

## My Journey Through Quran

It was a hot, humid morning in the middle of August 2003. We had recently moved to Islamabad. The house was still in a mess with everything scattered about the rooms haphazardly. The settlement process; slow, messy and exhausting as usual.

I remember I had just come back after dropping my children off, at their new school and was feeling anxious and lonely. "Well life does go on..... They are not babies after all", I tried to console myself. Feeling at a loss, I just took up the T.V. remote control and started surfing through the channels. I was just flicking the buttons one after the other when the smiling face of Dr. Ghulam Murtaza Malik appeared on the screen and I stopped to listen to his soothing voice. The first sentence that he spoke went right through my heart and shattered it into a thousand pieces. What he said was :

" the person who does not have any purpose in his life is living like an animal"

I simply froze in my place and tears started streaming down my cheeks. And I cried out to Allah "Why don't I have any purpose in my life. Tell me what is my goal. Why am I existing on this earth anyway.....??"

Of course this was not the first time that such a thought had crossed my mind. Although I had everything a woman could wish for, I had often felt an awful void in my heart. As if there is something missing and I am not complete without it. As far back as I could recall, my days and nights had been accompanied by a quiet emptiness; a nagging dissatisfaction which sat quietly in a corner of my mind waiting to explode whenever things got too much on my nerves. And I would ask myself, time after time: "Why are you not happy? What is missing? After all, you have everything that anyone could possibly wish for! So what more do you want?"

When I looked around myself and saw my wonderful, caring husband; my beautiful, healthy children, full of energy and life; my clean, orderly house; my own reflection in the mirror; my quiet peaceful world.....I would feel guilty to harbour such ungrateful thoughts. And I would be disgusted at my self-pity. So I tried to suppress those unsettling questions and would get myself busy with my housework and my hobbies. But in the depths of my heart I knew that these were just diversions and I needed to have that "solid" purpose in my life that would justify my existence on this earth.

And now once again that wound had been opened up by the words of the soft spoken scholar (May Allah rest his soul in peace). Wiping my tears I got up with a heavy heart and started to put things in order, trying to organize the newly occupied house. A short while later the phone rang; it was a friend of mine. After the initial exchange of pleasantries, she asked me if I would accompany her to *Al-Huda* (an institute for Islamic studies).

It had been my desire to learn the truth about my religion and to study the Quran in depth, since a long time but somehow I had not been able to do that. Now seemed a good opportunity, so I told her I'd be glad to go with her whenever she wanted. She expressed her happiness in finding a willing companion and it made me feel good too..... Little did I know that it was going to change my world! I was too ignorant about Allah to know that He had answered my prayer

The next day we went to the main campus of *Al-Huda*. I was very excited and eager to discover for myself what it was really like. I had heard many contradictory opinions about this institution but I don't give any importance to rumors, as a principle. I believe in trying out something for myself before making any decision about it. Allah has given us enough sense to judge between the good and the bad, provided we don't cover it up with prejudices.

As soon as we entered the building, a feeling of peace descended on me as if I had entered a sanctuary. Girls clad in white uniform were going about cheerfully. One of them saw me and said "*assalaamualaikum*" with a big smile, and I mumbled "*wa-alaikumussalaam*..... trying to remember who she was; obviously she had recognized me but my mind was totally blank as I tried to keep smiling even in my confusion!! A second later as I was still fumbling with my brain's memory cells, she was gone, leaving me stunned ! I moved on to the reception area trying to solve this puzzle, when I came upon a group of girls who repeated this "smile—*salam*---disappear" act. Only then did I realize that they were just being cordial and were greeting me in the Islamic way. And my heart cheered for them and for this religion that had taught them to smile in this hostile, unsmiling world. I felt welcome, as if I belonged.

A smiling receptionist guided us to the main hall in the basement. My friend and I took off our shoes on the rack at the entrance and entered the world of Quran!

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As I descended down the cool white marble steps, a strong feeling of tranquility and peace enveloped me and the sound of Dr. Farhat Hashmi's voice, echoing in that enormous hall, seemed to hold my heart. I have a very critical nature and so was afraid of being put off by any show of artificial piety or false sainthood. Therefore I was relieved to see

such a practical, scientific and down to earth approach towards the *Ayaat* of the Quran. It was a pleasant surprise to see the discipline in the whole environment. The posture of the girls; the way they were writing in their Quran-copies, reflected their focus and sharp reflexes. They made it look so easy and natural! The incharges, gliding along the aisles, in their floor length gowns, quietly helping out the students, guided us to the listener's area. I had never experienced such pin-drop silence in my life! I sat down and took out my diary and pen but I felt like an illiterate in that room full of learned people who had reached the end of 21<sup>st</sup> *Para*. So I continued to just sit there and let the sound of the Quran wash over me.....

Little by little, I seemed to come out of my "hypnotic" state and began to make out what the teacher was saying. I realized that it was the explanation of *Surah Ahzaab* and the teacher was telling about how the Prophet *s.a.w.* and His companions dug up the trench in one of the battles with the "*kuffaars*" of Mecca. I opened up the Quran to see the verses. It was so strange that I must have read these verses countless times in my life, but had I ever felt the heat of the on-coming battle? Had I ever felt the tension that brings your heart to the throat? The following words of the Quran made me feel as if I myself was standing in that hot desert, digging the hard earth, with stones tied to my belly to ward off the hunger pangs.....

*"when they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes grew wild and the hearts reached to the throats, and you were harbouring doubts about Allah. There, the believers were tried and shaken with a mighty shaking."* (33:10-11)

It was unbelievable but true that I had read these same verses all my life without attaching any significance to the message in them. To me they were just sacred words of an unknown language and I had hoped to gain "*sawab*" or reward by just reciting them. Therefore it was a completely new experience for me to feel this turmoil in my heart and I thought that if just a few verses could do this to me then what about the whole of the Quran? No wonder Allah says in *surah- Al-Hashr* verse 21:

*"Had we sent down this Qur'an on a mountain, you would surely had seen it humbling itself and rending asunder by the fear of Allah."* (59:21)

I had barely come out of this wave of unexpected enlightenment, when the voice of Saad Al-Ghamidi filled the hall with the most beautiful

recitation I had ever heard..... “Oh my God!” my heart cried out in wonder, Is this your Quran? Was it always there and my eyes were closed to it? Was it always being read out like this and I was not listening to it? Have I spent 35 years on this earth without understanding your words that were meant to guide me and to protect me from the misery of confusion and lack of direction? How did I let this happen to myself?

And that afternoon, I made a firm resolve to myself and to Allah that I was going to learn this Quran, whatever it takes.

But even at that moment, I did not know that it was that “something-solid” that my soul had been yearning for.....I was not to know that until a few days later.

My friend and I continued to make our visits to Al-Huda as listeners, inspite of the difficulty of leaving home and getting the housework done on time. On top of that my washer woman as well my servant, both took off on emergency leaves. The problem was that my family had always been used to a “stay-home-mom” and I had also enjoyed the comfort and luxury associated with such an arrangement. Therefore it was a real test for me, to work extra hard to be able to attend the classes without creating any fuss at home.

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The next moment of awakening came when, after a few days, we were going through the explanation of *Surah Fatir*. By then I had started taking notes in my diary. I was scribbling away trying to capture as much as I could yet at the same time listening intently to the teacher, when all of a sudden I had this strange feeling that the teacher was addressing me alone ! I looked at the Quran and saw that she was explaining *ayat* 32 in which Allah SWT says:

*“ Then we gave the Book ( the Quran ) for inheritance to such of our slaves whom we chose (the followers of Muhammad s.a.w.) Then of them are some who wrong their ownelves, and of them are some who follow a middle course, and of them are some who are, by Allah’s leave, foremost in good deeds. That , that is indeed a great grace.”*  
(35:32)

As the meaning of these powerful words of Allah was revealed to me, I felt myself to be swept away by a tide of emotions and in that moment of absolute clarity, I saw myself as my Allah had wanted me to be. All the pain and anguish that I had endured all along my life in the solitude of my soul, came to surface, and I wept like a child who cries in the arms of his mother after a long separation.

“O my Allah! am I really something other than just a meaningless creature that I had thought myself to be? Am I really worth this great heritage of the Quran? Did you actually make me for this?”

And a voice inside me answered, “ Yes, of course!”

This was the blessing that was missing from my life. This was “**the purpose**”, that all my faculties and resources were destined to be used for.

As I was being showered by these thoughts and my eyes were blinking and trying to adjust to this sudden brilliance of awareness, I decided then and there, what my course of action should be.

Allah SWT had given me three choices; either to ignore this heritage and do *zulm* on my self (as I had been doing up to that point) or to take it half heartedly (which was unthinkable now) or to do my UTMOST effort in utilizing all I have, in the way of receiving and spreading this message to the whole world. No matter how ignorant, or incompetent, or inadequate I might seem to myself for this great responsibility.....I just knew that it was going to be my choice and my destiny, *inshaallah*, I also believed that if Allah could bring my wandering soul out of its ignorance to this day and this place, then he will surely guide me the rest of the way too.

Oh, the peace! the tranquility in knowing that I have found my way. And that I have found my Friend, my sustainer, my guide, who will hold my hand and tell me where to go. The best thing is that He will always be with me, watching over me and protecting me.

I got myself the Audio cassettes of the course with a view to start it from the beginning. Fortunately we came to know about a branch of al-Huda In our vicinity. So we joined the class there at the end of September, just as they had started the first *para*.....

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Thus began a new way of life for me. My whole routine went through a complete turn over. Where once I used to have so much time at my disposal, now there began a race against time as I struggled to fit in a whole series of activities related to my Quranic studies with my housework and my time with my family. I had vowed to myself that my family should not be affected in any way so that they should not blame my studies for anything. To achieve this simple goal was not so simple! But since I was doing it all for Allah, I did it in good spirit. My body ached because of this unaccustomed exertion but my spirit soared!

I would get up in the morning with anticipation and a renewed sense of wonder at being alive. The miraculous effects of the Quran taking hold of my heart and soul day after day. Allah’s words gave me a new vision and from these open eyes I saw, as if for the first time, the vast blue sky; and the endless expanse of earth, the beautiful mysterious Margalla Hills, the flowers and trees swaying in the wind, rain pouring from thick

clouds, all these and much much more, singing the praise of their Creator, the one and only Allah!

And, in the midst of this unimaginably vast universe, stood my own self..... A tiny structure, a human being, that is Allah's best creation.

The Quran made me see myself as I really was. Never before had I seen my image in such a mirror which gave me such an unbiased, clear picture of where I stood. What were my plus-points and weaknesses. Usually if someone points out something bad in us we tend to become defensive but in this journey of self purification it used to feel good to identify and remove my flaws. Just like in illness it relieves you to get a reliable diagnoses and to begin the right treatment. It felt so good to see how my Allah had blessed me with all these faculties which I had always taken for granted.

Only then did I understand that the Quran is not just an ordinary religious book with just a long list of instructions. Rather it has a life of its own. It talks to you like a friend. It not only scolds you on your misdeeds but also gives you hope of salvation. It makes you dream of *Jannat*, warns you of hell-fire, of Allah's wrath. It doesn't force you rather it makes you WANT to become a much better person that you are and most of all it gives you a hope that it is possible to do so.

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There is so much that I can tell you about the Quran, but I don't want to spoil your pleasure of discovering everything for yourself as you go along the verses one by one. However, let me give you a glimpse of its endless treasures of wisdom and inspiration.

*Surah Fatihah*, ( the most repeated *Ayaat* ) are the opening page of the Quran. Millions of Muslims recite it daily in their *salat*. Yet, very few know what it really means. The very first words: "*Al-hamdulillahi Rabbil Aalamin*" contain a wealth of knowledge. It means that the ultimate gratitude and praise is for Allah. But what is the effect of the combination of gratitude and praise and how do we experience it ? Actually *hamd* is that beautiful feeling that arises in your heart when you appreciate and wonder at a blessing of Allah. When you see a half opened rose on a bright spring morning; when you inhale the sweet fragrance of the dry earth after the rainfall; that experience of delight and thrill when you hold a new-born baby; if you want to describe all these feelings in one word.....that is *Hamd*. Through this one phrase "*Al-hamdulillah*" the Quran connects me to my Allah, every time I see a sign of His creation, which, in fact, is a sign of His presence. If I can truly absorb this one basic concept then how is it ever possible for me to spend any time without Allah's remembrance??

Even in a social aspect, in my dealings with people and things in general, it has given me a positive attitude towards life. I have learned that most of my problems arise from a lack of gratitude. Most of the time I am complaining of something or the other. And unless I saw myself in the mirror of Quran I would not be able to admit it. Only this great book has the power to make us realize what we truly are !! And through our daily contact with this Book we can learn to correct ourselves.

It was this daily contact that taught me the value of my five daily prayers. Previously I just used to fulfill a “duty” by chanting words while my heart and mind would go astray, forever pondering on the worries of the *duniya* and its endless cycle. Now I came to know that *salat* is actually, my direct communication with Allah, as well as my timely dose of a spiritual tonic to ensure my stability (and sanity !!) How merciful is our *Rabb* to have given us this blessing and making it the first and foremost obligation so that we might not be deprived of its numerous benefits. *Al-Hamdulillah!*

After outlining our complete agenda for life in *surah Fatihah*, Allah introduces his book in the most amazing introductory lines I have ever read:

*Zaalikal Kitaabu Laa Raiba feehi Hudallil muttaqeen*

“this is the book in which there is no doubt, a guidance to those who are Allah-conscious” (2:2)

How much confidence these words inspire in a person who is plagued with doubts of all kinds in this uncertain world ! It seems to beckon to you “Come here, there is no doubt, Take it with an easy mind, everything here is for your own good.....”

How could I not be moved? But you have to listen to Allah to believe it. I cannot give you the real taste of it by any description, however beautiful. Just like if I give you a description of grapes or mangoes or any fruit. I can only tell you my own feelings but you will have to taste it yourself to recognize and enjoy its flavour and fragrance.

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Writing all of this, takes me back into time and I remember how exciting it was to discover all this and much much more. The program of our Quranic studies was also very interesting, and apart from the daily *Tafseer* lectures, we had to learn the translation, review the explanation and prepare for the tests too !

I became a child again, as I sat with my children in the evenings and tried to put my rusty brain into action. How it creaked in the beginning ! But I carried on; my passion to be the best in Allah’s eyes, driving me forward. I thrived on this exercise of comprehension and memory; and derived a unique pleasure in reading out the translation in

the class without making any mistake! Learning the “*Tajweed*” (proper recitation) was also a new experience for me. I did find it very difficult in the beginning but with the passage of time I learned to love this activity so much that it became quite natural for me to copy any *Qari* (recitor) that I liked.

Then came the best part, the *tafseer* (explanation). Although we were going through the lectures by listening to tapes, yet our teacher, seemed to be present right in front of us. I used to hang on every word she spoke. Her love for Allah, her belief in the *akhirat* and her passion for the Quran seemed to affect us too. How well she taught us to look carefully at the text, to concentrate on the meaning and then to absorb the gist of every word, every verse and every chapter as it came along. Her biggest “*Ehsaan*” (favour) on me is that she taught me to love Allah and His Prophet *s.a.w.* and made me feel proud of being a learner of the Quran.

*Seerah* classes, (which is a study of the Prophet’s life) were also conducted. I came to know how much ignorant I was about this topic. It’s a pity that we spend so many years in the name of education yet hardly a few of us really know who our Prophet was or How he spent his life. How can we claim to love him when we don’t even know what his teachings and mission were all about??

After the class there used to be some time for mutual discussion on whatever we had learned that day. All of us were encouraged to speak out. *Alhamdulillah* I got over my fear of public speaking from day-one. It surprised me how I could express my views in front of all those strangers.

But then, they did not remain strangers for long. Gradually we got to know one another and developed an easy friendship. Where I had always remained reserved and aloof, I found an environment in which I could also let go of myself and make friends. They did not care “who” I was but “what” I was. Every morning a whole bunch of buddies would welcome me with “real” smiles on their faces and genuine warmth in their handshakes. No wonder I had felt so alive, so happy in the absolute sense of the word.

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It would have been impossible not to bring that happiness into my home! With open eyes and an open heart I saw my loved ones and was grateful to Allah for giving me such a lovely family. Not only my home life but my relationship with my relatives and people in general, took a positive turn. I still had the tendency to fall back onto previous habits but at least I could see where I was going wrong instead of always finding fault with others. When you realize that the solution to most of your problems lies in yourself then its just a matter of making that extra effort.

At least you stop feeling helpless because you know Allah is with you to help you in any rough spot that you might fall into. So even if I had to face setbacks and disappointments; sometimes by my own behaviour sometime by others, I still had the assurance that I am not alone. Besides, I had no time to brood ! there was enough work to occupy my mind and my time.

And time flies..... Soon our stay at Islamabad came to an end. With a heavy heart, I said farewell to my friends and teachers and moved to a new phase of my life at a small station, in the beginning of July 2004.

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*Alhamdulillah* , by that time I had done eight *paras* and was very confident that Allah will not let me go astray if I stayed true to my commitment . I set up my house at record speed so that I might get in touch with my studies with the shortest possible gap. Thanks to the Al-Huda website, I downloaded the lessons and after my children started school, I resumed my “class”.....this time alone in a quiet room. We had a jungle at the back of our small, ancient house; and with its low roof and narrow galleries, I almost believed myself to be transported into another world. It brings to mind a verse that I read somewhere :

*“connected to a timeless place  
a world where I am me  
a dream where I walk at my own pace  
and see what I can be”*

It took me some time to adjust to the quietness and solitude but soon I realized that it was Allah’s special plan for me that I should be able to give my whole attention to the continuation of my study of the Quran without any distractions whatsoever. The lesson of positive attitude i.e. *Sabar* and *shukr* that I had learned at the start of my course was being tested here. I could choose to call this situation, a great blessing from Allah and make use of this time; or I could complain about my loneliness and lack of human support and bonding, and waste this opportunity in self pity. I took the first choice and Allah granted me immense peace and inner joy of a unique kind.

The only disturbing factor was that inspite of all my efforts I could not complete the *paras* at a good pace. I was too slow in my writing. But I kept in touch with the correspondence department of Al-huda and took the tests of the *paras* regularly which they sent me by post. It was good for my evaluation besides giving me a feeling of being connected. Everytime I would get a checked paper, it gave me a childlike joy to

discover my marks! So I kept moving on, at a slow and steady pace and completed 17 *paras* by 31<sup>st</sup> march, 2005. I remember that date because of a most shocking incident that happened the next morning and which left a permanent mark on our lives.

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On the morning of April 1, 2005, my uncle was held up and shot twice in the head at point-blank range, no more than one hundred meters from his home in Karachi DHA, as he was being driven to work. He died instantly. He was a most loving, generous and kind hearted person. And he did not have any feud or even a quarrel with anybody. That is what made this tragedy even more difficult to accept.

For my whole family it was extremely painful to bear his loss. But I had a firm belief that Allah is kind and merciful. He loves us. He cannot do "Zulm" (injustice) on his creatures. There has to be a meaning in such a devastating tragedy. So instead of complaining "Why did he do it?" I should ask Allah for *sabar* and try to concentrate on what I should do and what is it that He wants me to do?

In the words of the Quran in *surah Mulk* verse no.1 and 2 Allah says:

*"Blessed be He in whose hands is the dominion, and he is able to do all things. Who has created death and life, that He may test you which of you is the best in deed. And He is the All-Mighty, the Oft-forgiving."*  
(67:1-2)

I was once again amazed at the soothing power of the Quran and its strong hold over my heart and soul. Not only did it give me solace in my grief, rather it was a means to keep my thoughts in the right perspective. And I was convinced that my uncle's death is not without purpose. It is a test by which Allah wants us to change our lives and become **Akhirat**-conscious.

So I expressed these thoughts in a letter and mailed it to all my relatives, inviting them to read the Quran and start thinking about what we have been doing so far. I also stressed the point that we will be doing this for my uncles's "*Isaal-e-sawab*" as well as our own salvation.

I was amazed at my courage because I had never done anything like this before. Then I got an answer to my letter but in a totally unexpected way. Some people came to offer condolences and a lady started off by saying the usual things..... How sad it was and so on. But I answered her in the same words that I had written in my mail..... that Allah is merciful and He does not do anything without a plan.....and all that I had been thinking, poured out.

She gave me a call a couple of days later and asked me if I could teach her the Quran. I was glad and terrified at the same time. On the appointed day, I spent the whole night with open eyes and a fearful (yet hopeful) heart. And she came and Allah put the love of the Quran in her heart as well. She is MaashAllah such a bright learner. And then some days later I met another woman who was devastated by the death of her two small children. I tried to comfort her by showing her the healing power of the Quran. This time I was more confident because by that time I had realized that it was not me who was doing it but Allah was putting this love of people in my heart, which made me want to help them.

The strange thing is that I am not out-going at all but Allah kept sending these women to me, one after the other, who were totally strangers and now they are my best friends. They are all learning the Quran through cassettes and online lectures and I just maintain a regular contact for moral support.

So whenever I think about my uncle, and how tragic his departure was from this world, I turn my thoughts to Allah and my heart is filled with peace that his pain will not go unrewarded.

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All of this and a lot more that has happened to me so far, would not have been possible without the light of the Quran. As Allah says in a beautiful verse of surah Al-Maida Verse - 16:

*“Wherewith, Allah guides all those who seek his good pleasure, to ways of peace, and He brings them out of darkness, by his will, unto light, and guides them to a straight way” (5:16)*

So life moved on and by the middle of August 2005, my husband was transferred to a non family post and I moved, with my children, to Rawalpindi. This was again a test of nerves in which I sought comfort and support from my ever growing belief in Allah and His mercy. It was not easy to put aside my fears completely but as soon as we moved in our apartment, Allah’s help came in the form of my neighbour who welcomed me wholeheartedly. She told me how she had wanted to study the Quran but there was no class nearby. I wasted no time in telling her about my own pattern of study and so began our friendship. We would do our lessons separately and then got together for discussions. And so it was the Quran that helped me in those difficult days of living without the support of my husband.

Soon afterwards, I started writing short comments on the *Ayaat* of the Quran. It was very important for me to record all the impressions because as I neared the end of the Quran, the pictures of paradise and hell became more and more vivid; and at times the day of recompense seemed to be waiting just around the corner.

The scenes of Hell are terrifying. As in chapter-78 , verse-21—25, Allah says;

*“Truly, Hell is a place of ambush; A dwelling place for those who transgress the boundaries. They will abide therein for ages; Nothing cool shall they taste therein, nor any drink, Except boiling water, and dirty wound discharges (i.e. pus etc ).”*

On the other hand there is the paradise, for those who strive to please their Lord in this world.....

*“So Allah saved them from the evil of that day, and gave them a light of beauty and joy. And their recompense shall be Paradise, and silken garments, because they were patient. Reclining therein on raised thrones, they will see there neither the excessive heat of the sun nor the excessive bitter cold. And the shade thereof is close upon them and the bunches of fruit thereof will hang low within their reach” ( 76: 11—14)*

The Quran urged me forward:

*Wa fi zalika fal yatanaafasil mutanaafisun (83:26)*

And for this, let those compete, who want to compete !!

After going through all this , I wonder how is it possible not to change our attitude towards life, towards people, towards Allah, towards each and every object in this universe that has been made for us.

In that third and final phase of my journey I had the most excruciating experience of “*Tazkiyah*” ( self-analysis) as *ayat* after *ayat* prompted my brain to bring forth long forgotten memories and the negative emotions associated with them. It was very difficult at times to face all the evil inside me but I also knew that until and unless I admitted those flaws, I would never be able to extract them out of myself. So I underwent a sort of major surgery in which the *surahs* about the day of judgement and hell, simply tore at my heart and soul, but side by side Allah would put the soothing balm of hope by depicting the most picturesque scenes from *Jannat*. Its beauty and bliss, the waterfalls of crystal clear water, the dense green gardens, the various fruits, the graceful people.....no more worries, complete and ultimate satisfaction, happiness, Success.....all of this seemed to mesmerize me and moved me towards making myself good enough for all those rewards.

The last two *paras* were especially eye-opening, and my excitement was reinforced by an ever increasing sense of responsibility. To know that from now on I cannot do anything rash, that might harm the image of Quran, weighed heavy on my conscience. And on the other hand it was balanced by a feeling of intense gratitude and humility that Allah had chosen me to receive this extraordinary blessing of Quran. I knew it in my heart that the most beautiful way to do *shukr* was to act upon its teachings and also to connect others with their Creator through Quran. In other words, I had finally found **the purpose** of my life.

But putting it into action is my real test. How to confront age old prejudices in the hearts of people who have been conditioned into thinking that they can do without religion. How to make them realize that there is a vacuum in their lives which can only be filled by knowing Allah, by having a day to day communication with Allah. How to make them see the absurdity of saying that they believe in the Quran without their ever having read a word of it? I want to ask all the religious people that if religion was just acting upon a few rituals then why did Allah send the Quran ? Why did our beloved Prophet spent 23 years of his life in all sorts of trials and tribulations while receiving the revelation little by little. Are we not even curious to find out, after all, what was about this Book that changed their world in just a few years?

At times it seems to be almost an impossible task to reach out to people. But in this also, my Quran is my perfect guide and mentor. One of my most favourite verses are from Surah Ha-meem As-Sajdah;

*“verily, those who say : our lord is Allah and then they are steadfast, on them the angels will descend (saying): ‘fear not, nor grieve! But receive the glad tidings of Paradise which you have been promised. We are your friends in the life of this world and in the Hereafter. Therein you shall have (all) that your inner-selves desire, and therein you shall have (all) for which you ask for. An entertainment from (Allah), the Oft-forgiving, most Merciful.”*

*And who is better in speech than he who invites (men) to Allah and does righteous deeds, and says: “ I am one of the Muslims.” The good deed and the evil cannot be equal. Repel (the evil) with one which is better, then verily! he, between whom and you, there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend. But none is granted it, except those who are patient , and none is granted it except the owner of great portion (of the happiness in the hereafter)*

*And if an evil whisper from Satan tries to turn you away, then seek refuge in Allah. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower. (41:30-36)*

These verses remind me of my commitment with Allah and the purpose of my life in this world. There is a strong message in them that if I want to be the best in Allah's eyes then I will have to keep the rewards of *Akhirat* in my mind and let go of my ego in every situation. I will have to bear negative attitudes with patience and do good even if someone doesn't "deserve" it, in my opinion. Only then can I hope to achieve the level of success that has been stated in this passage.

I also have to keep reminding myself that self development is a life long process. It takes patience and hard work. On one hand I have to keep praying to Allah and on the other hand I should seek His protection from our biggest enemy.....the *shaitaan*.

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By the Grace of Allah, I reached the end of the Quran on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2006.

My heart overflows with Love and Gratitude for Allah that He has given me the greatest blessing of Quran. It has been the most amazing experience of my life through which I came to know the truth about Allah and His Prophet *s.a.w.* and learned how to relate that knowledge to my own self and the world. My days and nights have been filled with an ever present joy and deep contentment of having a constant relationship with Allah through His Book, about which Allah says

*"O mankind! there hath come to you a direction from your Lord and a healing for the (diseases) in your hearts,- and for those who believe, a guidance and a Mercy.*

*Say: "In the bounty of Allah. And in His Mercy,- in that let them rejoice": that is better than what they hoard"*

Through this journey of enlightenment I have come to understand the true purpose of my life and that is to live my life according to the teachings of Quran and Sunnah, so that I might save myself from fire and earn the rewards of everlasting peace and happiness in Paradise. It is also my responsibility to spread this awareness to the whole world.

I am forever grateful to my parents for their love and kindness. And to my husband and children, for their openheartedness (and

courage!) who have put up with me, all along. And to all of my friends and teachers for their valuable support.

I would like to end, by extending my heartfelt gratitude and prayers to my wonderful teacher, Dr. Farhat Hashmi, who made the Quran so easy and interesting for me to understand. May Allah make every student of hers a sadqa-e-jaria for her. Ameen.