

My path to true Islam

By Syeda Sana K. Shah

I was born a Sunni Muslim but little did I know that at the tender age of 19 I would become part of the fastest growing Muslim community in the world. I didn't know much about the different sects that were in Islam; all I was raised to know was the "Sunni way." Growing up we would regularly attend the mosque for *jumma*; me, my brothers and sister would attend Quran classes on the weekends. When I was 17 I had gotten admission into a college where I was introduced to a diverse group of religious faiths. I was amazed at how open minded the people were. The way I was raised was that I should only associate myself with other Muslims, but the display of unity among various faiths made me curious. There I was introduced to an eclectic group of Muslims of different sects. As the semester went on, I joined a Muslim group where I met Muslims of different sects. I had already known about Shiites but that day I was introduced to Ahmadiyyat. When I got home that night I asked questions about Ahmadiyyat: Who are the Ahmadis? What are their beliefs? And why hadn't I heard of this specific sect before. My father was born and raised in Pakistan while my mother was born in Afghanistan but raised in Pakistan. Coming from Pakistan they had major misconception about Ahmadiyyat. My mother responded and told me that there are many sects and that this was just one of them. My father on the other hand was very strict and quick to respond negatively. He forbade me to ask questions about Ahmadiyyat and told me that Ahmadis' are not Muslim. He told me never to mention the name again and to disassociate myself from anyone who was an Ahmadi. Being 17 and hearing the hatred and prejudice coming from my father made me wonder why there was such a strong sentiment against Ahmadiyyat. Why was it so wrong to call an Ahmadi a Muslim? It really bothered me that I didn't get a proper response about Ahmadiyyat from my parents but it inspired me to do some research on my own. Every day I would read about Ahmadiyyat online. I would read both the positive and negative things people had to say. The more I read the more I noticed the similar struggles that the Muslims of the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) and Ahmadis' had to face. Both were persecuted mercilessly and were shunned from their communities only because they were following the word of Allah. The more I read about Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmed (as) the more I fell in love with the love he had for the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw). How can anyone claim that this noble and pious man does not follow the teachings of the Holy Prophet (saw), when in fact he is the perfect example of how a Muslim should be? After studying Ahmadiyyat, the life and writings of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (as), and praying for Divine guidance, it became evident to me that Ahmadiyyat is indeed the true Islam and that Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (as) is that same Messiah and Imam Mahdi prophesied by the Holy Prophet

Muhammad (saw). By the grace of Almighty Allah, I have seen many powerful and faith enhancing dreams. I have met the Holy Prophet (saw) twice in my dreams. Once he appeared as a young man who embraced me, and at another time appearing middle aged at the end of a long corridor. I have also met the Promised Messiah (as) in another dream who was inside a tent in the middle of a desert at night and gifted me with a gorgeous green head scarf from under his bed of straw. I also met our elegant Hudhur in another one of my dreams where Hudhur gifted me with a white head scarf and received me with a daughter-like embrace. These inspiring dreams are direct proof for me that Ahmadiyyat is the true Islam. I had so longed to see the Holy Prophet (saw) in my dreams and the fact that I saw him in my dream after accepting Ahmadiyyat just increased my faith and confirmed my decision. By the grace of Allah, I became inspired to join the holy Community of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi and signed my bai'at forms in 2009 at the age of 19, at Baitul Aman Mosque in Connecticut, Alhamdulillah! Even though, my parents do not support me and want nothing to do with me, the Connecticut Jamaat has shown me love, respect and welcomed me with open arms. Every time I attend the mosque I had felt a sense of wholeness that I was searching for. I was not afraid or sad to leave my family because every member from my Jamaat made me feel like I was not alone. I love and respect my parents and do not want to disobey them, but I will not turn my back on Ahmadiyyat which I know is the true Islam and no one can convince me otherwise. Finally my life was moving forward and in the right direction. Ever since I had accepted Ahmadiyyat, I feel I am receiving direct blessing from Allah (swt) both religiously and secularly. Being an Ahmadi convert, I encounter opposition for my beliefs from my very own family and friends. It is very difficult for me to live in a home surrounded by people whom I love but do not accept the message. Some family members try to set me back, but I feel much remorse for them, for they do not know where their salvation lies. To all my sisters, if you encounter similar difficulties, try and resist their efforts to entice you back to your former habits. Suffering and trials strengthen spiritual progress. Even if you make mistakes, keep praying for guidance because Allah is most Forgiving, Ever Merciful and Acceptor of Repentance. I would like to end with a verse from the Holy Quran which states:

“Indeed, you (O Muhammad) guide not whom you like, but Allah guides whom He wills.”(Al Quran 28:56)

And Allah had guided this Sunni Muslim woman to the true Islam, my name is Syeda Sana K. Shah, I am 22, and I am proud to say I am an Ahmadi Muslim.