



All praise is due to Allah Ta'ala, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Blessings and salutations upon our beloved Nabi Muhammad (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam)

Bismillahir Rahmaanir Raheem

I was born into a mixed-parentage family. My father was a Buddhist Chinese and my mother is a Hindu. They both practiced different faiths. I grew up worshipping idols and visiting temples, so I never felt odd or weird about the rituals. Because I was born in a Muslim country, Islam was not foreign to me.

I was 17 when I started asking questions about my religion. Prayers and rituals did not make sense anymore. I then started seeking the religion that made the most sense. An invitation came for me to visit a church and attend a sermon. I did attend, but still felt that it wasn't for me.

I never kept Islam as an option because the Muslims whom I knew were not a good example of a religion that I wanted to follow. Being the majority in my country, Muslims were the ones who were committing most of the crime. In my eyes, they were bad, so how could Islam be the perfect religion?

At 21, I found a job with a reputable airline. At this time, religion wasn't my concern anymore. It was all about having fun and living the glamorous life. One day, I met a man. Little did I know that he would become my husband. I accepted Islam and everything changed, including my name.

After we were married, Allah Ta'ala blessed me with a beautiful baby girl. I took baby steps towards understanding Islam while juggling motherhood at the same time. I was learning the basics of salaah and would sometimes struggle to read the transliteration of certain surahs. But none of this had an effect on me. I was growing more and more miserable inside and felt that Islam was something alien to me.

Two years later, I was blessed with another child. My husband then decided to uproot us and move us to his country (South Africa). Alhamdulillah, he always had great concern about providing the best Deeni environment for myself and the children. I eventually moved with a heavy heart, leaving my parents behind.

During these times, I was silently crying to Allah Ta'ala and even questioning Him (astaghfirullah!), as this was certainly not the way that I wanted my life to be. Tawakkul (trusting Allah Ta'ala) had not come into my heart yet, so I did not realize that Allah Ta'ala always has something better in store and that He always knows best.

Moving to a foreign country is no easy task. Challenges and trials were coming my way like a big rolling boulder. I now had to cope with madrasah, motherhood and a new environment. Alhamdulillah, I have very kind, loving and supporting in-laws. They often helped me and offered me assistance whenever I needed it. "If Allah Ta'ala has put you through it, He will definitely help you through it as well. Patience is the key."

Days became months and months became years. During this period, I began to use the hijab and niqaab, and became more confident around my new home (South Africa). But something within me still wasn't connecting with Allah Ta'ala.

One day, my sister-in-law approached me and told me to start ta'leem at home. I listened, but felt, "What can a kitaab do to change me? How can it possibly give me the connection with Allah Ta'ala?" Anyway, I did ta'leem for a few days and then stopped, forgetting that Allah Ta'ala is the changer of hearts and that guidance comes only from Him.

A few days later, someone invited me to join them for a weekly ta'leem program. Out of

courtesy, I agreed (this was the very first ta'leem program that I attended). During the ta'leem, I felt as if every message that the sister was delivering was for me, solely for me. It seemed as if she knew exactly what I needed to hear.

She mentioned a few points that stirred something within me:

- Allah Ta'ala will not change the condition of the people if they do not change it themselves.
- Take one step towards Allah Ta'ala, and He will take ten steps towards you. Walk towards Him, and He will run towards you.
- Imaan is like the sugar in a cup of tea. It sinks to the bottom of the cup. We have to stir it to taste the sweetness, or else it remains there.

The points that I heard in this ta'leem played on my mind for some time. It dawned on me that my imaan is something that *I* have to work on, not anyone else. I had to strive to improve my connection with my Rabb – and that is what I did. Alhamdulillah, with the help of Allah Ta'ala, love for Deen and my yaqeen (conviction) in Allah Ta'ala has grown.

I came to realize that all challenges and trials are actually blessings. Allah Ta'ala tests those whom He loves. Our Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) and the Sahaabah (radhiyallahu 'anhum) were put through such hardship and tests, yet they were so beloved to Allah Ta'ala. "And with difficulty comes ease", Allah Ta'ala has promised.

Now, having tasted the sweetness of imaan, I wanted my parents to accept Islam. Alhamdulillah, my father accepted Islam in 2006 and passed away in 2011 as a Muslim (may Allah Ta'ala place him among the righteous and grant him Jannah – aameen).

I am now concerned about my mother. I make du'aa that Allah Ta'ala grant her hidaayah (guidance) and the understanding of Islam. My children have initiated ta'leem at home with

the intention of hidaayah for my mother and for all mankind as well. May Allah Ta'ala accept our effort.

Dear readers, with no effort from me and only through the mercy and help of Allah Ta'ala, my children have a great deal of interest in Deen. I must thank Allah Ta'ala for the tarbiyah (Deeni upbringing) of my children, for I was worried that I was incapable of giving them a good Islamic upbringing.

May Allah Ta'ala grant them istiqamah (steadfastness) and make them a means of hidaayah (guidance) for others – aameen.

During this journey of mine, I've learned that we, as Muslims, should never take our Deen for granted, for it is a precious gift that some will never enjoy. Allah Ta'ala has chosen you. Treasure your imaan and nurture it. Hold onto the blessed sunnah and the rope of Allah Ta'ala at all times, and He will do the rest.