



al-raida

BEIRUT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

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FACTS ABOUT IWSAW

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) was created for the purpose of enlightening people in the Arab world and elsewhere regarding the actual status of woman in these countries, the problems derived from traditional laws and attitudes which society has adopted toward her, and the ways of handling these problems.

The task is, of course, very wide and requires a long-term commitment. The problems of Arab women are being studied and discussed by various other institutions. The plan of IWSAW (founded in 1973) has been to concentrate on a few practical activities: documentation concerning the status of the Arab woman; preparation of bibliographies; research; a newsletter; organization of, and participation in local and international conferences; and starting a course on women's studies at Beirut University College. Its latest activities have been, first, the planning of educational materials for illiterate and semi-literate women, dealing with health, nutrition, child care, family planning and civic education, to be used in women's centers, family planning clinics and on radio programs. Second, a series of coming publications dealing with the Arab woman and including the following: "A Survey on the Development of Higher Education of Women in the Arab World," "Status of the Arab Woman: A Selected Bibliography," to be published by Mansell Publishing House; a monograph in both English and Arabic on "The Female Industrial Worker in the Suburbs of Beirut" and two books in Arabic, one on "The Image of Women in Arabic Textbooks" and the other on "Contemporary Arab Women Poets".

A significant share of the Institute's interest is directed toward the needs of childhood and the ways to meet them, not only because the majority of women are actual or potential mothers but, more particularly, because the care and guidance of children during their formative years is mainly intrusted to women.

As a result of this genuine interest, exhibits of children's books have been organized by the Institute; a library for the use of children has been opened at the college; an art course for children has been successfully established by the college Fine Arts Department. A training workshop for kindergarten teachers was held by the Institute at the College in the summer of 1979. Another training course for pre-school teachers has been inaugurated, lasting over the spring semester, from February till June 1980. Another one is planned for next summer.

The most recent activity of IWSAW has been the establishment of a committee grouping women and men interested in promoting and producing good literature for children. The Committee has applied for membership in the International Board for Books for the Young (IBBY) and expects to soon launch its program of work.

This brief statement will hopefully reflect the IWSAW'S positive method of dealing with women's and children's problems in this part of the world.

Contents

Facts about IWSAW

PIONEER

Laila Abou-Saif 2

STUDIES

Survey on
College Women 3
Problems Faced
by Re-entry
Women to BUC 4
Creativity & Culture 5

CONFERENCES

Career Education for
Asian Women 6
Leadership Conference
at A.U.B. 7
Economic Commission for
Western Asia (ECWA) 8
Women of the Middle East
in Church and Society 9

ARTICLE

A survey of the Asian Women's
Institute's Activities
in 1979 10

BOOK REVIEW

The Age of Discretion 12
Beyond the Veil 14

RECENTLY RECEIVED BY IWSAW

LAILA ABOU-SAIF



A young Egyptian feminist who seeks self-realization through the films she has been producing. The heroines of her films share her spirit of defiance and a burning indefatigable desire to do something.

Early Arab women feminists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries fought for their claims by forming clubs and associations, delivering public speeches, engaging in social work and using their literary talents for the presentation of women's problems through the medium of books and papers.

Nowadays they have the opportunity to adopt new methods which were not possible for their predecessors. Communication media have multiplied. Besides papers and magazines, they have the radio, television and theater programs, national and international women's conferences, university centers and institutes for women studies. They have the support of international organizations like the U.N. which organized in 1975 the Woman's International Year.

Laila Abou-Saif is a young Egyptian intellectual who belongs to a bourgeois family. To escape a marriage she refused, she went to the United States where she studied drama, an art for which she was naturally qualified. After 7 years of work at the University of Illinois, she obtained a Ph.D. in theatrical production, then came back to work in her native country. She could have stayed in the States where she would have joined an emigrant sister in New York. Back in Cairo, she had the chance to parade like any other bourgeois Egyptian woman on the Cairo boulevards. But she preferred to put her dramatic talents at the service of her country women. She chose to live in Egypt where she would try to effect the needed change not only through her theatrical programs but also through her life and by direct contact with the people around her. By so doing, she gave up among other things a salary of 1000 Egyptian Pounds she was receiving as teacher and director of theater at Lawrence University, Wisconsin, and was satisfied with one of 60 Egyptian pounds she received as teacher at the Egyptian Institute for theatre. But, after two years of work there, she decided to work independently.

About her experience in independent living Laila says: "A woman with personal freedom is seen as a threat. If she tries to be independent she will be labelled promiscuous or immoral. She is thus unable to contribute anything to society. People here do not understand the concept of living alone. They cannot comprehend the enjoyment I feel in humming a tune in solitude as I water my plants or in slouching in a corner sipping a coffee... They even feel sorry for the unmarried. I am used to comments like "Poor Laila, she is unmarried; poor thing, she has no children."

Laila has not been discouraged, however, by threats nor by discouraging comments. Obligated to give up her wish of contributing to women's emancipation by being an actress, a profession considered by society as unfit for a decent woman, she decided to be a theater director and soon discovered that in this position, she could say more than she could ever have said as an actress.

Ambitious Plan

Her main fight at the moment is to try to change the existing Egyptian Family status law, to get women their rights in terms of divorce, custody of the children, property settlements and so on. Here she feels that women are at their greatest disadvantage.

The main channel of her activities is the theater. She started with a western sophisticated play which was not well understood by the audience. Then she resorted to Egyptian themes, using popular forms of entertainment and folklore as a vehicle: "she became Egyptianized instead of westernized." Her first theatrical attempt in this field was a play which handled the theme of "honor crimes," on which she worked for many months but it was censored and she had to give it up. Then she turned to film-making and was able after six years of work, to produce a film entitled "Where Is my Freedom?" It is a portrait of nine militant women who achieved success in their professions in spite of laws, social mores and religious sanctions. They included the first woman to remove her veil in public (Huda Shirawi), a painter jailed for five years because of her political beliefs, a school teacher, a social worker and the owner of a pharmacy. There was also footage of women in divorce courts, village women and, in general, women of Egypt's lower classes.

In 1979, she produced "Shafeeqa and Metwalli," a modified version of her play dealing with "honor crimes" which had earlier been censored. It is the tragedy of a young village girl who was led to wayward conduct during her brother's absence and had to incur his savage revenge upon his return.

Now Laila is working on a dramatization of the life of Shajarat el-Durr, a woman who ruled Egypt for 40 days in the 13th century.

Her theatrical work does not prevent her from attempting other forms of social activity. In company of a few European women feminists, who from 15 were finally reduced to 4, she went to Iran to protest against the veiling of Iranian women. She and her companions had to wear the tchador in order to visit the Ayatullah who accepted to give them a few minutes of his time. In spite of the deception she went through, she was able to meet, in secret, a few anti-tchador Iranian women who seemed to live in a climate of fear, but the atmosphere changed when she met a group who daringly supported nationalist and progressive ideals.

Laila Abou-Saif is not only the first woman film producer in Egypt; she is also one of the few dynamic feminists who courageously defy public opinion by their non-conventional way of life, their modernistic views and their faith in woman's potentials.

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SURVEY ON COLLEGE WOMEN

What kinds of women are attending college or university today? Why are they coming to study and where are they heading after the degree? This was the purpose of a BUC Sophomore Rhetoric project in fall, 1979. A research survey was conducted among contemporary women students in the Beirut area; interviews were made and questionnaires filled out so that class members might produce some statistical facts for evidence. What triggered off this project was the challenged premise of Dr. Burton who had claimed in the sixties, that most young women have less reason, i.e. less right, to occupy precious places in higher educational institutions; he implied that their prime ambition on campus, and elsewhere, is but to find a man and to establish a family. The following results were gleaned from the completed polls.

Single Women Students (84) Women Students with Steady Boyfriends (36)

Fifty five percent of the single women affirmed that the degree (AA, AAS, BA, or BS) is their principal target since it makes possible specific career opportunities. Forty-four percent of the singles felt that their main reason for being at college is culture, with all the mental enrichment, intellectual superiority and sophistication it can give. Only 1% admitted that college was a most effective means to combat boredom.

For those women "going steady, 73% stated as their primary purpose the degree that would lead to a good job. Twenty-seven percent thought that becoming more cultivated and more broad-minded was of number one importance.

As for **secondary purposes**, 38% of the singles asserted that they wanted a good job; 24% to meet and know new people; 21%, enjoy cultural experiences; 12%, to escape boredom; 2%, to discover new ways to improve society; 2%, because of parental pressure or to find a mate.

Thirty-six per cent of the women with steady boyfriends put "character development" and intellectual cultivation at the top of their list of second priorities; The remaining results show little difference from those of the single women, so we pass them over.

To complete the survey, 78% of all the singles and women students going steady declared that they would continue their education even if they were to get married and have a family of their own.

Engaged Women Students (58) and Married Women Students (43)

When asked why they were pursuing their studies after engagement, 67% of the women replied that they wanted a degree to be able to work and improve the finances of their future foyer. Sixteen percent said that they came mainly for intellectual interests and enjoyment of their major

subjects. Ten percent especially wanted to enjoy the social life on campus. Seven percent enrolled to be academically equal to or personally close to their fiancés.

As for the principal purposes of those women already married, three quarters asserted that they needed the degree allowing them to work and share the financial burdens of the household. Twelve per cent claimed they came to escape boring routine at home; seven percent hoped to become academically equal to their husbands; 2% came for sheer love of their major subjects, and 2% for more contacts.

Once again, the survey of the engaged and married women students was used to discover connections between personal, sentimental life and academic life. It was shown that two thirds of the married and a bit more than half of the engaged women are very happy: they see their spouses or fiancés regularly, and these men in turn encourage their partners to study and succeed; also there is mutual understanding and consideration. Thirty-three percent of the married and 34% of the engaged women wrote that they were not so happy in their private lives: either they did not see their partners very often or had occasional quarrels with them, sometimes over their getting the college degree itself. Finally, 9% of the married, but none of the engaged, admitted being unhappy, due to a combination of the reasons listed above.

Conclusions

From the results of the student poll, it can be concluded that the majority of all women students of the college, whatever their situation, attend college or university principally for the diploma that will provide, they believe, a passport to a good career, financial security, independent living, and personal pride. Only a quarter of all the singles (and as a secondary purpose), 16% of the engaged, and 2% of the married students interviewed, avow coming to campus for the sake of enlightenment and love of learning alone.

Judging from the survey of the singles and "steadies", there is no doubt that the less socially involved the student, the more she is likely to make it to the Honor List. Ironically, many singles have a wide variety of secondary aims at college... not the least of which is an expressed need for more interesting social contacts and new experiences with people. Therefore, it cannot be rare that most singles experience some doubts and confusion at college, often over a conflict of interests (for example, success in the right major to get the right job — 60% of all singles; success with the right people — almost 30% of all singles; perhaps to find the right mate or just to kill boredom — 13% of all). With multiple goals and a future yet to be determined, many singles may feel less secure, worry more, and concentrate less in preparation for classes; thus they may not score so well as they wished academically. Interestingly enough, those women going steady seemed to express a bit more concern for the cultural and personality development benefits of college than their peers without a definite partner.

The married and engaged women students that were polled seemed more specifically motivated, on the whole, than the singles: their main goal being need or desire to share in the financial support of homes and families already or soon-to-be established. Since many of these women already have or know what they want out of life, they

showed a tendency to be more confident or responsible academically. While most claim they study less after receiving rings, they evidently can and do concentrate more, since 43% of the marrieds and 31% of the engaged are on the Honor List and stay there. To sum up, almost all the married and engaged women stayed within their general GPA categories before and after the rings (below 2, 2-2.5, 2.6-3, above 3); thus it can be seen that marital status does not usually have a radical effect, positive or negative, on women's performance, although some improvement seemed common in most all cases in the survey.

As for happiness or feelings of personal satisfaction with life, the polls proved that these do not constitute an accurate barometer to successful academic performance. In other words, unhappy or dissatisfied women, be they single or married, need not expect a poor GPA just as their happier counterparts need not get a great GPA at college or university.

Statistics indicated that approximately 60% of all the groups of women polled were "happy." The engaged were definitely the happiest, followed closely by women with steady boyfriends; in third place came the singles, with the married trailing behind. However, 80% of the married students maintain GPA averages over 2.5; and there are many more happy singles and steadies than those who make the Honor List. It is not improbable to say, therefore, that academic success has more to do with happiness in private or social life.

Finally, although women today rarely if ever say (cf. Dr. Burton) that they come to college for the right man, men still do indeed exert significant influence on their academic performance and ambitions. For example, it was seen that so many women improved in their GPA after the rings and admitted they were encouraged to succeed by

their partners; many of the fiancés or spouses were or would be well educated professionals themselves, thus inspiring their partners to do likewise. It is not unreasonable to imagine that a good portion of the singles would be attracted to outstanding careers and services (via the degree) so that they might find such professionals or be such professionals themselves. That is probably why so many of them are sure that marriage or engagement would not stop them from completing their education.

So, in conclusion, there is no doubt that times have changed from the Fifties and Sixties when many people, like Dr. Burton, felt that women's place in college was more a noisome anomaly than an accepted necessity. They felt that men had and should have a monopoly on the job market and, consequently, at the university. But times have also changed since Dorothy Thompson idealistically proclaimed that real university life belongs to the intellectual elite, whoever they are, those with a love for mental cultivation and personal development for their own sake.

Indeed, from the responses of today's campus women interviewed by our own students, there is a mutual need and desire to participate in the working community. And more positions are open to them if they have but the talent and will to succeed. Education is not just a matter of status and independence but so often today a financial and psychological *sine qua non*. Contemporary women, as a whole, want to help out with the needs of their society, and, in turn, they constitute one of society's greatest needs because they definitely have so much more to give.

Condensed from an article prepared
by Dr Maxine Kambar
(BUC Faculty)

PROBLEMS FACED BY RE-ENTRY WOMEN TO BUC

Summary of findings

This pilot study was an attempt at bringing out the characteristics and problems of re-entry women as well as serving as an encouragement to pursue further research in other colleges and universities throughout the area.

For the purpose of this study a questionnaire was administered in a personal interview to 28 women, 23 married and 5 single. It covered roughly 4 areas: The re-entry woman's background and family life, her motivation for returning, her status at BUC, and the recommendations that she wished to make. The majority of re-entry women at BUC are Lebanese ranging in age from 20-40, 36% of whom left school in order to get married and raise a family. None of the married women have more than 3 children ranging in age between five and twenty. The duration of their absence from college ranges from three months to twenty years with the majority falling between 10-20 years which is a long time to be away from one's profession.

Their coming back is portrayed as "catching up, keeping up, and forging ahead". The majority of the women in our sample are in agreement on the three equally

important major reasons for re-entry, namely: that of furthering one's knowledge, self fulfillment, and for adequate job opportunities. However, once they have become students again, their major problem is the balance of time between studying and homemaking which is evidenced by the fact that 43% are part-time students, taking one or two courses. Despite these difficulties they are very ambitious. Over ninety percent feel that a college degree is important and with one exception are all working for degrees.

The respondents had some recommendations for course offerings at BUC. Some courses were suggested for sheer enrichment of their leisure time, others for self fulfillment and still others, although offered at the AAS level, are in demand on the BA level. It is interesting to note that many courses center around the home and family.

As the findings are made known to various administrators, it is hoped that they will become more aware and concerned for the needs of re-entry women among the student body.

Maha Khuri
Assistant to Director
of Guidance, BUC

Creativity and Culture⁽¹⁾

The author, Dr. Nahid Ramzi, introduces her study by pointing out that women, on account of their relative seclusion, are more closely tied to their community and more liable to receive its influence than men. They are less free to think or to act differently from traditional patterns. In the field of creativity they are consequently affected by their cultural environment to a higher degree than their brothers.

Two basic theories have to be taken into consideration: The first is that creative ability is to a large extent a result of interaction with the cultural environment. Its development depends on opportunities open to individuals in a given society for contact with other societies and communication with other cultures. The second theory is that the method used by parents for upbringing their children is an important factor in suppressing or arousing their creative abilities.

The aim of this project being a study of the variables of cultural differences between various samples and the impact of this factor on female creativity, the author organized her study on the basis of three samples: One representing a cultural community considered more advanced than any other one in Egypt, namely Cairo. The other sample represented the district of Suhaj, supposedly one of the least culturally developed in the Qibli (Southern) region of Egypt.

To complete the picture a third sample was added, chosen from the district of Benha which shares many of the characteristics of Suhaj, except that it is located on the Bahri (marine or Northern) region of the country.

Two instruments were used:

1 — experiments testing creative abilities,

2 — a set of criteria of social interaction. The tests used to detect creative abilities included: 1) originality and inventiveness, 2) sensitivity to problems, 3) flexibility, 4) fluency, 5) maintenance of direction.

In testing social interaction, the family is supposed to represent a basic background for the individual's interaction with his environment. This interior interaction takes the following forms: 1) freedom or restriction, 2) closeness or remoteness, 3) liberalism or conservatism.

In preparing the test all three dimensions were considered. Therefore seventy questions were prepared and distributed over the above three dimensions in the proportion of eight standards of criteria related to the father, ten to the mother.

The samples were taken from secondary school girl students who had not come in contact with boys and had

been living in the care of their parents. They consisted of 113 students from Cairo, 110 from Suhaj, 99 from Benha. They all belonged to the same academic level; their average age was 17,8 years.

Results of the Study

1 — In creative abilities there were highly indicative differences between the results of the three samples in most, if not in all, of the creativity variants.

The Suhaj sample had the lowest rating while the Benha sample came higher and that of Cairo came highest on the scale.

A certain relationship was detected between the results of the Cairo and the Benha samples, which was lacking in the case of Cairo and Suhaj.

2 — In method of parental up-bringing, creativity proved to be negatively correlated to the conditions of mutual understanding with, and closeness to, the parents. The more creative students were those who were more remote from their parents and more independent in their thinking and behavior.

There exists, it seems, a negative correlation between parental friendship involving traditional thinking, and the ability to think independently from ready-made solutions and rigid information.

In the case of fluency, the study showed that this ability was facilitated by the intimacy of the respondent with one of the parents and her remoteness from the other.

Mutual understanding with one parent is likely to encourage fluency provided that it will not involve interference with the personal concerns of the respondent.

Conclusion

Cultural characteristics form a group of complex variables, in which the creative person is affected not only by the culture of his age, or his outer environment, but also, and to a large extent, by the attitudes and treatment of his family circle in the light of the particular traits or peculiarities of its members.

(1) Abstract of an experimental study of family upbringing of girls, prepared by Dr. Nahid Ramzi, from the National Center of Social and Criminal Research, published in Arabic in: *Readings in Social Psychology in the Arab Fatherland*, edited and introduced by Dr. L.K. Mulaika, published by Al-Hay'a al-Misriyya al-Aamma lil-Kitab, 1979.

CAREER EDUCATION FOR ASIAN WOMEN¹

The term 'career education' is a very recent one; it has only been used since 1971, hence it is an evolving concept which may embrace more than one definition.

The easiest way to clarify this concept is probably to define what it is not.

First of all, career education is not **vocational education**. Although both are concerned with the world of work, career education is designed for all students from kindergarten through secondary school and even through college and university. On the other hand, vocational education is training in job-entry skills for students who want to go to work.

Secondly, while career education is designed and implemented by teachers, it does not require the creation of a new course. It can be worked into existing classes, identifying the unit in the curriculum into which career education concepts of self-awareness and the like can be infused. This type of infusion can and does revitalise the curriculum and makes regular instruction more relevant and more meaningful to students.

Finally, career education does not only mean informing students about various occupational opportunities. Career information is only one of the important components; the others are self-awareness, educational awareness, career planning, decision-making and development of employability skills.

Women's Employment Needs

Much has been written about the "brain drain" or the loss of highly trained professionals from one nation to another. Little has been said about the loss to a country of women who are not only unemployed or underemployed but discouraged from fully utilizing their energies and potentials⁽²⁾

An ILO study pointed out that "More conscious, specific and intelligent attention needs to be given to women's employment needs and problems, if they are to be partners in development. If they are left behind in the process or not enabled to catch up, the consequences can be grave from an economic as well as the social and human point of view. This would entirely be at cross purpose with the basic aims of the world politics on employment and human resources development."⁽³⁾

Increasingly more women in Asia, comprising all sections of society, are motivated to go on to higher education and to have careers for the same reasons: they and their families need the income; they are dissatisfied with their current life-style of being confined to the home and having to do only home-related activities; they need self-fulfillment, status and prestige; they need to have authority to make a positive contribution to society.

The high cost of living, increased education and new aspirations, access to creches and day-care centers which facilitate child rearing, lighter household chores because of electrical gadgets and domestic help fast getting to be a luxury as housemaids themselves are trying to improve their status, increasing acceptance of birth control and family planning, are forces that impel women to combine home and career.

Basic Tasks

Therefore, career education for Asian women must focus on some basic tasks.

1. The development of positive attitudes towards the self, leading to greater and increased self-awareness and acceptance of one's self as a human being with an identity separate from that of the husband and children.
2. Career awareness of having access to information about career opportunities other than the traditional occupations of teaching, nursing, clerical work and so on.
3. Educational awareness of having information of various opportunities for training and education and for continuing education.
4. Develop the ability to use information in making decisions to identify options, to take risks and bear consequences and to decide on alternative courses of action.
5. Make career plans which involve identifying short-range goals to achieve long-term goals.
6. Develop skills in scheduling and efficient management of time, of combining both home and work duties and setting up priorities.

A Positive Self-Image

The development of a positive self-image is crucial, since many cultural factors have inhibited or restricted a

(1) Excerpts from an address prepared by Mrs. Santamaria, associate professor in the Dept. of Guidance and Counseling at De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines, and given at the AWI Career Counseling Conference, Singapore, June 27-July 3, 1979, at the Regional English Language Center; published in *Asian Woman*, vol. IV, no. XII, Sept. 1979, p. 6.

(2) See *Al-Raida*, no. 9, vol. II, Aug. 1979, p. 11, "Women's Response to Migration," by Mrs. Saneya Saleh from the American University in Cairo, Egypt.

(3) *Asian Woman*, op. cit., p. 8.

woman from thinking freely about herself and making informed and rational decisions as to the direction she must take.

A woman needs to be convinced of the joys and challenges of combining a family with a career. She needs to know where and how she can start. She must also be informed of the problems and difficulties that will be encountered and, just as important, to know how other women have coped with these difficulties and succeeded. She needs role models who will not only inspire and encourage her **but help her overcome the feelings of guilt for not conforming to the traditional sex-role stereotype.**

Providing Necessary Guidance

In selecting a career, a woman should be helped by guidance counselors in making decisions based on a realistic appraisal of employment and advancement opportunities, and on how the career will satisfy her own needs, abilities and interests. She needs help in choosing a

career area which she herself wants, not one that has been thrust upon her. Research has shown that women have the same aptitudes as men for skilled and technical trades; that some women really do have manual dexterity, hand-eye coordination, form and space perception. They can be good mechanics, machinists, type-setters, electricians, just as some of them are as competent as men to be engineers, physicists, architects, oceanographers, etc.

A Promising Future

There is a promising future for the women of Asia. Old attitudes are changing. Society now accepts women as salary earners and career builders. The weight of public opinion is gradually shifting in favour of family women having careers. The participation of the educationists will give leadership and support that a career education program needs. While many of us are not the direct implementors of the program for women, our positive attitude and active support are the basic ingredients of a sound program of career education for Asian women.

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE AT AUB

DECEMBER 10 - 14, 1979

The "Conference on Leadership and Development in the Arab World" which took place at the American University of Beirut, Dec 10-14, 1979, covered a long program of sub-topics included in this broad and important topic. We shall report here on the session which discussed "Women Leaders in Modern Arab Society: a Changing Perspective." Two women researchers from Egypt read papers dealing with the subject, which were discussed by those present. The first, Dr. Nadia Halim Suliman, senior expert at the National Center for Social and Criminological Research, showed that feminine leadership asserted itself through social service and not through the control of the sources of production. Women's associations succeeded in obtaining many feminine demands regarding social status and family laws. Egyptian, and other Arab women proved their efficiency when they participated in national demonstrations and other forms of patriotic struggle.

In 1975 the number of women's associations reached 200 all over Egypt, 72 of them in Cairo. The work of association leaders and board members has been mostly voluntary. Their activities are all embracing: social, cultural and educational.

Dr. Suliman then presented the biographies of five women leaders in social work, all of whom came from families of the higher stratum of society and had completed their secondary or their university education. She remarked that in the past, women leaders depended on their own financial resources, their work was voluntary; nowadays

social work has become a profession, mostly under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs. She finally expounded the advantages and disadvantages of feminine voluntary leadership.

Dr. Suha Abdel-Kader equally stated that most women leaders in Egyptian society have tended to emerge among the upper-middle and upper classes of urban society. This fact is due to socio-economic and historical factors.

As discussant of the above papers, Dr. Julinda Abu-Nasr, director of IWSAW, pointed out that leadership characteristics take shape through appropriate training in home and school. Our training methods, based on sex discrimination, do not encourage the formation of leadership among women. Certain studies carried out by IWSAW concerning the image of woman in textbooks and mass media and socialization patterns confirm this stereotyped orientation and show the need of a new one, free from the impact of the past.

Dr. Sophie Saadeh denounced the influence of religious legislation on the social status of women and emphasized the necessity of change.

Finally, a parallel was drawn between the ups and downs of national movements and those of women's movements in Arab countries. The obstacles arising from status differences which stand in the way of women's general emancipation should be fought and wiped out. This recommendation applies more particularly to deprived rural districts where the majority of women are illiterate and ignorant.

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ECWA)

The regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Conference of the U.N. Decade for Women, 1980, held in Damascus, 10-13 December, 1979, grouped besides representatives of Arab countries enrolled as members of ECWA, those of Arab League organizations, U.N. organizations and specialized agencies; also members of the Center for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, those of the "Secretariat of World Conference of the U.N. for Women 1980," and of the ECWA personnel.

Reports were given on 1) the activities of the ECWA in the field of the integration of women in development programmes in Western Asia. In ECWA's first regional meeting of the U.N. Decade for Women, held in Amman in 1978, the **Regional Plan of Action** which had been finalized in an earlier meeting of experts nominated by ECWA members, was unanimously adopted as a set of guidelines for women and development programmes in the region. This plan seeks to meet the needs of the region in education, employment, family services, and stresses that a sound approach to the integration of women in development must begin with assessment of the situation and resources in each country. 2) The projects of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women (VFDW), which has been an outcome of the International Women's Year Conference in Mexico in 1975. Its aim is to finance projects proposed by the U.N. regional commissions, which fulfill certain criteria. Some of the projects for the 1979/1980 period, on the regional level, include:

A. Integrated Development and Extension Service for Women in Rural Areas (Baghdad, 3 March — 21 April, 1979)

This workshop was held in Baghdad, in cooperation with the government of Iraq. The participants asserted the importance of the role of rural women and planned a special manual for women extension workers, to help them in organizing national and local training sessions and to serve as a guide for rural extension programmes.



B. Workshop on National Development Planning for the Integration of Women in Development (Damascus, 10-13 December, 1979)

This workshop covered many subjects some of which were :

- a) preparation of samples of national planning
- b) basic research and its role in development
- c) requirements for sectoral planning
- d) role of women's organizations in planning
- e) strategies for development based on the mobilization of human resources with special emphasis on women
- f) the role of women in the balance of human resources necessary for planning.

The workshop adopted the recommendation of the Regional Plan of Action (Amman, 1978), which proposed that "training workshops should be carried out at the national and regional levels, for persons working in planning organizations. The workshops should emphasize the integration of women in development as an essential object of social and economic planning."

C. Training Workshop in Formulation, Implementation and Evaluation of Projects for the Development of Human Social Resources

This workshop will be held, in principle, in Jordan, during the first half of 1980, with participants to be invited from all ECWA members.

D. Appropriate Social Services for Women in Rural Areas

The advisory committee of the Voluntary Fund also approved the implementation of twelve new projects during the 1980/1981 period on the regional level : community self-help activities, policy formulation for developmental images of women in mass media and literature; workshops on experimental training methodologies for trainers of rural development workers; logistic support for ECWA women's development program.



The Program of Action prepared by the members of the regional Preparatory Meeting, that constitutions and laws of the State has stipulated, should ensure full equality between men and women concerning their rights and obligations in the field of political action, work and property rights.

In the section dealing with the legal field, it should follow up the recommendation that women can enjoy equality with men in all civil rights, and to secure the requirements in legislation, procedure and facilities that will guarantee their enjoyment of those rights.

2. In educational and informational measures, the RPA endorses the recommendation for the Intergration of Woman in the Development field of "The Role of Mass Media" in the countries of the region. It equally recommends emphasis on the image of equality between men and women and on the clarification of the changes that have occurred in their respective roles in contemporary society.

3. Employment:

The RPA stress the importance of formulating

strategies for increasing the rate of participation of women in the labour force; for increasing the productivity of working women through training, and providing them with the supporting services so that they can combine their family and work responsibilities; strategies should also be formulated for encouraging women to enter new occupations in addition to the traditional ones, and providing them with equal opportunities with men for promotion in employment.

4. Health Programs

The RPA emphasizes the need for a regional meeting for health statisticians in order to formulate a detailed plan for data collection on health indicators, especially the relevant health and medical data on women, from all health institutions and at all levels. Another need is the preparation of model radio and television programs based on tested material on health and nutrition relevant to the needs of women in particular.

5. Education and Training

The RPA stresses the importance of technical training and its role in the national economy; the urgent implementation of the Arab Strategy for the Eradication of Illiteracy adopted at the Third Alexandria Conference held in Baghdad, in December 1976.

6. Regional and International Cooperation

It is important to emphasize here the need for mechanisms and structures for cooperation and co-ordination on the regional and international levels, so that it can be possible to meet the increasing responsibilities of the coming five years for implementing the activities of the Program of Action. This could be secured by means of a committee created to coordinate women's programs undertaken by ECWA and the regional office of the U.N. Development Program and the Arab League.

Other means of coordination: organizing regional meetings in 1982 to follow up the Program of Action, to investigate possible sources of funding for the women's program, to call upon the ECWA members to increase their donations to the Voluntary Fund so that it can fulfill its objectives in the region and in other developing countries.

WOMEN OF THE MIDDLE EAST IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

The "Women's Program" in the Council of Churches of the Middle East held two conferences, one in Beirut, December 1-3, 1977, the other in Cairo, March 1-5, 1978. The purpose of both conferences was to discuss and evaluate the status of women in the church, civil law and development.

The conferences brought together delegates from Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Sudan and Syria. They represented the various Christian Churches in the Middle East as well as a number of social institutions and welfare societies. Religious leaders, social workers and lawyers from both sexes participated in the studies that were presented and in the discussions that followed.

A third conference on a related topic, "Woman's Role in the Church and the Question of her Ordination," was held at the Near East School of Theology, Beirut, January 23-25, 1980. Documented studies were presented by priests and ministers representing the Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Protestant churches in the Arab East, expounding opinions of the early Church Fathers regarding woman's role in the Church. No definite resolutions were adopted but the conference fulfilled its purpose of establishing a dialogue and preparing the way for mutual understanding among the Christian churches, in accordance with the spirit of the Ecumenical Council.

A SURVEY OF THE ASIAN WOMEN INSTITUTE'S ACTIVITIES IN 1979

The Asian Women's Institute (AWI)⁽¹⁾ which links together nine women's studies institutes distributed among various women's colleges and universities of Asia, is defined, in the coordinator's report of 1979, as "a non-governmental organization accredited to the Department of Public Information of the United Nations."

The coordinator of the Institute, Mrs. Eva Shipstone, Lucknow, India, is assisted in her task by a Presidents' Consultation (P.C.) which oversees its activities and points out the priorities that it should pursue. These priorities include documentation, research, communication and educational projects.

Reports received from the coordinator, research assistant and executive directors of the nine institutes about 1979 activities, reveal a steady effort spent by the various institutes to implement the above-mentioned objectives in the following ways:

1) Research projects, documentation and publication on women's status, problems and needs have been continued. Mention should be made of the work achieved by the Korean Women's Institute at Ewha University, Seoul, South Korea, which completed and published a valuable "Study on the Patterns of Women Engaged in Social Participation in the Early Modern Era, 1890-1910." Also a revised edition of the book for the Women's Studies course published at the end of September 1979.

2) Women's studies courses have been offered at Ewha Woman's University for the third time, at Beirut University College (Lebanon) for the second time, and at Damavand College (Iran) and Kinnaird College (Lahore, Pakistan) for the first time.

3) An activity that is worth mentioning and encouraging is the participation of students in volunteer social work. At Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow, India, fifty students voluntarily joined the Center for Women's Studies and Development to help in the rural projects and office activities. At St. Christopher's Training College, flood relief was offered by students. A sale organized by students and staff contributed to the money raising campaign.

4) Probably the most important activity displayed by all the institutes in 1979 is the growing emphasis given to career counseling for women students. The all important Career Conference held in Singapore, June 27-July 3, 1979, and which has been reported in *Al-Raida*⁽²⁾ and referred to in this issue, had been planned in May '78 by: Eva Shipstone, coordinator of AWI, Phebe Gregorian, chairperson of committee of 1975, Nancy Tohen and Patricia Mcancy, Wellesley College, and three institute directors: Julinda Abu Nasr (Lebanon), Mina Riahi (Iran) and Tehrim Dass (India). About career counseling Mrs. Shipstone says in her report, p. 24: "The creation of course services on college campuses may help to design and offer training courses to facilitate employment of women. It is essential to provide training in fundamentals, in mathematics and sciences and in language skills to increase women's competence for various jobs."

5) Emphasis on career counseling for women awakened the need for continuing education. A study

prepared on this topic by Esther Schlorholtz,⁽³⁾ research assistant of AWI, confirms the necessity of creating continuing education opportunities for women wanting to participate more effectively in community service, to re-enter a professional field after an absence or to keep in touch with their professions and with life and learning outside the home."

Areas of Need

The areas of need vary in significance for each country. Ms. Esther Schlorholtz has prepared a continuing education program offered in Middle East and Far East countries, which we have tried to condense in the following paragraphs.

In India

Problems of poverty and illiteracy are the main concern of social leaders in India. There are at least six organizations which take care of adult education, three of them exclusively for women, the rest for all the illiterate and needy people of India without discrimination of sex. The Women's Section of the Textile Labour Association, one of the biggest labor unions of the world, has organized programs for the development and welfare of working class women. In 1975, training was provided in 25 centers for 1873 women in sewing, embroidery, knitting, doll-making, spinning, printing, composition, typewriting, radio-servicing and home help service.

Other organizations are the Central Social Welfare Board which gives condensed courses of education for adult women; the National Council of Educational Research and Training which has been carrying on a continuing education program for teachers. The same type of work has been carried on by the All India Association of Christian Higher Education.

Besides those private organizations, the Government of India has planned a project of adult education programs to be used all over the country.

At Isabella Thoburn College in Lucknow, the Centre of Women's Studies has implemented many programs dealing with problems of illiteracy, poverty and lack in income earning skills. The same activity is being carried out in other universities of India.

It is significant to note here that in the preparation of future programs, the tendency is not to confine women to the home sphere but to encourage them in activities outside the home. *Cont p 13*

(1) See *Al-Raida* vol. 1, No. 2, Sept. 1977, p. 8; No. 4, June 1978, p. 10; No. 5, Aug. 1978, pp. 7 & 10; No. 6, Nov. 1978, p. 3. vol. II, No. 11, p. 12.

(2) No. 11, Feb. 1980, p. 12

(3) "Continuing Education for Women", Asian Women's Institute, June 1979.

more women are going out to work. Education for women, due to the renaissance-like nationalist movement, is increasingly recommended, even in traditional society. The Moroccan law, however, does not favor desegregation when it states that woman's place is in the home and her access to offices and factories is subordinate to her husband's authorization.

In spite of restrictions, there were in 1975, 27,700 women working for the Moroccan government, 15,200 of whom were teachers. The government's attitude presents certain contradictions. While it supports the mobility of its employees, it clings to the traditional division of labor by stating in article 35 of the Moroccan code that men are the sole providers of their families, the wife being economically dependent. The code thus emphasizes man's ability to earn money as the sole symbol of masculinity, while a woman who shares this ability is considered masculine and castrating. The Moroccan husband is consequently torn between the law which gives him control of the wife's moves and the necessity of letting her work. A recurrent subject of dispute in Moroccan courts is the husband's claim to his wife's salary.

Conclusion

In spite of drawbacks and contradictions, it is possible to conclude that the events of the last two decades have brought about a serious erosion of male supremacy.

1. The state, by providing an individual salary for working wives and children and economic security for both, has been a threat to male supremacy.
2. The Muslim system which is sexist in the sense that it gives men certain privileges, is being questioned on the ground that it is oppressive to both men and

women because it imposes on both heavy restrictions: the man is sole provider for the whole family, repudiation and polygamy are costly procedures, the "Mahr" is often an obstacle to marriage, love is condemned and excluded as a weakness, etc.

3. In the West, the passivity of women has prevented them from reaching high positions in spite of their advanced social level. In the East, the Muslim social theory views women as a potent aggressive individual whose power, if not tamed, can corrode the social order. It is very likely that, in the long run, such a view will facilitate women's integration into the networks of decision making and power. The Muslim image of women as a source of power is likely to make Muslim women set higher and broader goals than just equality with men, since they have seen that this equality is not worth getting.

The holders of power in Arab countries, regardless of their political make-up, are condemned to promote change. The Arab ruling class is beginning to realize that their task is to build a sovereign future which necessitates the participation of both sexes and the utilization of all available human power without distinction of sex. The Arab woman is a central element in national development.

Sources

Mernissi, Fatima. *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society*. Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1975.

"Mosaic: Magreb Women in Motion, "The Middle East,, IC Publication, June 1979, No 56, p. 57-65.

Women's Studies at Beirut University College

A course on "Women's Studies" is being given at BUC under the direction of the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, during the spring semester of 1980. While the course given in the spring semester of last year⁽¹⁾ consisted of the presentation and discussion of actual information given by various lecturers on the status of the Arab woman of today, this course will take the form of a seminar requiring the students themselves to prepare the studies to be discussed. These are based on research materials, publications and essays connected with woman's problems in the fields of sociology, anthropology, psychology, health and demography. The aim is to examine the changing position of Arab women in comparison to other developing and developed countries. These cross cultural comparisons will add to the understanding of Arab women's status and role in the social context; special emphasis will be placed on discovering the cultural and social institutions that

determine woman's place in society.

The following are the main topics which will be discussed in the seminar:

1. The big challenge facing Arab society today.
2. Indicators of social change.
3. Existing trends of education for women.
4. Women in developing and industrial societies.
5. Legal reforms and women's status.
6. Health and women's role.
7. Sexuality, reproduction and women's status.
8. Urbanization, modernization and changing status of women.

(1) See *Al-Raida*, vol. III, no. 9, p. 12.

The Age of Discretion

BY SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR

Simone de Beauvoir is an outstanding French writer and an ardent supporter of the modern existentialist philosophy which declares that "existence precedes essence." In other words, it asserts that man exists first then creates his own essence. Existentialism is opposed to fatalism and determinism; it denies the existence of a "pre-existing human nature" because it states that man "makes himself" or shapes his own personality, unhindered by in-born tendencies which, if they exist, should not overrule him.

Existentialism is the philosophy of realism, of lived experience and self-analysis. While it makes use of psychological theories, it emphasizes human freedom as a goal and denies the Freudian theory that man is enslaved to congenital, physiological instincts or subconscious factors. It equally denies the marxist idea of man's subordination to the laws of history or to those of economic necessity.

Simone de Beauvoir, a friend and associate of the French philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre, has written several books in the form of research studies, essays and novels in which she has expounded her ideas and tried to prove that existentialism is a humanist philosophy, asserting the dignity and worth of man and woman and their capacity for self-realization through reason and self-confidence.

In "Age of Discretion," the first of her three stories contained in *La Femme Rompue*, the author analyzes a woman writer who, at about the age of sixty, becomes the prey of a persistent worry bordering on nervous depression. The sources of her worry were manifold; her last published book, on which she had worked very hard, did not receive from readers the response that she expected. This aroused her fear that her intellectual vitality was drying up as a result of age. Her son, Philip, whom she had tried to shape in her own mould, had disappointed her. Instead of preparing a Ph.D. thesis which would ensure him a permanent position at the university, he preferred a technological post in an industrial organization where he would earn double what the university offered him. In his choice he was probably influenced by his young, superficially educated wife. The mother had tried to inculcate in him the principle that money is of secondary importance in one's life but here she had failed. After a hot discussion with him, a complete break ensued. Though he tried to mend things up, she categorically refused to forgive him.

Another cause for her worry was her husband, André, whose love for her seemed to cool off at the same time as did his interest in scientific research and the outside world. He did not agree with her on completely breaking with his son but, to a certain extent, kept a neutral attitude. When he proposed for both of them a recreative trip away from Paris she refused to go with him and he did not insist, thus confirming her doubts regarding his adjustment to old age. Left to herself, she started to ponder about her failures and to blame herself for nourishing an empty dream of continuous progress.

Back from his trip, André looked cheerful and

refreshed. This time she agreed to accompany him on a visit to her mother-in-law who lived alone in a near-by village. At 84, the old woman seemed more lively and optimistic than her daughter-in-law. "It is because I have an ideal to live for," she explained, "a party to adhere to, while you two do not believe in anything." To this André retorted by saying that he did believe in something.

— What ? asked his mother.

— I believe that human suffering is something abominable; that it is our duty to try to wipe it out. Everything else is unworthy of consideration.

— Since the world is full of suffering, inserted his wife, why not exterminate it altogether with the atomic bomb ? Why don't we seek immediate annihilation of suffering through a general suicide ?

— Because, answered André, I like to dream that life may be possible without suffering.

André's answers surprised his wife. After all, he was not so indifferent and imperturbable as she had thought. He was sensible to human needs and did not lose faith in the possibility of a better future. An explanation followed which showed her that she had been taken up with a series of misunderstandings that brought her down. Her husband's love did not cool off but he was suffering from boredom and needed a change of atmosphere. He did not insist on taking her with him on the country trip because he respected her freedom. He said that her disappointment with her last publication was not entirely justified. She had made a false start because she had embraced too wide an ambition. If she resumed her attempt and persisted in her endeavour she would obtain better results. "As to me," he added, "I have a definite plan for the immediate future. Further than that I do not like to think."

After a moment of reflective silence, the woman asked :

— What about Philip ? Do you think I was harsh with him ?

— Possibly. You had no right to impose on him your negativism. I know that he shares our revolt against world injustice but he refuses to see the world with our own eyes. He believes in action and he thinks that service to others could take many forms. It could not be monopolized by one system or one group.

— Do you think I should make up with him ?

— He would be very sad if you did not. Or what use would this attitude of yours be ?

The conclusion that they both reached reassured her: "We are together, this is our lot. We shall help each other to live this last adventure from which there is no return. This might make it more tolerable. We have no alternative."

(1) In the collection entitled : *La femme Rompue*, Gallimard 1967.

Pakistan

"The All Pakistan Women's Association" has provided a variety of vocational and skill training opportunities for women combined with production and marketing outlets for goods produced."

The Girl Guides' Association runs more than one hundred Adult Literacy Centres and holds Service Campus for Women in various villages every year. The government has carried out several adult literacy and adult education programs.

Iran

The Women's Organization of Iran conducts special classes for girls between 7 and 20. After a one year course, the students are given instruction in various crafts that help them to earn an income. Since 70 percent of the population live in rural areas, the Ministry of Agriculture has developed literacy programs in villages but traditional life-style has prevented many girls from being reached through these programs, which have been attended mainly by boys.

Lebanon and the Arab World

Illiteracy reaches a high percentage in the Arab world, especially among women (85 percent in some countries).

Studies recently developed by the ECWA on the participation of Lebanese rural women in development showed that 14 government and 12 non-government organizations provided developmental programs for women in various handicrafts. Beirut University College has been offering a number of career programs preparing men and women for semi-professional careers. It is hoped that the "Basic Living Skills Programs for Women" to be prepared by IWSAW will eventually be incorporated in ongoing basic programs of education and women's organizations in Lebanon.

Korea

Rapid industrial expansion has played an influential role in changing women's life styles. Among young married

women there is an increasing desire for employment outside the home. The increasing demand for professional and vocational training for women favored the creation of a large number of public and private vocational training centers which, in 1977, trained more than 230,000 people. Social welfare organizations like the YWCA, universities and colleges like Yonsei University's College of Nursing in Seoul, Ewha Woman's University, Seoul Woman's College, participate in providing vocational training and counseling service. The majority of working women in Korea are illiterate and exposed to exploitation. An improvement in the level of their education would awaken them to their rights and responsibilities. Re-entry women workers, who have lately increased in number, need skill training or refreshment in their professional fields.

Japan

Local education boards and women's organizations in Japan sponsored the creation of training courses for women of all ages, in subjects ranging from household work, consumer knowledge and child education, to vocational guidance, health and culture. Continuing education programs for faculty and students, for parents of both sexes, for senior citizens and youth, are available at Tokyo Women's Christian University; university extension courses, home education guidance programs, correspondence courses reach an increasing number of people.

In Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, similar movements have contributed to the development of adult and career education but on a limited scale.

In conclusion, Ms. Schlorholtz quotes R.H. Dave who defines the goals of continuing life long education as "leading toward full self-awareness, a respect for other people's identity, a capacity for self-evaluation and the ability to cooperate in groups for common ends. Through it, people are helped to adapt and cope with rapid changes in technology and in scientific and social knowledge. "Today, she says, women have a special need of achieving these goals."

French Ministry for Women(1)

The second of October, 1978, will count as a new starting point for Women's Equal Status. It was Mme Irène de Lipkowski, founder and president of "Le Comité International de Liaison des Associations Féminines" (CILAF), who introduced the minister for Women's Affairs, Mme Pelletier, to the French Women's Organizations.

In the "grand salon" of the President, in the Sénat, 120 women were assembled to hear the Minister's program and to present the main issues and aims of their organizations.

The Minister's response was encouraging. Two things she especially wants: to translate the principles of equality for men and women into reality of daily life; to promote understanding and open up ways that enable women to exercise free choice between maternity and work, and the combination of both — according to their own desire and responsibility.

(1) International Women's News, vol . 74, No. 1, Feb. 1979, p. 4.

Beyond the Veil,

BY FATIMA MERNISSI

The author of *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society*, is a Moroccan sociologist, university professor and writer. While she uses Moroccan law and society as a background for her study, she makes a careful analysis of the Muslim theory about woman and demonstrates how this theory is apt to undergo complete modification by means of modern change.

As an introduction to her study she draws a parallel between Freud's concept of female sexuality and that of Al-Ghazali, the famous authority on Muslim theology and scholasticism who lived in the 11th century A.D. According to the author, both Al-Ghazali and Freud see woman as a dangerous aggressive power, but while in Freud's theory female aggression is turned inward into a masochistic, passive attitude, in Al-Ghazali's concept it is turned outward, giving woman a destructive power, a fateful attraction which bewitches men and leads them into sin. To prevent her fatal influence on man she should be veiled and subdued.

Making another comparison between the Muslim woman and that of pre-Islamic society, Dr. Mernissi says that, in pre-Islamic Arabia, matrilineal trends existed, giving a woman the right to stay with her kin and keep the child as her own. She had independence and self-determination when backed by her tribe. Promiscuity, fornication, unrestricted polygamy, temporary marriage (al-Mut'a), inheritance of widows by their kinsmen, infanticide were all practiced by the Jahiliyya Arabs. Islam put an end to all these chaotic practices. While it recommended monogamy, it limited the number of wives to four, promulgated definite marriage laws, gave women a share in inheritance and imposed their subordination to men.

The "Umma" or nation-system which united the Muslims and steered the tribe's bellicosity into new channels, confirmed male domination and responsibility as a safeguard of unity. It gave the husband unconditional right to divorce provided he paid the Mahr or bride-price. Being the guardian and the sole provider for the family, he required the legitimacy of the children for whom he provided and complete conjugal fidelity from the wife. An adulterous wife was condemned by both law and society. Her husband or guardian had the right to kill her, while the husband's adultery was more likely to be tolerated by public opinion if not by law.

Because of the supposedly irresistible attraction of women, Islamic law ordered the segregation of women and recommended marriage as a protection from fornication. Sexual satisfaction is considered necessary for both men and women because a sexually frustrated person is apt to become a troublesome citizen of the Umma.

Results of the Author's Investigation

Her interview with 50 people, males and females, showed that modern minded couples condemned sexual segregation while traditional people favored separation of the sexes and arranged marriage. They considered early

marriage as a sign of prestige and a means to avoid problems of sex. The parents' right to impose their will regarding their children's marriage was considered sacred. The parents' blessing, they said, is necessary and their curse is to be feared. The parental opposition to love marriage comes from their desire to bind their children's freedom and serve their own interest. Heterosexual love is equally condemned by Islamic tradition because it deviates a man from God's love. "Passionate love for a woman is pure madness" said Al-Ghazali.

In the household triangle of mother, son and wife, the mother holds a very important place. Love to the mother being recommended by the Quran, she has a decisive role in the choice of the bride and the direction of the house. Kissing her hand is still a current practice in traditional households. The traditional "hammam" (public bath) is a powerful information center for women who thus hold in their hands the fate of the younger generation and contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes.

Harmful Effects of Sexual Segregation

Women's seclusion has contributed to arouse men's passionate interest in them, specially in their physique. Women's response has been to focus their concern on their bodies and try to make themselves attractive and seductive through the use of cosmetics and jewelry. The male has been idolized by women of his entourage and made to feel that society was organized to satisfy his sexual needs. When he is later upset by sexual restrictions, his anger toward society is turned in toward the family and woman. Sexual repression arouses his preoccupation with symbols such as purity and honor. He feels bitter toward a sister or a wife working in an office and contacting men.

Effects of Modernization

Modernization, on the other hand, has contributed to the breakdown of traditional sexual segregation. More and

A BASIC LIVING SKILLS PROGRAM FOR WOMEN IN LEBANON

In accordance with its policy of progressive activity, the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World is presently seeking funding for an experimental program which will design and evaluate innovative materials and methods for use in a comprehensive, non-formal education program addressing needs of women in health, nutrition, family planning, child care, household management, vocational skills, rural and agricultural skills, community development, and general education. It is our hope that we can find the funds necessary to fulfill this need.

Studies about Woman's Status in Kuwait and the Arab Gulf ⁽¹⁾

The Socio-Cultural Women's Association of Kuwait has published a collection of studies about the status of women in Kuwait and the Gulf States. Three of these studies deal with woman's status in Islam and her contribution to ancient Arabic poetry; the other seven studies set forth the legal status of women in these countries, their role in development, in education and work, the attitudes of society toward women's liberation, women students' attitudes at the Kuwait University, woman and criminality in the Gulf countries.

Though the book was published around 1975-76, the legal status of women has not undergone any noticeable change since then. However, the decision taken by the Kuwaiti government, on February 17, 1980, to restore the democratic régime in Kuwait and to revise the Constitution, suspended in October, 1976, presumes the possibility of granting Kuwaiti women the right to vote, as implied in the statement of the Commission in charge of revising the Constitution.⁽²⁾

The question of women's vote is discussed in the book (page 108), where it says that the Constitution of Kuwait and Bahrain did not exclude women from the right to vote but entrusted the legislators with the task of defining the qualifications of both elector and candidates. The result was that the election laws ignored the principle of equality between the

sexes, approved by the United Nations Charter, and limited the vote to male electors. The author of the study regarding woman's legal rights considers the time ripe for Kuwaiti and Bahraini women to practice suffrage in accordance with democratic principles.

Laws of the Personal Status

A report on Women's status in Kuwait was published in *Al-Raida* No. 3, February 1978, pp. 10-11. The report given here has been limited to the laws of the personal status, which were not included in the above report. The following are the main contents of this report:

(1) Personal Rights of Women in Muslim Law

a) Muslim law grants the adult woman the right to marry according to her own choice and to reject compulsory marriage. In spite of this principle, recognized by Muslim law, the Constitution says that no woman, maiden or young widow, may contract a marriage without her father's or grand-father's consent. According to the author of the report (pp. 112-113), the section dealing with this topic should include the following statement: "The woman's own consent should be considered if she is adult."

b) The right to be her own boss, i.e. to make her own marriage contract, if she has reached adulthood, without the mediation of her guardian. This right which is recognized by

Muslim law has been overlooked by the Constitution.

c) The right to break her engagement or promise of marriage on an equal footing with men.

d) The right to have an appropriate or suitable mate and to reject an unsuitable marriage. This statement has been a source of controversy because of the different explanations given to "suitability."

(2) Rights which a woman should claim from her husband according to Muslim law :

a) Financial Support: the Mahr or dowry plus maintenance.

b) Non-financial claims: justice if he has other wives, sexual satisfaction, good treatment, the right to renounce obedience in reply to his renouncing maintenance, the right to terminate marriage by court decision, the right to child guardianship.

A man has no right to impose on his wife cohabitation with his co-wives or any of his parents of relatives, except his minor progeny.

(3) Divorce

Divorce is the sole right of the adult husband, unless the wife has included in the marriage contract her own right to divorce when she deems it necessary.

A woman is legally allowed to seek divorce from a husband who is impotent or suffering from a chronic disease like leprosy or insanity. The same right applies against a husband who has been away for more than a

(1) In Arabic, *Dirasat 'an Awda'a-el-Mar'at fil-Kuwait wal-Khalij al-Arabi*, Kuwait, 1976.

(2) *Al-Nahar*, Feb, 18, 1980.

year without a valid reason, and against one who mistreats his wife or injures her.

(4) Polygamy

Polygamy in Islam is tied to the principle of justice and submitted to severe regulations. A wife has the right to claim divorce from a husband who decides to remarry without her consent.

(5) Maintenance of Relatives

Every person should be self-supportive except minors and wives who should be maintained by their husbands. A child should be supported by his father, unless he has money registered in his own name.

An adult son should provide for his parents, even if they are able to work.

A disabled person should be provided for by his well-to-do relatives, according to the order of their shares in inheritance.

The above statement of women's

rights in Muslim law is supposed to serve as a guideline for those in charge of revising the Constitutional laws regarding the personal status of women in Kuwait and the Gulf States.

Child Development in the Arab Gulf

A series of booklets (Arabic) on the general topic of "Child Development in the Arab Gulf," published in 1979 by the Iraqi Women's General Federation, Secretariat of Studies and Research. Each of the booklets contains a study of one of the various aspects of the general topic. Among the subtopics treated we read the following: "Development Planning and its Influence on Child Welfare," "Developing the Child's Intellectual Abilities," "Cooperation Between School and Parents," "Developing the Child's Personality," etc.

The collection also contains a bibliography of Arabic books on

children and a compendium entitled: "Using science and technology in effecting social change and promoting woman's evolution," issued by the same Federation in 1978.

(Address: General Federation of Iraqi Women and Basra University, Secretariat of studies and Research, National Library, Baghdad, Iraq.)

From "National Women's Education Centre," Japan

A letter from the National Women's Education Centre, Japan, accompanied by a beautifully produced brochure, was received by IWSAW in September, 1979, informing those concerned with women's education that all the facilities of the Centre were completed by the inauguration of the new gymnasium, indoor swimming pool, tea ceremony house and Japanese house, Phone (049362) 6 7 1 1 Cables: N W E C Higashimatsuyama.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Copies from the study on May Ziadeh by Rose Ghurayyib, formerly advertised in Al-Raida, no. 6, nov. 1978, are available at the Institute or at Three Continents Press, 1346 Connecticut Ave. N.W. suite 1131, Washington D.C. 20036 U.S.A.

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