

We used to have Islamic studies teachers – *qari sahibs* – who came to our home to teach the Quran to me and other local children. By the time the Taliban came I had finished my recitation of the complete Quran, what we call *Khatam ul-Quran*, much to the delight of *Baba*, my grandfather the cleric. We recite in Arabic, and most people don't actually know what the verses mean, but I had also started learning them in translation. To my horror one *qari sahib* tried to justify Benazir's assassination. 'It was a very good job she was killed,' he said. 'When she was alive she was useless. She was not following Islam properly. If she had lived there would have been anarchy.'

I was shocked and told my father. 'We don't have any option. We are dependent on these mullahs to learn the Quran,' he said. 'But you just use him to learn the literal meaning of the words; don't follow his explanations and interpretation. Only learn what God says. His words are divine messages, which you are free and independent to interpret.'