

A Muslim Student's Diary

I was feeling depressed yesterday because of Layla's words. She tried to prejudice the class against me, saying that my Islamic dress was nothing but immature behavior designed to attract attention. Her words were cutting and left me spiritually hurt. How difficult it is when a woman doubts her purpose in life! She often acts harshly towards Muslim women. I was shocked, dismayed and hurt by her words.

I thought about the matter at home and sought guidance from Allah. I realized that I was not immature, as Layla had claimed. In fact, being an adolescent is but a stage of an individual's physical and mental growth. At this stage, knowledge flourishes and rids itself of childhood confusion. One becomes used to life's contradictions.

Hence, my attitude towards hijab is not abnormal. I rationalized that attracting attention is not accomplished by wearing long garments, but through dressing without hijab. I used to go out in public without Islamic dress before Allah guided me to the right path. I could actually feel the sharp looks of men wherever I went. I always noticed and was embarrassed by their looks and their obvious pleasure at seeing an unlimited exposure of beauty. Now that I have my hijab on, what can they be attracted to? If they look, they see nothing to excite them. This hijab reminds them that a Sacred Law protects the blessed creatures of the Creator.

I have come to a conclusion: Layla does not understand her words and I only feel sorry for her. Her beauty may become spoiled by this corrupted society. I pray to Allah to help me guide her in understanding Islam.

Feb. 7th, 19...

Yesterday I was waiting for my friend, Wala, to come over so we could study for exams together. She did not show up, and I became worried. I waited for her to phone me but she didn't. She has just now phoned to apologize and to tell me that she isn't feeling well. I wished her a speedy recovery.

I like Wala very much because she is a good Muslim. Our beliefs, dreams and hopes are the same. We became friends at the beginning of the school years. Harmony in beliefs and ideals brings strangers

together, while disputes always leave close friends apart.

Today we are going to have our weekly Islamic meeting. We shall recite some Qur'anic verses and try to understand their meaning, than we will discuss religious subjects. I wonder if Wala is coming.

Feb. 12th, 19...

Our meeting last week was a real success. Despite her illness, Wala attended and gave an interesting lecture about religion's sublime aim. I, in turn, spoke about the issue of obedience and disobedience in regard to Islamic instructions. One of the sisters complained of her mother's insistence that she not wear hijab. This Muslim girl wondered if she had to obey her mother's orders, since obeying parents is a religious duty. I explained to her that she should obey her parents' orders as long as their rules did not violate religious instructions or cause Allah's displeasure. She can disobey her mother and keep her hijab to please her Creator.

March 2nd, 19...

I have really tried hard to make Layla listen to me. She has often been unyielding; however, I won't give up. I feel she has changed a bit. I gave her some Islamic books about why women should dress modestly. She accepted the books and promised to read them and discuss them with me.

When I visited Layla's home yesterday, she gave me a warm welcome. I shall never regret this visit. We discussed the Islamic books and she asked whether she could continue her high school studies with hijab. I assured her that Islam has ordered both men and women to seek knowledge. The Prophet's hadith relates: "It is an Islamic duty for men and women to learn."

March 11th, 19...

How happy I am! I have seen Layla wearing her Islamic dress in school. She has become a good Muslim girl. In our history lesson today, the teacher claimed that if the Holy Qur'an were revealed today, it would not order woman to wear hijab, since woman today plays a significant role in society. She cannot be isolated within the house. I asked the teacher to allow me to answer her point of view. I told the class that: "Throughout history woman has been involved in society. In fact, she played a significant role in ancient civilizations. Women were queens and empresses. In the Holy Qur'an, for instance, the Queen of Saba is mentioned:

Surely I found a woman ruling over them and she has been given abundance and she has a mighty throne. (Al-Naml, 27:23)

"History also tells us of Cleopatra, who ruled Egypt and resorted to suicide when she was defeated by the Roman invaders. However, past civilizations generally considered women to be inferior to men. Some religions considered woman to be unclean and did not allow her to perform religious rituals or enter places of worship.

I continued, "Islam neither isolated woman nor belittled her contributions to society. On the contrary, Islam has given a woman equal rights, as is clearly stated in the Qur'anic verse:

"I will not waste the work of any worker among you whether male or a female; the one of you being from the other...I will most certainly make them enter gardens beneath which rivers flow; a reward from Allah, and with Allah is yet better reward." (Aale-Imran, 3: 194)

"In another Qur'anic verse concerning hijab, Islam does not address women only; men, as well, are ordered to cast down their eyes. Had Islam aimed at isolating woman, there would not have been the necessity for such an order:

Say to the believing men to cast down their looks and guard their private parts... and say to the believing women to cast down their looks and guard their private parts and not to display their ornaments except what appears thereof; and let them wear their head covering over their bosoms and not display their ornaments except to their husbands or their fathers or their sons... and turn to Allah all of you, oh, believers, so that you may be successful. (Al-Nur, 24: 37)

"Islamic history illustrates the role of women in the Muslim community. Women were present at the Prophet's battles. They nursed the wounded and supplied water and food to the believers. Some even carried a sword and defended Islam. The Prophet (SAWS) appreciated their role and gave them their share of the spoils. We also read in Islamic history that Muslim women held meetings to recite and interpret the Qur'an. Such evidence indicates that Islam never isolated women or negated their role in the community...

Furthermore; hijab is necessary for woman and is in harmony with her nature and man's nature too. Men are inclined naturally towards women and women are inclined to draw men towards them. Hence the exposure of woman without hijab in society can arouse the inner instincts that lead to sexual relations that affect not only individuals, but the family and the community as well. One illustration of this is in the Western so-called civilized societies where corruption and immorality are increasing and more and more homes are being broken."

March 26th, 19...

I have noticed recently that my dear friend Saffia does not look well. Though she has not missed our meetings, I feel something is wrong with her. I wish I could help her. I know nothing about her family. May be she needs money and does not want others to know about her hardship. She is quite wrong. Muslim believers do not care for an easy life, and they are kind to each other. What counts are good, righteous deeds as mentioned in the Qur'an:

As for the scum, it vanishes as jetsam, what profits men, abides in the earth. (Al-Ra'ad, 13: 17)

April 20th, 19...

At last I have discovered the reason for Saffia's uneasiness. She lives in a humble house and thinks this may cause her to be ashamed among her friends. I managed to make her change her opinion. I told her our great Prophet (SAWS), the greatest man in history who achieved the most sacred mission, was a poor man. He could have lived as a king or an emperor, but he did not. Fatimah (AS), his daughter, lived in a humble house with a minimum of furniture. The Prophet's companions lived the same sort of humble life. History relates that a great fire broke out in Al-Madyin (in Iraq) when the companion, Salman al-Farsi, was the ruler. People rushed to save their valuable possessions, but Salman carried nothing but a small bundle of clothes, a Qur'an, a prayer rug and a water pot. He was heard to have said, "In this way, light travelers are saved."

May 2nd, 19...

I came across an old friend of mine the other day. She used to be a very optimistic and active girl with tremendous belief in Islam. She never hated others or harbored any ill intention towards anybody. She trusted all her friends and was ready to help them in order to please Almighty Allah. Anyway, it had been a long time since I last saw her. I was so happy to meet her again, but I was shocked to see that she had changed into a different person with a pessimistic view towards life. She was sad to see that those around her never differentiated between good and bad deeds.

She had nearly lost confidence in everything and had resorted to living a solitary life, avoiding both friends and relatives. She was spiritually depressed. When I saw her in such a state, I realized she had been a victim of our deviated society. I told my friend, "Do you really regret your good deeds?" I felt the question put her at a loss. I hoped she would say "No", but she remained silent.

I said to her gently, "Say, no, please. Doing good is something wonderful and gives spiritual satisfaction. Never regret good actions. It is enough that you can examine your deeds and find that nothing shameful stains your record. Allah will surely reward you. Don't regret anything and don't be hopeless. Life is filled with promise and there are those who appreciate good deeds. Please don't allow disappointments in society cause you to hate it. If you fall, try again and remove this cloud of doubt in order to see more clearly. Keep on being a good righteous believer, think of Allah's reward and you will feel much better!" she listened to me attentively and I hope my words will be of some help.

May 22nd, 19...

Today a Muslim sister has asked me to explain a phrase in Du'a Kumail: "...Oh, Allah! I appeal to you by your Holy Names to make me pray to you day and night..."

The sister asked, "How could one pray continuously day and night? We live in an age that requires cooperation with others in order for us to carry out our various jobs and daily work. How can we put aside our duties and resort to du'a all the time?" I said to her, "Be at ease, sister. We are not supposed to pray day and night. Though it is a good habit that gains reward, this is not everything. Many people glorify and praise Allah with their tongues but forget Him in their deeds. We can enrich our lives with

prayer easily and without neglecting our duties.

"Religious rituals, such as daily prayers, can be reflected in our actions. If you are a good housewife, then you are a righteous individual glorifying Him day and night. One of the Prophet's traditions relates that a woman came to him and asked "what women could do in that way of jihad." The Prophet (SAWS) said, "Righteousness and good house management are features of good Muslim woman and are well-rewarded by Allah. A woman, whether she is a housewife or a young girl, can be in the service of Allah at all times if she gives help to the needy for the pleasure of Allah. Any help to others for the sake of heavenly reward is a du'a and a prayer to Allah the Exalted. Any hardship endured for the sake of elevating the Word of Allah is a prayer. Any good idea on behalf of the community's welfare is an act of worship."

Reference to Allah's bounties without the notion of *kibr* (self-pride), can be a prayer. A smile without the intention of flattery or pretension can be a prayer to Allah. But telling a person's secrets or someone's defect without the least necessity and for non-religious aim is disobedience to Allah's orders.

"Our final exams draw near and we should schedule our time wisely in order to pass them successfully and prove that Islamic activity can not hinder study or prevent reading. In fact, it can widen the scope of the brain and deepen thinking.

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