

## Identity, Empowerment and Change, Handout 13

### On My Mother's Lap

I grew up reading the Qur'an on my mother's lap. It's an experience shared by most Muslim children. It's usual, once children are about four or five, for mothers to start reading the Qur'an and getting the child to repeat the words, again and again, till they become familiar and can be easily recited from memory.

Actually, I started a little late - when I was pushing six. In those days, we lived in a small town on the Pakistani side of the Punjab. After dinner every Thursday evening, my mother would shout: 'Sipara time!'. I would stop playing, run to her, jump on her lap, and put my left arm around her neck. She would open a slim, rather torn booklet, and start reading: Bismil-Lahir-Rahmanir-Rahim. In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful. I remember how she would pronounce each word distinctly and separately. I would repeat each word after her and then she'd have me repeat them again to make sure I pronounced each word correctly.

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