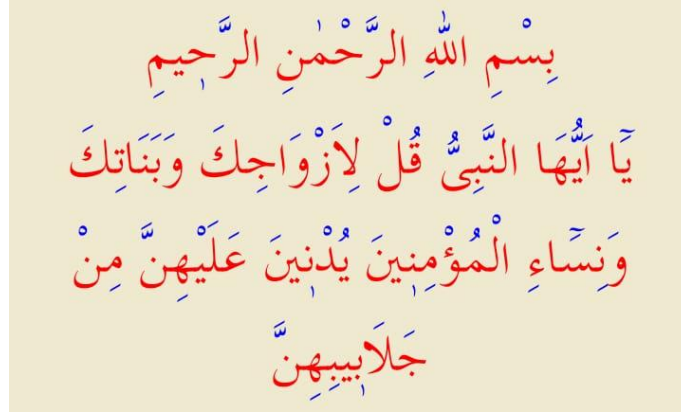


The Twenty-Fourth Flash

On Islamic Dress for Women

[While being the Second and Third Matters of the Fifteenth Note, this treatise was made the Twenty-Fourth Flash because of its importance.]



In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

O Prophet! Tell your wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons [when abroad] [to the end of the verse].⁽¹⁾

This verse enjoins the veiling of women. However, dissolute civilization opposes this command of the Qur'an; it does not consider the veiling of women to be natural and says it is slavery of a sort.⁽²⁾

The Answer: We shall explain only four of the many instances of wisdom in this injunction of the Qur'an, showing that it is entirely natural and those who oppose it are opposing the innate disposition of women.

⁽¹⁾ Qur'an, 33:59.

⁽²⁾ Part of my defence for the Appeal Court, which opposed the [Eskishehir] Court and silenced it: "I say to this court of law that if there is justice on the face of the earth, it will surely quash the decision to convict a person who has expounded a most sacred, true, and right Divine principle which has been in force in the social life of three hundred and fifty million people every century for one thousand three hundred and fifty years, relying on the confirmation and unanimity of three hundred and fifty thousand Qur'anic commentaries and following the beliefs of our forefathers for one thousand three hundred and fifty years; it will surely quash such a ruling!"

FIRST INSTANCE OF WISDOM

To veil themselves is natural for women and their innate dispositions demand it. For women are weak and delicate, and since they are in need of a man's protection and help for themselves and for their children whom they love more than their own lives, they have a natural desire to make themselves loved and not loathed, and not to be rebuffed.

Also, seven out of ten women are either old or ugly, and they do not want to show their age and ugliness to everyone. Or they are jealous, and they do not want to appear ugly in relation to others who are more beautiful. Or they are frightened of assault or aspersions, and want by nature to cover themselves so as not to suffer assault, nor to be accused of unfaithfulness in the eyes of their husbands. If noted carefully, those who hide themselves most are the elderly. And out of ten women, only two or three may be found who are both young and beautiful and are not discomforted at displaying themselves.

It is clear that people are discomforted by the looks of those they do not like or find tedious; they are upset by them. If a beautiful immodestly dressed woman takes pleasure at two or three out of ten men who are canonically strangers looking at her, she is bored by the seven or eight. Also, since a woman whose morals are not corrupted is sensitive and easily affected, she will certainly be distressed at dirty looks whose effects have been physically experienced, indeed, are poisonous. We even hear that in Europe, the place of open dress, many women are fed up at being the object of attention, and complain to the police, saying: "These brutes keep staring at us and disturbing us." This means that present-day civilization's unveiling women is contrary to their natures. And together with being in accordance with their natures, the Qur'an's command to veil themselves, saves women—those mines of compassion who may be worthy companions for all eternity—from degeneration, abasement, what is in effect slavery, and wretchedness.

Furthermore, by nature women are fearful of men who are strangers, and anxious at them. Fear naturally demands the veiling of women. For in addition to suffering the difficulty of bearing the load of a child for eight or nine months, which certainly embitters the eight or nine minutes' pleasure, there is also the possibility of suffering the calamity of bringing up a child for eight or nine years without protector.

And since this happens frequently, by creation they truly fear strange men and by nature want to hide themselves from them. Being weak, their creation demands that through veiling themselves they do not excite the appetites of men outside the stipulated degrees of kinship, nor allow any opportunity for assault; their weak creation gives powerful warning. It shows that their cloaks and coats are shields and fortresses. The fact that, according to news received, the bare-legged wife of a high-ranking man in the world was accosted in the country's capital, in the market-place in daylight in front of everyone by a common shoe-shiner, deals a slap in the shameless faces of those opposed to the veiling of women!

SECOND INSTANCE OF WISDOM

The authentic and extremely intense relationship, love, and affection between men and women does not arise only from the needs of worldly life. Yes, a woman is not only a companion to her husband in this worldly life, she is his companion also in eternal life. Since she is her husband's companion in eternal life, she surely should not attract the looks of others besides her husband, her everlasting friend and companion, and should not offend him and make him jealous. As a consequence of the mystery of belief, her believing husband's relations with her are not confined to this worldly life and his love is not only animal and temporary, during the time of her beauty; he holds true, earnest love and respect for her in regard to her being his companion in eternal life. And he bears that love and respect for her, not only during her youth when she is beautiful, but also when she is old and ugly. Certainly in return for this, she should show her beauties to him alone and restrict her love to him; this is demanded by humanity. Otherwise she would gain very little and lose much.

According to the Shari'a, the husband should be a good match for the wife. That is, they should be suitable to one another. The most important aspect of this being suitable is from the point of view of religion.

Happy the husband who sees the wife's firm religion and follows her, and himself becomes pious in order not to lose his companion of eternal life.

Happy the wife who sees her husband's firmness in religion and becomes pious so as not to lose her eternal friend.

Alas for the man who becomes dissolute, which will lose him for ever that righteous woman.

Alas for the woman who does not follow her pious husband and loses her eternal blessed friend.

And a thousand woes on the unhappy husband and wife who imitate each other in sin and vice, helping one another to enter Hell-fire!

THIRD INSTANCE OF WISDOM

Happy family life is perpetuated through mutual confidence between husband and wife, and heartfelt respect and love. Immodest dress and free-and-easy behaviour destroy the confidence, and spoil the mutual respect and love. For out of ten women who favour immodest dress only one will not try to make herself liked by strangers because she does not find other men more attractive than her husband. Nine out of ten will find others better than their husbands. And only one out of twenty men will not find other women more attractive. Then besides the true love and mutual respect disappearing, it may arouse extremely ugly and base feelings, as follows:

By nature, men do not feel any lust towards those within the stipulated degrees of kinship like their sisters, because, since such relatives' faces induce kindness and licit love due to their close kinship, it nullifies any sexual or lusty inclinations. But to leave uncovered parts of the body which according to the Shari'a it is not permissible to expose to close relatives like the legs, may give rise to the awakening of extremely ugly feelings in men of low character. Because the face of a close relative reminds the man of that close kinship and does not resemble the face of someone outside the degrees of kinship, but a bare leg is the same as that of canonical strangers. Since the leg does bear any distinguishing mark to recall the close kinship of its

owner, it is possible it will arouse carnal feelings in the man. And to look on things such as that is a degenerateness that makes one's hair stand on end.

FOURTH INSTANCE OF WISDOM

It is clear that everyone wants lots of children. There is no nation or government that does not support increase in population. In fact, the Most Noble Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) said:

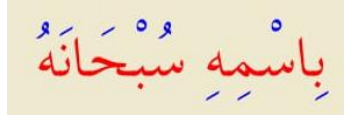
تَنَّاكُحُوا تَكَاثَرُوا فَإِنِّي أَبَاهِي بِكُمْ الْاُمَمَ

“Marry and increase, for at the Last Day I shall take pride in your large numbers.”⁽³⁾ However, the abandoning of Islamic dress for women does not increase marriage, it decreases it greatly. Because even the most lay-about and modern youth wants his wife to be chaste. He does not want her to be modern, that is, careless in questions of dress and morals like himself, and so remains single, and even frequents prostitutes.

Women are not like that, they cannot restrict their husbands' behaviour to that extent. The most basic characteristic of women is loyalty and confidence—since being the director of all the matters to do with the home, the woman is charged with protecting and preserving all her husband's property and possessions, and his children. Carelessness in dress and morality destroys that loyalty, her husband too loses confidence in her and makes her suffer pangs of conscience. In fact, if the two qualities of courage and generosity, which are desirable in men, are found in women, it damages this loyalty and confidence, and so are undesirable for women and are considered to be bad qualities. But since the husband's duty is not loyalty and stewardship, but protection, kindness, and respect, he cannot be restricted and refined, and may marry other women as well. Our country cannot be compared with Europe, because there honour may be preserved to a degree by violent means such as the duel, despite immodest dress. A person who makes eyes at the wife of a self-respecting man takes his life in his hands, and then looks. Also the people of Europe are cold and frigid, like the climate. Asia, that is, the lands of Islam, are relatively torrid countries. It is well-known that the environment has an effect on people's morality. Perhaps in those cold countries immodest dress does not stimulate the animal appetites and carnal desires of those cold people, and be a means of abuse. But immodest dress which continually excites the carnal lusts of the easily influenced and sensitive people of hot countries is certainly the cause of much abuse and waste and the weakening of the young generation and a loss of strength. Instead of answering natural needs one a month or every three weeks or so, a person considers it necessary every few days. And then, since he is obliged to avoid his wife for perhaps two weeks out of every month due to contingencies like her monthly period, if he is defeated by his appetites, he will incline to houses of ill-fame.

(3) al-Munawi, Fayzu'l-Qadir iii, 269 no: 3366; al-Ajluni, Kashfu'l-Khafa 1021; Suyuti, Jami'u's-Saghir no:3366.

The veiling of women may not be abolished on the pretext of the women of small towns and villages and nomad women, for innocent working-women and somewhat coarse women being partially unveiled due to their working to secure their livelihoods and their physical, wearying labour does not excite carnal desires. Moreover, since idle, lay-about men are few, not even one in ten of the immoral men of the large towns can be found among them. Such a comparison should not therefore be made.



In His Name, be He glorified!

A Conversation with the Women, My Believing Sisters of the Hereafter

At the time I returned to blessed Isparta, which bears the meaning of the Medresetü'z-Zehra,(1) for the third time, I had seen the sincere and enthusiastic interest shown by women towards the Risale-i Nur in some other provinces, and had realized that in a way far exceeding my due they had confidence in my instruction in it. I heard then that the women in Isparta, my blessed sisters of the Hereafter, were waiting to receive instruction from me, as though I was going to instruct them in mosques in the manner of preaching. I was ill with five or so different illnesses, in a wretched state, not even having the strength to speak and think, yet that night the following was imparted to my heart, impellingly: "Fifteen years ago you wrote 'A Guide for Youth' at the request of some youths and it was a source of benefit for many. Women, however, are in even greater need of a guide at this time.' Despite my extreme weakness, wretchedness, and powerlessness, in the face of this warning, I wrote very concisely in three Points a number of necessary matters which I now explain to my blessed sisters and young spiritual offspring.

FIRST POINT

Since one of the most basic principles of the Risale-i Nur is compassion and women are champions of compassion, they are by nature more closely connected with the Risale-i Nur than others. Praise be to God, this natural sympathy is felt in many places. The self-sacrifice within this compassion wants nothing in return and expresses true sincerity, and so is of the greatest importance at this time.

Yes, the fact that wanting nothing in return, a mother will sacrifice her life to save her young from danger, as the demand of her nature and with true sincerity, shows that women are capable of great heroism. Through developing this heroism, they may save their lives both in this world and in the Hereafter by means of it. However, this important attribute does not unfold under the influence of certain bad currents of thought. Or else it is exploited. A small example out of hundreds is as follows:

(1) Before 1914 and the First World War in Van, a name of the 'Oriental University' that Ustad Bediüzzaman Said Nursi attempted to open and laid the foundations of in Artemid. Later it became the name of the places where Risale-i Nur was read and written.

A compassionate mother undertakes every sort of self-sacrifice so that her child should not fall into danger in this worldly life and should receive every sort of benefit and advantage; she brings him up with this in view. Thinking, "My son is going to be a Pasha," she gives him all her property, takes him from the Qur'an school and sends him to Europe. But it does not occur to her that her child's eternal life has fallen into danger. She tries to save him from prison in this world, and does not take into consideration his being sentenced to the prison of Hell. And as the complete opposite of innate compassion, she makes her innocent child a claimant against her in the Hereafter, while he should be her intercessor. He will complain to her saying: "Why did you not strengthen my belief and so cause me to be lost?" And in this world too, since he did not receive a proper Islamic upbringing, he cannot respond to his mother's wondrous compassion in the way it deserves; in fact he does so very deficiently.

If, not misdirecting her true compassion, she works to save her unhappy child from the everlasting incarceration of Hell and from dying while in misguidance, which is to go to eternal extinction, the equivalent of each of the child's good works will pass to the book of good deeds of his mother, and just as after her death he will continuously send lights to her spirit with his good works, so too in the Hereafter, he will be not a claimant, but with all his spirit and life an intercessor for her, and a blessed child of her's for all eternity.

Yes, man's first master and most influential teacher is his mother. In connection with this, I shall explain the following to you, which I have always felt strongly in my own self:

I am eighty years old and have received lessons from eighty thousand people. Yet I swear that the truest and most unshakeable lessons I have received are those inculcated in me by my late mother, which have always remained fresh for me. They have been planted in my nature as though they were seeds planted in my physical being. I observe that other instruction I have received has been constructed on those seeds. That is to say, the lessons instilled in my nature and spirit by my mother when I was one year old I now see at the age of eighty to be each fundamental seeds amid great truths.

For instance, I consider it certain that I learnt to be compassionate, which is the most important of the four principles of my way, and to be kind and clement, which is the greatest truth of the Risale-i Nur, from the compassionate behaviour and acts of my mother and from her teaching. Yes, the compassion of motherhood bears true sincerity and true self-sacrifice, but not thinking of the Hereafter—a treasury of diamonds for her innocent child—and to turn his face towards this world, which is like temporary, transient fragments of glass, and to be kind to him in that way, is to misuse that compassion.

A proof of this heroism of women in regard to compassion, which wants absolutely no recompense and nothing in return, and of their sacrificing their very spirits, which bears no meaning of personal benefit and no show, is that a hen, which bears a tiny sample of that compassion, will attack a lion and sacrifice its life for its chicks.

Now, the most valuable and most essential principle in Islamic training and deeds pertaining to the Hereafter, is sincerity. Such true sincerity is to be found in the heroism of this kind of compassion. If these two points begin to develop among women, it will be the means to considerable happiness within the World of Islam. When it comes to the heroism of men, it can never be for nothing; they always want recompense in perhaps a hundred ways. At the very least they want glory and renown. But regrettably, unfortunate women practise hypocrisy in another form in order to be saved from the evil and oppression of tyrannical men; this sort arises from weakness and impotence.

SECOND POINT

This year, despite having withdrawn from the life of society and being in seclusion, I looked at the world for the sake of some of my brothers and sisters who were Risale-i Nur students. From most of the friends who visited me I heard complaints about their family lives. "Alas!", I said, "The refuge of people, and particularly of Muslims, and a sort of Paradise, and a small world, is family life. Has this started to break up as well now?" I sought the reason, and I understood that one or two covert groups were working to mislead youth and drive the young to vice by means of their appetites, in order to cause harm to the social life of Islam, and thereby to the religion of Islam. I also realized that one or two groups were working covertly and effectively to drive neglectful women down the wrong road. I understood too that a severe blow would be dealt to this Muslim nation from that quarter. And so I categorically state the following to you my sisters and spiritual children:

The sole means of saving women's happiness in the Hereafter, and their happiness in this world, as well as saving their elevated innate qualities from corruption, is the training given by the religion of Islam; there is no other means. You hear about the situation into which the unfortunate women of Russia have fallen. It says in one part of the Risale-i Nur that no man of sense builds love and affection for his wife on her fleeting, superficial beauty of five to ten years. He should build his love on her fine conduct, the most permanent and best of beauty, which is particular to womanhood and its compassion. In that way, when the unfortunate advances in years, her husband's love for her will persist. For his wife is not merely a temporary helper and companion in this worldly life, but an eternal, lovable companion for everlasting life, so the older they grow they should increase also in love for each other, and compassion, and respect. Family life now, which, under the guise of culture and civilization is a temporary animal relationship followed by eternal separation, is being destroyed at its very foundations.

In another place in the Risale-i Nur it says: "Happy the man who in order not to lose his companion of eternity, copies his righteous wife and so becomes righteous himself. And happy the woman who, seeing her husband to be pious, adheres to religion herself so as not to lose her everlasting friend and companion. Unhappy the man who follows his wife in sin, does not try to make her give it up, but joins her. And unhappy the woman who, seeing her husband's sinfulness, follows him in another way. And alas for the wife and husband who assist one another in throwing each other into the Fire. That is, who encourage one another to embrace the evils of civilization."

The meaning of these lines from the Risale-i Nur is this: at this time, the only means of developing family life and finding happiness in this world and the Hereafter, and causing the elevated qualities of women to unfold, is Islamic conduct within the bounds of the Shari'a. Now, the most important point in family life is this, that if the woman sees bad conduct and disloyalty in her husband, and to spite her husband, stints in her loyalty and faithfulness to him, her duty as far as the family is concerned, then the factory of that family life will be thrown into confusion, exactly like discipline in the army being spoilt. The woman should rather try to reform her husband's faults as far as she can in order to save her companion of eternity. If she starts to show herself to others by unveiling herself and tries to make herself attractive to others, it is harmful in every respect. For a woman who gives up complete loyalty pays the penalty in this world too. Because it is her nature to be fearful and upset at the looks of those canonically strangers to her, and to avoid them. She is discomforted at the looks of eighteen out of twenty strangers. As for men, they are discomforted and upset at the looks of only one out of a hundred women who are canonically strangers to them. The woman suffers torment in that respect, and so too may be accused of disloyalty, and due to her weakness, will be unable to protect her rights.

I n S h o r t : Just as in respect of compassion women do not resemble men in heroism and sincerity, and men cannot compare with them in that regard, so too innocent women can in no way compare with men in vice. For this reason by their natures and weakness, they are truly frightened of strangers and consider themselves compelled to conceal themselves beneath their abundant outer garments. Because, if for eight minutes' pleasure a man commits sin, he only suffers a loss of eight liras. But as the penalty of the pleasure of eight minutes' sin, in this world too the woman bears a heavy load for eight months and then has the hardship of rearing the unprotected child for eight years. She therefore cannot compete with men in vice and pays a penalty a hundred times greater.

The not infrequent incidents of this sort show that just as by nature women are the source of elevated morals, so do they virtually lack the capacity for worldly pleasure in vice and dissipation. That is to say, they are a type of blessed creature created to pass happy lives in the family within the bounds laid down by Islam. God damn those covert groups who are corrupting these blessed creatures! And may Almighty God preserve my sisters from the evil of such dissolute wretches.

My sisters! I have this to say to you confidentially: rather than entering under the domination of a dissolute, immoral, Westernized husband due to straitened circumstances, try to economize and obtain your own livelihood like innocent peasant women with the frugality and contentment which is in your natures; do not try to sell yourselves. If it is your fate to have a husband who is unsuitable for you, be content with your fate and resigned to it. God willing, he will be reformed through your contentment and resignation. But to apply to the courts for a divorce, which I have heard of recently; that is not in keeping with the honour of Islam and this nation's good name!

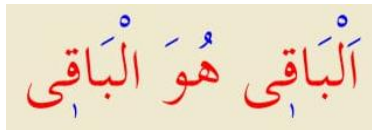
THIRD POINT

My dear sisters, you should be certain that as is demonstrated with powerful proofs and examples in the Risale-i Nur, present in pleasures and enjoyment outside the bounds of the licit are pains and distress ten times greater. You may find detailed expositions of this in the Risale-i Nur. For instance, the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Words from The Short Words and A Guide For Youth will show this truth to you completely in place of me. In which case, make do with licit pleasures and be content with them. Innocent conversation with your innocent children in your home is more pleasurable than a hundred cinemas.

You should also know certainly that true pleasure in the life of this world lies in belief and the sphere of belief. And there is an immaterial pleasure to be found in all good works. The Risale-i Nur has proved with hundreds of decisive evidences that even in this world most bitter and grievous suffering is present in vice and misguidance. I myself have experienced on numerous occasions as certainly as seeing it with my own eyes that present in belief is a seed of Paradise while in vice and misguidance is a seed of Hell. This truth is repeated many times in the Risale-i Nur. Although the Risale-i Nur has come into the hands of those who oppose it most obstinately and severely, they have been unable to refute this truth; neither have the 'committees of experts' and the courts been able to refute it. Now, my blessed and innocent sisters and your children who are like my spiritual children, foremost the Treatise on Islamic Dress, and A Guide For Youth, and The Short Words should teach you in my place.

I have heard that you want me to teach you in the mosque. But my wretched condition and my illness and many other reasons do not permit it. I have decided to include all my sisters who read and accept this instruction which I have written for you in all my prayers and spiritual gains, like all the students of the Risale-i Nur. If you obtain and read part of the Risale-i Nur in my place, or listen to it, then in accordance with my rule you will also have a share in the prayers and spiritual gains of all the Risale-i Nur students, your brothers.

I was going to write more now, but I am very ill and very weak and very old and have many duties like correcting copies of the Risale-i Nur, so for now I have sufficed with this much.



The Eternal One, He is the Eternal One!
Your brother who is in need of your prayers,
S a i d N u r s i