

I believe that it is not God's true word

Salamun Alaikum

I am Sister Suraya, born and raised in Australia. Currently studying in Iran.

I converted to Islam in 1997.

I believe that Allah exists in the hearts of us all; it is something that is innate, however some of us choose to acknowledge it and submit to that Higher Force, whilst others choose to ignore it and live their life according to their own will and desires.

As a child, I felt this presence of Allah in my heart and desired to submit; however, I was unsure about the way to reach this destination.

I often contemplated about where did I come from, why am I here and where I am going?

Growing up in Australia in a strict Catholic Christian environment did not allow any enquiry into beliefs, it was expected that I would follow my parents and accept their religion blindly without question.

Many concepts such as the doctrine of Trinity, where God Himself exists in three parts, including Jesus (a.s) being the son of God and praying to humanlike statues, are some of the Christian beliefs that I started to question from a young age.

I was continually dissatisfied with incomplete or illogical answers provided and eventually I became a nuisance and was punished by the Christian Sisters at School for my frank and inquisitive nature.

When I was 13 years old the Sister asked the classroom, who doesn't like the Bible? I was the only one in the room to answer, I stated that "It has been tampered with by a human hand, it has pornography in it, and I believe that it is not God's true word". I was told to get out of the classroom.

In my teenage years, I abandoned Christianity altogether, tired of

established Western religious systems.

I would have dreams of groups of people from different nationalities wrapped in white garbs, walking up and down systematically in a place with large pillars. I connected this to Ghandi; so when I was older I started studying Eastern religions. My enquiries inclined me towards Buddhism.

During this time my mother was preparing to fulfill a lifelong dream of traveling to Egypt . I often mocked my mother's obsession with Egypt . However, it seems now that it was Allah's blessed plan.

My mother traveled to Egypt in 1997.

Shortly after, I traveled to Europe to visit my relatives, although I had no interest for Egypt , I planned to stay in Egypt for 5 days to see my mother.

I flew with Gulf Airlines. On the plane I plugged in the headset to listen to music; I stopped at the sound of a beautiful rhythmic harmony that brought immense peace to my heart, despite being unable to understand its meaning.

After arriving in Egypt I stayed much longer than planned. In fact, every time I attempted to leave I found something blocking my way.

Everywhere I traveled I was told over and over about a Masjid of one of the Ahlul-Bayt in Cairo . If I went there, my wishes would be granted. I didn't know anything about this personality of the Ahlul-Bayt, but the people loved them so much and had so much faith in this place I was also inspired. The remnants of the Fatimid Kalifate left a love for the Ahlul-Bayt, still present amongst Egyptians today.

So I went to the Masjid full of hope, while at the Zahrih I sincerely asked to be guided to the truth, to be shown the straight path and end my search and to change my empty life in Australia .

Growing up in the West, I was constantly fed with negative images of Islam and Muslims; however, as a traveled in Egypt I saw strong family values, respect for the elders, and a great spirit of generosity. People

were so poor, yet their hearts were so content and satisfied, like they knew their destination and purpose in this life. I did not see this drive towards materialism, nor a fear for tomorrow. I concluded that most of these characteristics were driven by religious foundations.

This initiated my enquiries into Islam and the more I discovered, the more I was impressed; I found Islam to be a complete package, covering all spheres of life, from medicine to hygiene, science to moral values, and even the unseen world.

One day walking down the street, I heard that same beautiful rhythmic music I heard on the plane coming from the coffee shop. I was told that it was the Holy Quran.

Finally I was given the Holy Quran in English. The moment I opened this book I realized my search was over. As I started to read, it was like something had come from the sky into my hands. The words were so black and white, so majestic, whilst straight to the point. I felt that God was talking to me for the first time. These were clearly the words of God, and not the words of a human mind.

Many verses, such as, Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem Qulhuwulahu Ahad, alahu samad, lam yalid, walam yulad, walam yakun laku kufuan Ahad", instantly ended a lifetime of confusion.

On that morning itself, I concluded that there is no God accept Allah; He has sent many different messengers and prophets, like Moses, Abraham, Jesus and Mohammad (pbut), to carry his message through different generations, societies, and cultures. Islam was the last part of the message and Prophet Mohammed the seal of the prophets.

However, my search for the truth did not end here.... I went back to Australia and after 6 years of following Islam, I came into contact with some Shia's. I was shocked to find fundamental differences between Sunni and Shia beliefs.

I suddenly realised that choosing which sect to follow was a critical matter; affecting my station in the next world. Thirsty for the truth, for one year I read, contemplated and supplicated heavily to Allah to guide me and not to leave me destitute after I had come so close.

I encountered much negativity and ignorance projected towards the Shia. However, I found myself slowly being swayed towards Shia ideas; not only by the evidence, but also from a logical stance.

Many Sunni's warned me to stay with the majority and be safe. However, I knew that if I followed this rule, then I should still be following the religion of my forefathers.

Sadly enough, I found the great division of this pure religion primarily caused by the issue of leadership after the Prophet's demise.

I deliberately searched in the Sunni references to find evidence. I found more than 140 Sunni narrations supporting the event of Ghadeer. Even Omar himself congratulates Imam Ali (a.s) on his appointment. Logic dictates that the Prophet would not stop such a large group of pilgrims in the blistering heat of the desert before the group were about to disperse, without having a significant reason. There are also Quranic verses surrounding this event that confirm the importance of the declaration made that day. Allah commanded the Prophet to deliver the final part of his mission to complete the religion of Islam.

Besides, why would Allah leave the fundamental subject of leadership undecided? Leadership has never been a matter for humans to decide. From the time of Adam (a.s), it has always been a divine appointment.

Various statements made by the Prophet during his lifetime confirm the position of Imam Ali (a.s), "Ali is to me as Haroun was to Musa, except there is no Prophet after me", "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is the gate". When the other Kalifah's were governing, if it was not for this gate of knowledge, in the words of Omar himself, they would have perished.

Most of all, I found Imam Ali's character shining through the pages of Najul-Balagha. One reading of this literary masterpiece was enough to convince me as to who was more worthy and capable of leadership.

The foundations of the four Sunni Madhabs are built on the Ahlul-Bayt, as Sunni Imams were originally students of Imam Jafar Al-Sadiq (a.s).

The list of proof in support of the truth continues, however, time does not permit me to go through them all.

Eventually I was guided by Allah to the Imam Hussain Islamic Centre in Sydney . The minute I entered this house of Allah, I felt a strong spiritual energy, a greater connection between the heart and Allah, especially as I heard the beautiful and deep supplications being recited, such as Du'ah Kumayl.

During this time, I discovered the concept of Tawassul and the great personality of Imam Hussain (a.s) (who I had been kept in the dark for so many years about by the Sunni) including the great sacrifice he made for Islam. At this point I realised that Imam Hussain (a.s) was the Ark of my salvation, my advocate before Allah, as I was in his Masjid in Cairo (The Masjid of Hussain) when I first asked for guidance and I felt that he was guiding me up till this very moment.

Shortly after, on the birthday of Imam Ali (a.s), just after midnight, I woke up, feeling the presence of Imam Ali (a.s) in my room. I was given a clear message by the Imam to follow him and I would be safe.

I arrived to the point where I found no other way but to embrace the Ahlul Bayt as my spiritual guides and leaders; it is from this point onwards that I felt for the first time a completeness of my faith.

Since embracing the Shia sect I have traveled to Iran and Iraq every year for ziyaraat or to participate in Islamic Conferences. I reached the point where I realised that I was leaving Australia every year to recharge my soul. I became dependant on this yearly spiritual injection.

This eventually led to a decision to leave the Western lifestyle for a more Islamic, simple and less materialistic lifestyle. Also thirsty for a greater depth and understanding of my deen, no longer quenched by what the English language offers, I felt that it was my duty as a Muslim to learn languages.

Hence, I am currently in the heart of the Shia world, on a scholarship studying Farsi language, which will lead to a Masters in Islamic studies

in the Hawzah. I will see what Allah has planned for me from here.