



Alhamdulillah, I was born to loving parents who made a change in their lives – change for Deen to become the objective of their lives and the lives of their progeny till Qiyaamah. So with the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ala, I did not face any challenge within my home, as the environment in our home had already been created and was an environment of Deen and the sunnah.

But yes, I did face many challenges. Most of us do at some point in our lives, and maybe we face the hardest challenges (when it comes to hijab and niqaab) with our own family and relatives.

Although I grew up with some of my cousins, my siblings and I were always different (we did not go to every place that they went to and we did not do everything they did). We dressed differently, our lifestyles were different and we were home schooled.

Being little, we played together, we prayed together and weekends were spent together (but my parents did not compromise on the manner in which they were raising us). But things began to change when we reached pre-teens...

I started wearing the niqaab early, before salaah etc. became fardh on me, and it was entirely my own choice to do so. Initially, I even felt like I couldn't breathe with my niqaab and felt extremely hot in it! Alhamdulillah, about ten months later, I began making purdah (not interacting with and remaining concealed) from boy cousins, non-mahram uncles and all non-mahram men, only with the favour of my Rabb.

Some would make it a point of discussing certain places or topics which they knew would make me feel totally uncomfortable! They would comment on the modest dressing of myself or my siblings. I became a stranger to them, as if I was an alien from mars! Just because I did not

allow a photograph of myself to be taken or I did not take photos myself... Just because I wore a burqa over my cloak... Just because I made purdah from boy cousins...

It hurt... They were not making fun of me. To me, they were making fun of Deen. May Allah Ta'ala protect and save us all and our progeny till Qiyaamah, aameen.

There were naturally many braais, family functions, engagements, weddings, etc. which we did not attend as our purdah would have definitely been compromised. Grandparents and relatives would become upset and we were made to feel as if we were in the wrong. However, time passes.

Eventually, grandparents and relatives came to realize that I was not trying to practice on Deen because of my father. I don't know why some people feel that my loving father was strict in the way he brought me up. If a child's upbringing is on Deen and the sunnah, why is it regarded as strict? To me, it is pure and true love, as my parents are making an effort to protect me from so many evils and are concerned about my Aakhirah which is everlasting!

We often face the challenge: The happiness of family vs The happiness of Allah Ta'ala.

Regarding this challenge, I always think of this hadeeth, which I have heard or read in ta'leem: 'Aishah (radhiyallahu 'anha) narrates that Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) said something to this effect: "He who seeks Allah Ta'ala's pleasure at the cost of people's anger, Allah will suffice him against the trouble caused by people, and he who seeks the pleasure of people at the cost of Allah's anger, Allah will leave him to the people." (Sunan Tirmizi #2414)

Sometimes or many a times, we are made to feel like strangers for practicing on Deen and adhering to the sunnah. May Allah Ta'ala bless us with the glad tidings of our beloved Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) who said, "Islam had commenced like a stranger in the world (outwardly seeming like the odd one out in society), and soon before Qiyaamah, Islam will again be seen as a stranger (among the people). Glad tidings be for those who are regarded as strangers (on account of them remaining steadfast on Deen)." (Saheeh Muslim #372)

Alhamdulillah when there is a good environment at home, and the father and mother are on the same Deeni wavelength, then it becomes easy and natural for the children to practice Deen. I can only thank Allah Ta'ala for the decisions my loving parents made. I do not feel like I was deprived of anything! The first step of doing any good is hard – like the feeling of not being able to breathe the first few times I wore my purdah!

Once, I attended a ta'leem programme for young girls. The 'Aalim that addressed us from behind the screen mentioned, "When we take a step to obey or get closer to Allah Ta'ala, our battle with Shaitaan starts. All along he was not worried about us, but when we decide to make Deen and the sunnah our objective, he will try harder to dissuade us from achieving our goal."

Beloved sister! Maybe you are not wearing the niqaab and making purdah, but just respect the girl or woman who is. Make it easy for her to remain committed to Deen and her purdah. Encourage her – tell her that you admire her for taking a step closer to Allah Ta'ala.

O Allah! Bless us all with true modesty and chastity and fill our entire being with noor and hayaa. O Allah! Give us the courage to do good and the strength to stay away from all types of evil, aameen.