

## My Journey to Islam

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On May 10 of this year (2010) I was surfing around Facebook and found a page called "Everybody Draw Muhammad Day". This was after the censoring of one of my favourite cartoon shows, South Park. I read the cause and decided that freedom of speech was really important.

For days, I read little bits and pieces of information about Islam while I was slandering the name of the Prophet (pbuh) and I hope that ALLAH forgives me for this, because I did not know what I was doing at the time.

I received many emails for many different Muslims and Muslimahs. Some of the people acted exactly as I had stereotyped them for. They were violent and threatened me for the things that I said and did. But most were sincerely just asking for me to stop because it was painful for them to see. I did not understand their logic; it didn't fit with my democratic view on life. But I kept hearing the same thing, that the people that censored South Park, the people that tore down our Towers, the extremist acts all over the world did not come from Islam. They begged that I read and learn the Qur'an for myself.

Then one night I went to bed and had the most vivid dream. I dreamt that I left my home to study Islam and in fact became a Muslimah. I returned home and demonstrated to my country that Islam was not evil and helped liberate the Muslims in my country from the religious witch hunt in which they were a target of.

I woke in the morning bawling. I was so confused and didn't understand. Already my heart began to seek answers that I would get later. I didn't want to be Muslim that much I thought I knew. And lo and behold that day a nice Muslim man came to the EDMD forum and asked so nicely that we all stop. That we did not know Islam or we wouldn't be doing what we were doing. So I sent him a message, respectfully asking why Islam could come to my country and censor us....and there, without my knowing, I had found my Bhaijaan, my dearest older brother.

I challenged him and he answered my questions logically and showed me the other side of the story. Then my questions went from a political platform to a religious as I began to know the man. By the end of the day I was calling him Brother. Already ALLAH was working on me and changing my heart and opening my mind.

The rest of it was seamless for me, although my Brother probably saw each step of the transformation, I feel as though I have been this way my whole life...not three weeks. I started to notice the light but I didn't know what it was and step by step things started to transition. I started (to my own surprise) to dress modestly, I started wearing scarves, and everything that my Brother said to me of the Prophet (pbuh), the Qur'an, and Islam just made my heart hungry for more as it grew in the light.

Not long after, my Dearest Brother sent me several books, including the Qur'an. It traveled to me from India to Seattle in just two days. My heart was anxious because it already knew. I made a promise to my family though that I would do nothing until I read both the Bible and Qur'an. Finally, the day arrived that my books came. It was very late in India and in the later afternoon in Seattle but my Bhaijaan waited with me until it came. I finally opened it and then stopped on a page. The first words that ALLAH said to me, the moment I knew I was a Muslimah in my heart, was when I read Surah 14 vs 52:

"This Qur'an is a message for mankind and clear proof against them, in order that they may be warned thereby, and that they may know that there is only ALLAH and none has the right to be

worshipped but ALLAH”

I should have said my Shahadah right there. I knew right then, but I did not. I worried that because I wasn't very good at practicing yet and because of my promise to my family that I should wait and Inshallah I would say it in November with my Umma in India.

My heart was full of light for the next day or so, but slowly it started to leave me. It scared me. Slowly it was creeping away and Satan's whispers were in my ear; filling me with awful things and ideas and thoughts. I was getting anxious and all I could think about was running away to India to be with my Bhaijaan, to protect my light. The days were passing and several brothers and sisters either told me to follow my heart or to hurry and say my shahadah if I believe it, because you never know when it will be too late.

Finally, after talking with my three dearest brothers I went to meditate and pray. ALLAH had not really spoke to me in a day or two and I needed his guidance badly. Finally it came to me. That I was indeed past due for my shahadah; that the light was not my light but His light that he was lending me for my journey. That to keep my light I must submit. When you KNOW you MUST submit. If you don't your light starts to slip away...and I understand that now. I see now why Muslim's are very rarely afraid of things like death or pain or persecution; for as long as a Muslim has their light, nothing is ever really so bad because ALLAH is with you and ALLAH has the best plan.

After this, I called upon my Bhaijaan and informed him that I was ready and he and his family gave witness as I came into the world again, as a Muslimah. I see how blessed I am, that ALLAH did not leave me behind even when I walked away from my truth for the sake of worldly matters. . HIS plan is so perfect when I reflect on each step that led me here; each triumph and tragedy that has brought me to this very moment; spanning over an amount of time that I cannot even comprehend. HE has given me something so much better than the world and that is HIS Light that he lends to me. I want to guard it, protect it, and defend it. I would die to keep it and surely I would die if I lost it.