you.

My dear children
I say this not from a place of blame,
But from a place of deep concern, and even deeper love.

More than any other group I know,
We are drowning in a feeling of hopelessness.
Not because we are weak. Not because we are lazy.
But because somewhere along the way,
We were hurt, dismissed, forgotten
And we never got the time or space to heal.

More than any other people I know, we are struggling.
Not because we lack strength,
But because our strength has been buried beneath generations of pain.

We carry wounds we never asked for.
We have seen genocidal imperial and military regimes
We have seen leaders betray us.
We have seen our neighbours attack us

We have seen our fellow citizens humiliate us
We have gone through brutal journeys to reach here
We have gone through life's misery at refugee nodes: Djibouti, Somalia, Rome, and the like
And, even facing discrimination at our final destinations

We are here feeling liberated, but struck by alien ideology
We are embroiled in an alien lifestyle, a materialistic world
A world of selfishness and hollow happiness
We have learned that *hope is sometimes dangerous,*
And that joy is something you find at a party, not in a plan.

We have become addicted to emotions, to conflict, to drama
Not because we are shallow, but because pain has been our closest companion.
We know how to laugh at weddings, cry at funerals, dance at barbecues, and events
But when it's time to talk about our town, our youth, our broken foundations?
We have seen unity crumble.
We fall silent. Or worse, we turn on each other.

But let me remind you, God does not create people to remain broken.
"Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." (Qur'an 13:11)

We were not made for failure.
We were not made to tear down anyone who tries to rise.
We were not made to turn jealousy into tradition.
We gather and speak like intellectuals, like politicians, like doctors, like professors.
We preach like Sheiks and Imams.
But wisdom without *action* is wasted.
Talk without *trust* is noise.

We've learned to feel alive only through drama and conflict.
We get emotional, loud, reactive, not because we don't care,
But because *we care too much and don't know what to do with the pain*.

We tear each other down, not because we hate success
But because success in our community often feels like betrayal.
We gather for weddings, burials, barbecues, and parties,
But when it comes time to talk about our town, our future, our broken systems?
Silence. Discomfort. Deflection. Disrespect. Jokes and Mocks.

We don't want to face the hard truths
Because we've been burned before.
And hope… hurts.

But my people, this cannot be our story forever.
We can't be people who only know how to talk, but not build.
Who can debate for hours like politicians, but do nothing like bystanders?
Those who show up for fun, but not for progress.

This is not a moral failure.
It's the result of trauma, abandonment, and generational exhaustion.

Because this dysfunction is not who we are, it's what we've *endured*.
And if we want a different future, an uncontaminated future for the young
We must do something radical:
Believe in ourselves again.

And still, I do not despair.
Because the prophets came to people just like us.
People who had lost direction.
People who gathered but didn't unify.
People who had opinions but no healing.
And yet, Allah *revived them*.
Through truth.
Through brotherhood. Through sisterhood.
Through *sincere hearts* willing to start small.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:
"None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."
(Sahih Bukhari & Muslim)

So let me ask:
Do we love for our people what we love for ourselves?
If we see someone trying to build, do we support them, or do we secretly wish they fail?
If a young person dares to dream, do we guide them, or remind them why it won't work?
If our elders are stuck in old thinking, do we dismiss them, or gently invite them forward?

But now we know, and naming the wound is the first step toward healing.
It is time to stop the blame game
It is time to detoxify
It is time to shift from survival to revival.

Let me say it again
It is time to shift from survival to revival.
It is time to connect and reconnect to our root, Harar
It is time to support the youth and give them space

It's time to stop tearing down those who try and start lifting them up.
It's time to stop asking, *"Why bother?"* and start asking, "*What if we did?*"
It is time to stop lamenting, *'Who cares?'*, and start afresh, *'What can I do for my people?'*
We don't need a hundred people.
We need *three people who believe*.
We need *one table where truth is welcome*.
We need *one project that builds trust*.
We need to *respect* those who are capable of leading.

My dear people,
This is our spiritual test.
This dysfunction we see is not who we are; it's what we have *survived*.
But survival is not the goal.
Revival is.

Revival starts not in the crowd, but in the soul.
All it takes is a few hearts ignited with sincerity.
A few hands willing to build, not break.
A few tongues willing to speak the truth, not just opinions.

Let's stop tearing each other down.
Let's stop making fun of dreams.
Let's stop gathering only for food, burials, and weddings
And start gathering for *vision*.
A vision of reviving Harari values
A vision of implanting these values into the young,
Give my grandchildren a healthy start
Allah (SWA) is still with us.

The question is, are we together?
It's time to believe again.
To hope again.
To build again.

You are not alone in this reflection. Many diaspora and hometown communities are asking why they function socially but fail structurally. But the fact that *you* are asking, not to blame, but to understand, means healing *can* begin.

You're not broken. You're bruised. And it's time to learn how to walk again.
And if we return to our higher purpose, our unity will no longer be fake; it will be faithful.

The answer to our dysfunction is not found in emotion, reproach, slander, backlash, trash, or blame.
It is found in sincere intentions, honest reflection, and spiritual re-alignment.

We must return to:

1. Purification of the heart (*Tazkiyah*): to remove envy, pride, laziness, and blame.
2. Constructive Advice (*Naseehah*): Speak truth lovingly, not bitterly.
3. Action (*Amal*): stop being people who only talk and become people who build.

Allah ﷻ says:
"And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided."
(Surah Aali 'Imran, 3:103)

Unity will not come from photos at weddings or events.
Unity comes from *trust*, *sacrifice*, *truth*, and shared spiritual purpose.

My beloved community
If we want revival, we must stop seeing each other as threats.
We must stop gathering only for fun and start gathering for vision, faith, and collective purpose.

We have the numbers.
We have the young,
The uncontaminated and the dynamic
Let's give them a space and place
We have the knowledge
What we need is Sincerity (*Ikhlas*) and Patience *(Sabr)*

Let us start small. Let us believe again.
Let us rebuild and improve our grassroot institutions,
Let us revitalize *Mugads, Afochas, Madraasas,* and the like
Let us respect ourselves and respect others
Let us focus on the positive and build the future
Let us stop bashing and trashing each other

Let us become a community that Allah ﷻ is pleased with, not just socially united, but spiritually alive.

We were blessed to sit close to her and listen to her tirelessly. We received blessings (Dua'a) every few minutes. She is a great-grandma full of blessings. Her jokes and sense of humour were also mind-blowing.

Amazing! Ouma Dua'a has renewed us with all her wisdom, inspiration, and sense of humour. We have presented only a glimpse of the 101 social and spiritual wisdom and messages we have tapped into.

Ouma, you are not only the fountain of motivation but also determination. Your words are transformative. We love you, Ekhista, Mum, and Grandma. We shall have another coffee time, Insha'Allah.

Aselam Aleykum

Translated and compiled by Prof. Abdi Khalil