

I did not even know that Islam existed. p:2

...When I was eighteen I moved to London to study Japanese, and when I was nineteen, I went to Japan as part of my degree. I found a society that had become very materialistic, and again, for me, there was a sense of something missing. On my way back from Japan I visited Malaysia. This was the first Muslim country that I had ever been to. I journeyed to the northeast by train. When I got to the north, which is the most religious area of the country, I began to dress as the Muslim women do in that country, and told people I had just become Muslim – but I said this in order to protect myself. I stayed at a guest house where the owner asked me if I was learning about Islam. I said ‘no’, because I knew nothing about Islam at that time, so the owner taught me how to do wudhu and how to pray, and took me to the mosque at fajr time. I spent only a few days in Malaysia, but I had a feeling of being at home and of being at peace in a way that I had not done for a long time.

When I came back to England, I continued with my studies. I rented a room from a Moroccan woman who was just two years old than me. We became like sisters, and spent all our time together. She introduced me to her family. I felt that she had something that I had lost: a purity and innocence. British culture encourages people to corrupt and harm themselves in the name of being free, and I was already very dissatisfied with the ‘free’ way of life here: for me it was shallow and meaningless. In 1996 my Moroccan friend went to Egypt to study fus.ha Arabic and I followed. I stayed in Egypt for six months, and this changed my life. I immediately felt at home in Egypt in a way I had never done in England. Just before I had gone to Egypt I had a dream that I was wearing white, and that I was in a market looking for a hijab. In Egypt I wore clothes that covered, and I preferred to cover. I loved the adhan and the sense of community among people. Britain is very individualistic. People also still had a sense of noble and dignified behaviour, which in Britain we have also lost. I had my first Shahr al-Ramadhan in Egypt, and saw how, close to iftar time, the streets were completely empty, the trams had stopped, there were no cars or taxis around. Everybody was inside preparing to break their fast. When I thought about returning to England I wanted to cry. Eventually I had to return, but I was not the same person. I could not go back to the same life as before. I began to search for knowledge on Islam and to read the

Qur'an. I visited different mosques in London. In 1999 I took my shahadatayn. After that, I had a dream about the Holy Prophet (s). He appeared to me in a dark space, on my right hand side, dressed in white. I didn't see his face, just the edge of his beard. In front of him was a rolled up red and white musalla. He took a step towards the musalla and it unrolled by itself and laid out flat in front of him. I was told that this dream was asking me to make complete submission. After that, I began to wear hijab.

At that time I knew nothing about the differences between path of the Ahl al-Sunna and the path of the Ahl al-Bayt (as). I followed Sunni Islam because I had never met any Shi'as, or even heard about the Imams (as). In 2001 I went to teach in an Islamic College in London which was set up by Iran. There were Shi'a teachers and students there, but still I did not really understand what the path of Ahl al-Bayt (as) was all about. I was confused and I decided to leave it Allah (swt).continues