



# al-raida

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## The Status of Arab Women

The stated goal of the International Women's Year, held in Mexico City in 1975 was «The integration of women in the development process as equal partners with men». In her book, *Le Deuxieme Sex* (The Second Sex), Simone de Beauvoir attributes the subordinate status of women to their identification with the domain of «nature» and the relationship of «nature» to the domain of «culture». She argues that nature is always identified as being active. Women are constrained by the biological facts of reproduction and lactation, and hence they are less free than men to be culturally creative. She adds that man cannot live and reproduce himself without women, and this need for women is at the root of the ambivalence displayed by men towards women.<sup>(1)</sup> Arab women and women everywhere have been the target of many development programmes and projects in order to achieve the stated goal of the International Women's Year. Al-Raida endeavours to shed light on the status of Arab Women, especially on their role in economic and social development.

This issue contains two pages in Arabic which makes a new addition to this newsletter. The Arabic pages have been launched to meet the urgent demand of our readers and will endeavour to cover the most significant cultural events in the Arab world. The Arabic pages of this issue cover an interview with Suzanne Mubarak, President of the Friends of the Children's Library in Egypt. An article on the organization of the Friends of the Children's Library is included in English for our English speaking readers.

We are grateful for the group of eminent researchers and writers who have been contributing to al-Raida and to our subscribers for their encouragement and support. Your suggestions and comments will be of great value. We look forward to more contributions to make our objectives achievable — an objective that advocates creativity, knowledge, learning and awareness.

(1) Rassam, Amal. «Arab Women: the Status of Research in the Social Sciences and the Status of Women» in *Women in the Arab World*, UNESCO: 1984, pp. 2-3.

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## Women in the Arab World

The Book *Women in the Arab World*<sup>\*</sup> is an important reference on the position of Arab Women in different societies. It presents eight studies by women specialists from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Libya-Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Sudan. In this book, Arab women social scientists look at the state of research of women in their region and the way in which future research could be made more relevant to the concerns and needs of women in the region. The recommendations in the studies call for research to be undertaken by women specialists of the region themselves in a manner that reflects the complexities of social reality and the situation of women of different social categories. Research should serve to enhance knowledge of the situation of women and should have as one of its principal objectives the improvement of their status.

One of the chapters of the book is on «Survey of Research on Women in the Arab Gulf Region» by *Farida Allaghi* and *Aisha Almana*. The following is an excerpt of this chapter, noting that the Gulf region includes the following Arab countries: Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman. These countries share similar historical, cultural, social, religious, economic and political conditions.

### Research priorities and needs for the study of women in the Gulf

Different methods exist for establishing priorities to carry out research about Gulf women. To emphasize answers to questions that have been neglected is just one of these priorities. Many of the questions which come out of the studies are cited in regard to issues and

problems and constitute a list of researchable questions. This list does not constitute a definitive list of all research priorities and needs applicable to Gulf women. It should also be pointed out that each Gulf country must develop its own priorities as far as the ordering and content of the following specific priorities and needs are concerned:

— Studies reviewed reveal that conflict exists in the region about traditional role expectations and actual life experience. Research should explore how newly-educated and emancipated women in the region are at odds with their roles, and how people subsequently perceive women who deviate from their expected behaviour. Studies pertaining to the cultural restrictions upon women would pinpoint these restrictions and provide steps to overcome them and bring about positive change.

— Research should explore whether or not the rapid socio-economic changes which are sweeping the region have fundamentally affected the status of women in different geographical locations and social classes, especially with regard to the division of labour, decision-making power within the household, and increased choice opportunities.

— Research related to Gulf women and, in turn, the Arab world, must seek explanations about how a balance can be achieved between continuity of certain roles, values, and traditions that are considered 'good', and change of others which impede progress and improvement.

— Country profile studies should be directed to encourage and develop empirical assessment of the different roles of women in different geographical locations. These studies should also concentrate on the collection of demographic data on rural and bedouin women, which are still largely lacking. Such studies should help in designing action programmes through which women can actively participate in solving the problems of the family, community, and the nation.

(\*) First published 1984 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France and Frances Pinter (Publishers) Limited, 5 Dryden Street, London WC2E 9NW and 51 Washington Street, Dover, New Hampshire.

— The reviewed studies reveal a total lack of data and information about rural and bedouin women. Research should focus on such variables as the type of work performed by bedouin and rural women and men outside the household. Findings from this kind of research will indicate which tasks are performed by women in the agricultural sector and within the tribal communities. It also will show what kinds of skills women already have, allowing plans to be developed to build upon and refine the existing skills. These kinds of studies will also encourage planners to recognize the vital roles which rural women play in the agricultural sector and the bedouin women perform in the tribes.

— Research pertaining to infrastructure building (roads, water, electricity, health, education) should go hand-in-hand with projects pertaining to women, especially in the remote rural and nomadic areas. Other researchers in other parts of the world have shown that if this does not happen, any effort directed towards women, without the supporting infrastructure, will be doomed to failure.

— Research related to Gulf women should explain regularities, variations and interdependence of social, psychological, cultural and demographic variables. It should also list the indicators chosen to describe the overall situation of all women in all social classes and geographical locations.

— Research should focus on the felt needs of women themselves. The projects designed to benefit women will be accepted if they address locally-perceived needs.

#### **Suggested solutions to major obstacles facing Gulf women**

Although more problems were discussed in the studies reviewed than solutions proposed, some researchers have suggested a few solutions. Perhaps some are superficial, reformist, or vague, but others are meaningful, radical and specific. Several studies have

emphasized the need for fighting illiteracy among women in the Gulf as a primary solution to the various problems they face. The BNSU\*\* study calls for co-education in order to overcome the psychological obstacles between the sexes. The only paper that proposes the introduction of women's studies in the educational system in the Gulf was by BNSU. The paper states that 'women's studies will teach both females and male students about the real potentials of women and help correct wrong and stereotyped ideas about women's primary roles and responsibilities'. *Altagheb* suggests that educational policies should be planned to encourage more women to join scientific and vocational fields and not continue to be concentrated in the fields of humanities and social sciences. *Al-Rimehi* states very specifically that 'education for both sexes is the major solution for providing better life for the Gulf individual'. *Shilling* indicates that programmes to alter women's self-image, expand their options, and motivate them to improve themselves can help overcome the obstacles faced by Kuwaiti women.

*Al-Rimehi* and *Taki* both indicate that women in the Gulf must consider their liberation as a national liberation. If the obstacles that women face should ever be solved, their problems should not be dealt with in isolation from all sources of exploitation that dominate the Gulf region. *Musa*, *Al-Rimehi*, *Almana* and *Algadi* suggest the need for providing women with equal opportunities in the job market. *Musa* indicates that one major solution in overcoming the obstacles that women face in the job market is appointing them to different jobs according to their skills, educational backgrounds and capabilities and not according to their sex.

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(\*\*) The Bahraini National Student Union (BNSU) study, «Women in Bahrain and the Arabian Gulf».

## Salma Khadra Jayyusi

*Salma Khadra Jayyusi* is a well known Palestinian poet and critic. She graduated from the American University in Beirut and received a Ph.D. degree in Arabic literature from the University of London. Her dissertation «Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry» was published in 1977. She published in 1960 a volume of Arabic poetry, *Al Aouda min an'Naba' el-Halim* — (the Return from the Dreamy Source).

She lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts and is the director of PROTA, a project of translating Arabic literature and poetry into English.

The following poem appeared in *Women and the Family in the Middle East*, by Elizabeth Fernea.

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### SALMA KHADRA JAYYUSI

Translated from the Arabic by Patricia Alanah with the author and Christopher Middleton

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#### *To Usama*

I am a woman of April  
December fires that burn to ash frighten me.

Hide me, my son, you who rocket to the stars  
You who spread over the earth like grass.

Ominous December thunder will overwhelm  
My river rippling with secrets of love.  
It will stifle the music on whose echoing  
Waves you were born.

Your shrug:

This woman is rooted in time.  
She spans the air like a dove  
In flight for a thousand years.

I know her.

She is a willow, a supple reed, I know her.  
Twisted or bent, she returns to her old self.

A palm tree, I know her.  
Pick her fruits and she sprouts more,  
More fruits, and their honey.

A cypress tree, I know her.  
Never shedding leaves, why should she care about  
December winds?

Son, the winds blow stronger.  
My longing to hear your voice burns low, bitten off  
By the iron edge that echo in your voice has;  
It is wise, cruel, innocent, selfish.

Without your presence  
All times of day and night are void.

We both permeate the wind, the air, the rains,  
But like different galaxies we drink  
Our own heart's wine,  
We are poured, each, in our own glass.  
Yet you were born of my elements,  
I gave you my impetuosity,  
That constant flitting in the public world,  
That private elusiveness,  
Chronic dizziness,  
Rocklike will  
And the fixity of faithful stars  
In the valleys of the sky.

And I gave you  
That spark of conquest, the rapture of love,  
The intensity  
And absorption of your being, all of it,  
In the presence of holy fire.

Should I blame you?

And you offered me the promise, a pledge of calm,  
A love like a tide that comes ashore  
Only to recede.

Should you blame me?

I am a wild gazelle; you are rock, and  
The blood is on my head.

## Nour Salman

The most recent collection of letters by *Dr. Nour Salman* is her book «Ila Rajol Lam Y'ati»\* (To a Man Who Never Was). *Nour*, a well known Lebanese writer who lives in Beirut spoke to Editor *Aida Arasoghli* about her book. *Dr. Salman's* dynamic and warm manner belies the context of the book which reveals the political, social and emotional turmoil in Lebanon and the Arab world. The principal character in the book is a man to whom all the letters are addressed. In these letters, *Nour* resists the conventional roles ascribed to people in a relationship by withdrawing from the relationship. She refuses to join the Qafila (Convoy) of tradition. She tries to escape this by ending the relationship and this entails longing, anguish and separation. The letters reveal memories that have not faded and a strong feeling of alienation. She retreats to herself and writes these letters, «why is it that I always suffer, always defying the norms, sometimes by obstinate silence». Writing satisfies in *Nour* «the need for communication, the need to end my isolation. I believe everything is universal in life, the letters do not reveal personal experiences, instead, they reveal the experiences of life and love». Her book is marked with a serious analytical approach and an endless search for solutions «vertical vision helps me think clearly of the problem and find a solution. My perspective of things is very comprehensive, honest and authentic. Honesty is very essential for every writer, every artist and every leader».

**Question:** What is the impact of honesty on your writings?

**Answer:** There is no eloquence in literature without honesty. Writing well involves authenticity of feelings and ideas. The problem of people lies in the schism between what they do and what they say. I believe that the confessional and sectorian problems of the country will be resolved with the emergence of an honest leader.

**Question:** The feelings of anxiety and alienation are overwhelming in these letters, what are the reasons for these feelings?

**Answer:** Defying tradition and choosing to be a writer was not an easy task, there was a high price to pay.



My father always warned me of the problems that face women who choose writing as a career in this part of the world; but I believe that rationalization is not the only means of finding truth and reality. Logic could limit our perception of things. My perspective of life is very analytical, skeptical and very intuitive, I think that one cannot gain without losing, and I am more than ready to pay the price.

**Question:** What about the strong feelings of homelessness which are pervading in the book?

**Answer:** The strong feeling of homelessness is caused by the confessional dissension in Lebanon that is leading to the fragmentation of the whole country. I feel that I am in constant struggle against the windmills of war and violence. I am determined to go on with the struggles; I have a vertical vision to problems. One should not be lost in futile details that will mislead him from envisaging the real problem and thus the right solution. My feelings of homelessness could be attributed to strong feelings of disappointment in the status-quo of things that need to be changed.

**Question:** Your letters reveal strong symbiosis between life and love, how do you explain this?

**Answer:** For me, life and love are symbiotic because they are one. Both life and love should not be restricted to time and place. The axis of life is the human being who is more important than the game of winning and money. Most people are trapped in the money race, love becomes secondary or non-existent. I believe

\* Salman, Nour. *Ila Rajol Lam Y'ati* (To a Man Who Never Was). Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, Beirut 1986. 223 pages.

that love is the guarantor of happiness and peace.

**Question:** The letters show very clearly that you have chosen the symbolic style; what is the symbolic dimension of the convoy and homeland?

**Answer:** The symbolic style in this book is a reflection of my contention that reality and symbol are one, abstraction and reality are also one. There is unity in everything in life. Reality is very important whatever dimension I choose. There are many perplexing questions that do not have an absolute answer, and the symbols in life are an answer to these perplexing questions. The convoy is the imposed symbol of tradition, the imposed arranged path of life. The homeland is the extension of life and destiny. It is the present and the future. All the symbols in my book have a human dimension.

At present, Dr. Salman is preparing a research study on *Tawfic Youssef Awwad*. She is also professor of Arabic Literature at the Lebanese University. In December 1986, she plans to travel to Algeria where she is invited by the Ministry of Higher Education and Culture to give a lecture on her book on Algerian Literature. She also plans to publish ten short stories in the near future.

The next issue of Al-Raida is going to be on  
**CONTEMPORARY ARAB WOMEN ARTISTS**  
February 1, Vol. VIII, No. 39

Articles and contributions will be appreciated from all our readers. Articles chosen to be published will have a special acknowledgement to the writer.

## A Bridge Through Time<sup>(\*)</sup> A Memoir

By Laila Said

A dramatic, intense and honest book that reveals the experiences and alienation of *Laila Said* who was introduced in *Al-Raida*, May 1, 1980, No. 12, as a pioneer film and theatre producer in Egypt.

The book was reviewed by many critics, and the following are two reviews that appeared in the *Middle East* and the *Social Studies*.

*Nora Peck* from the *Middle East* wrote:

Towards the end of *Laila Abou Saif's* inspiring memoir, a former teaching colleague, a man, tells her with admiration, «You're a fighter, Laila, and this is not a society which admires aggressive women.» Though *Abou Saif* has spent her life surrounded by conflict in the Arab world, as an Egyptian woman she is not allowed to take part in it.

The memoir, which begins with *Abou Saif's* efforts to postpone an arranged marriage and follows her through an American college education, divorce, and a successful career as a theatre and film director, is the story of how one woman discovers her own more effective method of battle. As *Abou Saif* evolves into a feminist, she discovers that this career is as inseparable from her life as the devotion she feels to her stubborn culture.

*A Bridge Through Time* is at its best when relating *Abou Saif's* personal struggles, and at its weakest when she attempts to weave in the background of the political changes in Egypt over a twenty year period. Though this information is certainly integral to her story, it is often made separate and unclear, which to the uninformed reader will only slow down a story that moves at the pace of a good novel.

(\*) Published by Quartet (27-29 Goodge St. London W1P1ED), Summit Books, 282 pages.

*Abou Saif* has all the characteristics of the traditional heroine; constantly faced with obstacles, she persists, and succeeds. As a teenager, faced with an arranged marriage, she persuades her educated and well-connected father to let her finish her studies in Chicago. This brings on an identity crisis of sorts, one that will haunt her throughout her life, as Western freedom is so tempting.

Though the marriage ultimately takes place, *Abou Saif* is able to finish her doctoral thesis in record time. A study of the actor-manager *Najib al-Rihani*, the creator of Egyptian social comedy in the 1930s and '40s, the thesis leads *Abou Saif* into her work as a director and helps her develop a goal, that of finding a theatre that will reach her people.

This would seem a way, finally, out of the identity crisis and an unhappy marriage, but with success comes a new obstacle. Under the new, seemingly liberal *Sadat* government, *Abou Saif's* productions are challenged by censors who deem the plays politically unsound. She turns to documentary film-making and participation in world feminism, and finds that film is the strongest way she can expose and perhaps alter the plight of women in the Arab world.

Despite the occasional lapse from clear straightforward prose into poetic images that seem to belong to a different kind of person, *Saif's* story leaves the reader wanting to tell her, as the same colleague finally does, «There's still so much for you to do here. Don't give up.»

*Ahdaf Soueif* from the Social Studies:

*Laila Abou Saif's A Bridge Through Time* spans a period of almost twenty-five years; from her betrothal in Cairo in 1958 to her departure for America and a teaching job in the University of New Haven a couple of years ago. There are many faults to be found in these memoirs. At the most basic level, almost every Arabic word that occurs is inaccurate. To take the most flagrant examples: the word which President *Abd el-Nasser* used to describe the defeat of 1967 — and which came to identify the entire era from 1967 to 1973 — was *naksa* not *nakba*. The word used by *Anwar Sadat* when he wanted to allow a degree of diversity of

political opinion but was reluctant to condone any *ahzab* (parties) was *manabir* (forums) not *nawabir*. The oft-heard Islamic cry is *Allah-u-Akbar* not *Akhbar*. The *karawan* (not *qarawan*), which still sings in some parts of Cairo, is the curlew not the nightingale, and so on. These mistakes embody one of the reasons why *Ms. Abou Saif* found it so difficult to get on in Egypt: denimed, divorced and American-educated at a time when none of these things was common, she was also demanding to be taken seriously as the first Egyptian woman stage director — and she was making this demand in flawed Arabic.

This verbal inaccuracy is mirrored by a factual one: the *mogama'* is not an «octagonal building of about nine floors» but a rectangular eleven-storeyed one. An apartment in Zamalek would not overlook a «tributary of the Nile» but the Nile itself. «My country, my country» is not merely «a patriotic song» but the Egyptian National Anthem. The 1952 burning of Cairo was more or less established as the doing of *Misr al Fatah* (a neo-fascist society) and not the Muslim Brotherhood. High-fliers pre-1966 did not go to the Sheraton Hotel (which had not yet been built) but to the Semiramis «Night and Day». The list could go on. One would have thought that Quartet, part of the Namara Group, would be equipped with an editor who can pick up this sort of thing — but apparently not.

In its straightforward bits, *A Bridge Through Time* is very readable. But then suddenly it appears that a need is felt for some «style» — and that's when things go wrong; here is *Ms. Abou Saif* observing the felucca boatmen on the Nile: «These boatmen's lives had not changed for thousands of years. Yet I found a strange comfort in observing the life of my ancestors reassert itself with primeval confidence, the still point of Egypt.» And here she is entering a seminar room: «I found an esoteric group of Arab and Western scholars... engrossed in learned talk.»...

Whatever its faults, *A Bridge Through Time* has its heart in the right place. It captures some of the climate in Egypt from 1967 to 1981 and it describes some significant and authentic incidents. If the frankness with which it is written signals that *Ms. Abou Saif* has now left Egypt for good, then that would be a pity.

## Women in Egyptian Public Life

by Earl Sullivan

Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, 1986. 223 pages.

This book is a statistical survey of Egyptian women in the sectors of business and politics. Professor Sullivan's approach to this study is based on the fact that the class a woman is born into is a determinant factor of her activity and work in life. Women who come from the upper-middle class tend to choose the fields of business and politics for work while purely upper-class women choose the business field.

## Women in Saudi Arabia

Ideology and Behaviour Among the Elite

by Soraya Al-Torki

Columbia University Press, New York, 1986. 183 pages.

This book is of enormous impact and interest although it is limited to the elite families of Jeddah, Ahl al-bilad (people of the country). Soraya's book focuses on the human dimension of the problems that face women. She uses in her book two important terms: ideology and strategy, or in other words ideology versus strategy.

The ideology is the traditional norms, women's sub-ordination and seclusion, marriage, inheritance, children. The strategy is the gentle process of change especially with the impact of education. According to al-Torki, her book describes the changing domains of discretion and constraint among the elite families of Jeddah.

## Changing Faces of Egyptian Women

Nikki Keddie, Editor of *Women in the Muslim World* (1978), is Professor of History at the University of California, Los Angeles. In an article that appeared in the

Middle East, October 1986, she wrote about books that shed new light on the roles of women in modern Egypt.

Taken together, they suggest the progress which has been made since 1800 towards women's emancipation, as well as the difficulties which remain.

Judith Tucker's *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge University Press, Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Rd., Cambridge CB2 2RU; 268 pages, £25) deserves special mention as the first detailed work in English on the history of Middle Eastern women based on archive records.

The use of court records allows Tucker to show that many women went to court (or, if they were members of the élite, sent their representatives). The courts were inclined to accept their Islamic right to property and inheritance, but were severe on other issues, such as the right of a working mother to retain custody of a young child.

The book deals with poorer women, and more on the élite would have been welcome. It also deals with women's work, suggesting that work outside the home was far more common than many have thought. Tucker demonstrates the changing and disruptive impact of the world market and of internal economic change, which was dramatic from Muhammad Ali on.

The book would have benefited from an introduction summarising the position of Egyptian women before 1800, and from a more extensive conclusion. But it is a fine work which ought to inspire other specialist studies of the history of Muslim women, which are strangely lacking despite the widespread interest in women's studies.

*Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist* by Huda Sharawi, translated and introduced by Margot Badran (Virago Press, 41 William IV St, London WC2N 4DB; 192 pages, £6.95), is about an exceptional woman of the élite who became Egypt's leading feminist until her death in 1947 (her memoirs cover the years up to 1924).

Her boldness in living apart from a husband who continued to live with his first wife, in joining and addressing societies for women and in joining the nationalist struggle after World War I are themes of these memoirs.

Sharawi's life is put into perspective in Margot Badran's fine introduction. Because the memoirs deal with only part of her life, however, we must still await a full biography.

Nawal el-Saadawi's *Memoirs from the Women's Prison*, translated by Marilyn Booth (The Women's Press, 34 Great Sutton St., London EC1D 0DX; 128 pages, £3.95), concern her period of imprisonment, with many other Egyptians, in the autumn of 1981, during the last months of the Sadat regime.

The book is lively, touching and highly readable, making us re-live with the author the shock of arrest, the dirt and horror of jail, and the nagging uncertainty about when or whether she would be released.

The author gives vivid pictures of her fellow prisoners. Few of the political prisoners were intellectuals like herself, and many were Muslim women activists. Some were not political prisoners, like the gentle peasant woman driven by terrible circumstances to kill her husband.

The book reads like a good novel. It even has a fiction-like ending: Saadawi is taken from jail, whisked off to meet President Mubarak and then taken home. The author's respect and love for her outstanding husband, incidentally, serve as a reminder that being a leading feminist does not necessarily mean being against men.

The budding self-assertion of women depicted in the two other books comes to fruition in Saadawi's memoirs, where we learn what a variety of women think and what they do to find their place in a world which is difficult but not without its hope and joy.

## Simone de Beauvoir

*Simone de Beauvoir* is a prominent writer and feminist who was awarded the prize Goncourt in 1954 for her novel **Les Mandarins** (The Mandarins). She passed away in April 1986 in France.

Born in Paris on 9 January 1908 into a middle-class Catholic family. She studied philosophy at the elite Ecole Normale Supérieure and at the Sorbonne where she obtained her post-graduate degree at the age of 21. She was the youngest ever in France to pass this examination. Later she started teaching at a Lycee in Marseilles. In 1929 she met *Jean-Paul Sartre* at the Ecole Normale, *Sartre* suggested that their relationship was «necessary» and this relationship lasted till the death of *Sartre* in 1979. Her life and books have been an inspiration for women around the world, especially her book *Le Deuxieme Sex* (The Second Sex). This book is a massive overview of women's subordination. It was published in 1949 and was acclaimed all over the world.

Thousands of women wrote to her on the issue of women's rights. In 1970 she joined the French women's liberation movement. In 1971, she signed the Manifesto of 343 as one of the 343 women admitting to an illegal abortion. Before 1970, she saw feminism as only reformist and legalistic; but in 1972 she declared herself a militant feminist and revised her belief that socialism alone would resolve women's subordination. Two years later, she was elected President of the French League of Women's Rights.

### Publications

1941 — *L'invitee* (She Came To Stay).

1945 — *Le Sang des Autres* (The Blood of Others).  
In the same year she founded with *Sartre*, the journal «*Les Temps Modernes*».

1946 — *Tous Les Hommes Sont Mortels* (All Men Are Mortal).



1948 — *L'Amerique Au Jour le Jour* (America Day by Day).

1949 — *Le Deuxieme Sex* (The Second Sex). An overview of Women's subordination.

1954 — *Les Mandarins* (The Mandarins).

1957 — *La Longue Marche* (The Long March).

1958 — *Memoires D'une Jeune Fille Rangee* (Memories of a Dutiful Daughter).

1959 — *La Force de l'Age* (The Prime of Life).

1963 — *La Force des Choses* (The Force of Circumstance).

1964 — *Une Mort Tres Douce* (A Very Easy Death).

1968 — *La Femme Rompue* (The Destroyed Woman).

1970 — *La Vieillesse* (Old Age).

1972 — *Tout Compte Fait* (All Said and Done).

1973 — Publication of a feminist section in *Les Temps Modernes*.

1981 — *La Ceremonie des Adieux* (Adieux — A Farewell to Sartre).

1983 — *Lettres Au Castor et a Quelques Autres* (Letters to Castor — (his nickname) — and to some others).

## Betty Friedan

The feminist writer *Betty Friedan* says at least one result of the women's movement — changes in divorce laws — backfired. «There is a false illusion of equality in current divorce proceedings,» *Friedan* said at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association in New York. She said the laws enacted in the past 15 years were «male models for equality...that penalize women.»

*(International Herald Tribune, September 5, 1986)*

## Female Education in Kuwait

Kuwait university admitted 2,581 students in the 1986/87 year. Of these, 2,148 were locals and 1,017 were women. More than 1,480 will be studying science.

*(MEED, August 9, 1986)*

## Overuse of 2 Birth Procedures Found in U.S. Studies

Two major medical studies published Thursday provide strong new evidence that two childbirth procedures — electronic fetal monitoring and cesarean delivery — are being overused.

A study of nearly 35,000 births in Dallas found that routine use of continuous electronic monitoring of the fetal heart rate, a practice in many American hospitals, led to a «small but significant increase» in cesarean-section deliveries but to no major improvement in the health of babies born there, doctors at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center reported.

A separate study of more than 65,000 births at four New York hospitals found that private physicians performed «significantly more» cesarean deliveries than doctors treating patients in hospital clinics, without «demonstrably improving» the outcome for most babies, said researchers from the State University of New York.

Both groups, in studies published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, suggested that overuse of medical interventions during childbirth may stem, at least in part, from obstetricians' concerns about potential malpractice suits.

Cesarean deliveries have jumped from 5 percent of all U.S. births in 1970 to 21.1 percent in 1984, according to the National

Center for Health Statistics. It said the rate in 1981 was 18 percent, well above the 12 percent in Denmark, 11 percent in France and 9 percent in England and Wales.

Since the early 1970s, use of electronic monitoring also has grown rapidly. It is now routine in many institutions for most obstetrical patients.

The monitoring charts the fetal heartbeat and a woman's contractions continuously, using equipment attached externally to the woman's abdomen or internally through the vagina to the infant's scalp. The information is intended to provide a warning of fetal distress during labor.

Electronic fetal monitoring initially was used mostly for patients known to be at higher risk of birth complications, such as women with labor problems, high blood pressure or diabetes, or who are carrying twins. Despite scientific debate over the benefits, many physicians and hospitals shifted toward the new technology for all labors.

In 1978, it was estimated that at least two-thirds of all pregnancies in the United States were electronically monitored during labor. The new study, believed to be the largest to measure the effect of electronic monitoring, suggests that monitoring may not be needed in most pregnancies.

«It clearly indicates that the policy of monitoring all women did not improve the pregnancy results,» *Dr. Kenneth J. Leveno* said in an interview Wednesday.

During a three-year period at Dallas's Parkland Memorial Hospital, *Dr. Leveno* and his staff alternated monthly between a policy of monitoring all women and one of «selective monitoring».

With selective monitoring, slightly more than one-third of the pregnancies were considered high-risk and were given continuous electronic fetal monitoring. The rest were monitored by nurses, who checked babies' heartbeats at least every 30 minutes with special stethoscopes.

*Dr. Leveno* reported that infant death rates did not differ significantly between the two groups. Nor were there differences in the other indicators of fetal problems, such as breathing difficulties, admission to intensive care and seizures.

Cesarean rates increased slightly, however, from 10 percent for first-time, cesareans among the selective monitoring group to 11 percent in the universal group.

A large study of cesarean sections at New York hospitals found that 10.7 percent of clinic patients had their first cesarean and 6.4 percent had repeat surgery, compared with 13.2 percent and 8.2 percent, respectively, for private patients. But the private pa-

tients' babies generally did not fare any better, said *Dr. Roberta Haynes de Regt*, director of obstetrics at City Hospital Center in Elmhurst.

(*International Herald Tribune*, September 5, 1986)

## Amendments to the Arab Civil Status Law

In a report written by *Sana Attiyeh* to the *Jordan Times*, the amendments to the Arab Civil Status Law is being discussed. In this report, *Miss Rihab Qadumi*, an active lawyer and a legal consultant for the Business and Professional Women's Club Consulting Office for Women, explains women's rights under the present Jordanian civil status law and Islamic Sharia and the suggested amendments concerning marriage and divorce.

The committee of the Business and Professional Women's Club has submitted suggestions for amendments to the committee of the civil status draft law. This were up for discussion at the Arab ministers of justice conference held in Casablanca, Morocco, between April 14-18.

### Suggested amendments

*Miss Qadumi* spoke about some of the propositions given to the Jordanian civil status draft law committee. She says: «We suggest that for marriage, a man must be less than 20 years older than the woman and that medical examinations must be performed to prove lack of serious illnesses or diseases in both the man and the woman.»

Concerning working wives, *Miss Qadumi* says they should not necessarily have permission from their husbands to work. «There are cases where husbands disappear and desert their wives and they are left with no money to support themselves or the children. In such circumstances, we suggest a charity box for such women to be put up in the courts or anywhere else. But when the husband is traced, he must pay back the funds. Concerning a man who divorces his wife for no valid reason, instead of him supporting her for only one year as is the present law, the time should be increased to five years,» she said.

Some of the proposed amendments were suggested by *Miss Qadumi* in view of personal cases on which she has worked. She suggests: «If the husband is addicted to alcohol, drugs, or gambling, the wife should be entitled to divorce him. Also, there are cases when the man divorces for no reason, the woman is not allowed to stay in the house if it is rented, because usually the rent is under the husband's name. Here, a woman should be allowed to stay in the house for at least one year to give her time

to find other shelter. Also, it is common that a man can really pressure his wife until she relinquishes all her rights in order to divorce. After the divorce, she realizes that she needs her rights again. We suggest that such women should at least be granted their second dowry, even if under moments of pressure she relinquishes her rights.»

### Second wives

In situations where the husband wants to marry another woman, which he is entitled to, several suggestions of conditions have been given to the amendment committee. There should be valid reasons why the man wants to marry another; he should be able to financially support more than one wife and both women must be informed that the man is either already married or that he is to marry another.

*Miss Qadumi* believes that these proposals will hopefully be seriously considered by the Arab justice ministers when amending the unified draft Arab civil status law, because she says all are within the limits of the Shari'a. She adds: «If any of these suggestions are included in the draft law, then we as women have participated in the amendment of laws that personally concern us.»

(*Jordan Times*, April 20, 1986)

## Challenges Facing Arab Women in the Next Decade

The Arab Women Solidarity Association (AWSA) held a three-day conference (1-3 September 1986) in Cairo, Egypt on the «Challenges Facing Arab Women in the Next Decade». The objectives of the conference were:

- To determine the causes behind the deterioration of Arab women's status in the last decade; and the dynamics of change.
- To formulate outlines of strategies on how Arab Women can resist and confront such deterioration.
- To carry on the recommendations of Nairobi's conference according to Arab women's needs and specific problems.

This conference contributed to the process of consciousness-raising and policy formulation which would enhance the integration of women.

During the conference a series of topics were discussed dealing with the various challenges/problems that are likely to face Arab women in the next decade. The topics of the conference were:

- The political challenges
- The economic challenges
- The socio-cultural challenges.

# The Children's Literature Project

In 1981, the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World launched the «Children's Literature Project» to train librarians, writers and illustrators of books for children between the ages of 2-12. This project is financed by the Kuwait Society for the Advancement of Arab Children. The project aims at promoting quality children's literature in the Arabic language and providing essential base line data about children's literature for writers, illustrators, librarians and educators of Arab children.

Research was conducted to identify vocabulary comprehended by children in each developmental age level, as well as basic themes, concepts and styles of writing and illustration that are appealing to specific age groups. Training workshops were sponsored to train writers, illustrators and librarians to be sensitive to children's development needs and to sharpen the literacy and artistic skills to meet these needs. Educational material was prepared to educate Arab parents and librarians about the uses of children's books and to encourage communities to promote children's books and children's libraries.

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World held sessions and workshops for children's librarians in Cairo, Amman, Abu Dhabi, Manama and Rabat. These workshops were part of a comprehensive programme that included training writers and illustrators of children's books in Arabic.

*Workshops on Writing and Illustrating Quality Books for Arab Children.* (August 25-September 10, 1985)

Thirty young potential artists and writers attended the workshops in Cyprus representing four different

Arab countries, namely: Bahrain, Jordan, Aden (PDRY) and Lebanon. The instructors for this training programme were international experts on Children's literature. Over 200 books were displayed as samples

of good literature and were carefully studied by the trainers as part of their programme. The selected illustrators attended another workshop in Cyprus (August 1-23, 1986), in order to put the final touches to the manuscripts. A professional artist was invited from the United States as consultant and supervisor.

### Librarian's workshops

*Cairo* (December 14-22, 1985)

The invitation to schedule a training workshop in Egypt was forwarded to *Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak*, since she has a special interest in children's libraries. She and the members of the society, Friends of the Children's Libraries, arranged for publicity, location, accommodation and selection of 37 participants. UNICEF provided necessary supplies, materials and transportation. The sessions consisted of lectures, demonstrations and practical experiences such as cataloguing, book evaluation, programming, preparation of an original book, policy and procedure developments.

*Jordan* (December 29-January 4, 1986)

The contacts for this workshop were initiated by Beirut University College Alumni Chapter President *Mrs. Janette Mufti Dahkan*, and members of the executive committee of the Library Association of Jordan. *Dr. Hani al-Amad* and the executive committee of the association arranged with Jordan University for the use of their facilities, materials, supplies and for providing transportation.

Thirty-three participants attended the training sessions that were held with association members to stress their role in promoting children's libraries and the importance of reading for children. Recommendations were made for changes that would improve the use of facilities and the quality of programmes provided.

*Abu Dhabi* (January 6-12, 1986)

The workshop was held at the Baraim al-Mostaqbal School in Abu Dhabi. *Mrs. Nelly Bajali Lama*, the President of Beirut University College Alumni Chapter, and *Mrs. Jehan Nasr*, headmistress of the school, arranged for publicity, location and selection of participants.

Thirty-five participants and five observers attended the workshop and sessions. The programme contained the same elements of that followed in Egypt, with modifications to meet the needs of the group and the restrictions of the schedule.

*Bahrain* (January 14-23, 1986)

The initial contact for the arrangement of the workshops was made by Beirut University College Alumni Chapter president, *Dr. Sofia Doweigher Aubry*, with the Ministry of Education which offered to arrange for facilities, materials, supplies, recruitment of participants and accomodation.

The sessions were held in the Um el-Husam school for boys. The workshop was opened formally by *Mr. Ali Abdel Haq*, Director General of the Training Bureau of the Ministry of Education, representing his Excellency the Minister, and *Mrs. Hassan Mehri*. The programme was similar to that implemented in Egypt with necessary modifications for limitations of time and large number of participants, ninety in all.

*Rabat* (July 1-7, 1986)

The workshop in Rabat was organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Artisanat and Social Affairs. *Mr. Mohammed Boulasri*, Director of the Ministry of Social Affairs, opened the sessions by stressing the importance of reading for children and the role of the librarian. The programme covered the same content and procedure as prior librarians workshops.

The books that were evaluated were taken from the



British Council, the French Cultural Centre and the Cultural Centre of Rabat. The sessions were attended by thirty participants.

This is only a brief overview of the training workshops for children's librarians as held in five countries of the Arab World. The content of the workshops not only included basic literary skills for organization and administration, but also presented the concept of programming and extension services to promote reading. The workshops seemed to result in a change of understanding of the role of the librarian, from the traditional custodian of books to the motivating force for reading promotion. Participants developed an awareness of what constitutes quality in children's books and how to select them. The limited number of quality books was felt, thus training of writers and illustrators who are sensitive to children's needs became imperative. Participants acknowledged the importance of a standard system of cataloguing and classification to be used in all children's libraries in the Arab World, be it a public or a school library.

More information and material on the workshops could be obtained from The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Beirut University College. P.O.Box 13-5053, Beirut - Lebanon. Tel. 811968/9/70, Cable Address: BECOGE. Telex: 23389LE.

سؤال: هذه المكتبة هي الأولى في مشروع يتضمن تحقيق ١٠ مكتبات للأطفال، ما هدف إنشاء هذه المكتبات وكم عدد الأطفال المستفيدين منها؟

جواب: نأمل أن يصل عدد المكتبات العامة للطفل إلى عشر مكتبات مع نهاية عام ١٩٨٦، وهذه المكتبات هي بداية فقط حيث تبدأ كل محافظة وكل مدينة بل وكل قرية العمل بالجهود الذاتية لإنشاء مكتبة تتناسب سعتها مع عدد سكان الحي أو القرية وهدف إنشاء هذه المكتبات متعدد فهو يؤدي مثلاً إلى:

— توفير الكتب والمجلات والمراجع والمواد التعليمية طبقاً لمتطلبات واحتياجات الأطفال.

— تنمي لدى الأطفال المهارة اللازمة لاستخدام الكتب والمكتبة استخداماً صحيحاً.

— تشجع عادة القراءة وحب الاطلاع والبحث الفردي ومناقشة الكتب واستخدام المواد التعليمية كمصدر للمعلومات.

— تثير في الطفل حب الاستطلاع الذي يمكن من خلاله توجيهه إلى القراءة ليصل إلى إجابات وافية عن الأسئلة التي تدور في ذهنه وبذلك نخلق لديه عادة البحث وأسلوب الدراسة.

أما بالنسبة لعدد الأطفال المستفيدين منها فذلك يختلف من منطقة إلى أخرى وإن كان معدل الاشتراك في مكتبات الطفل العامة التي قامت بالفعل قد وصل إلى ما بين ٤٠٠ و ٥٠٠ عضوية استعارة منتظمة للقراءة خارج المكتبة وهذا بالطبع غير الأعداد الكبيرة التي ترد على المكتبة للقراءة داخلها.

سؤال: في افتتاح مكتبة «عرب المحمدي» كان من أحد أقوالك أن «المكتبة العامة هي إحدى سلوكيات شعب متحضر، لجيل المستقبل». هل من الممكن تحديد المشاريع المتوخاة في المستقبل لخدمة الطفل المصري وثقافته؟

جواب: الحقيقة أن الطموحات التي تراودنا بالنسبة لمستقبل ثقافة الطفل المصري هي طموحات كبيرة لا تقتصر على مسألة المكتبات سواء كانت مدرسية أو عامة بل أنها تتجاوز ذلك إلى آفاق أوسع، وأذكر على سبيل المثال مشروع إنشاء «مركز وثائق وأبحاث آداب الطفل» في حي الروضة بالقاهرة إذ عثرنا على مبنى قديم لائق قمنا بتجديده ليكون مركز تتجمع فيه الدراسات والبحوث والوثائق المتصلة بالطفولة. كما أننا نقوم بإنشاء «متحف تاريخ طبيعى للأطفال» وهذا العمل يعتبر الأول من نوعه في مصر بل وربما في المنطقة العربية كلها حيث أن إدراك الطفل لمسيرة التاريخ الطبيعى سوف يؤدي إلى توسيع مداركه وإثراء مفاهيمه عن الحياة والتطور وتذوق الحضارات وفهم خصائص الشعوب.

سؤال: وأخيراً ما هو تقويمك لوضع ثقافة الطفل في مصر؟

جواب: مصر دولة نامية تنتمي إلى العالم الثالث بمشكلاته المعروفة والتي تعتبر نتيجة لسنوات طويلة من المعاناة السياسية والاقتصادية والاجتماعية، ولا شك أن ذلك الوضع ينعكس على الطفل في بلادنا ولكن ذلك لم يمنع إقبال الأطفال على مصادر الثقافة المختلفة ابتداء من الكتاب إلى التلفزيون إلى الإذاعة إلى السينما. وإن كان التقدم التكنولوجي في وسائل الاعلام والتثقيف الحديثة قد بدأ يجذب قطاعات كبيرة من الأطفال خصوصاً في المدن إلا أنني أعتقد أن الكتاب لم ولن يسقط عن عرشه لأنه أقدم مصادر المعرفة وأهمها في تاريخ الإنسان. وما نحاوله حالياً هو أن نعيد له مكانته لدى الأجيال الجديدة إلى جانب الوسائل الأخرى للتثقيف والتي تتمثل في المشروعات المختلفة لإيجاد وسائل تثقيف حديثة مثل المتاحف العلمية ومراكز البحث والدراسة والمكتبات العامة والمدرسية بالإضافة إلى توجيه برامج التلفزيون والإذاعة لخدمة الطفولة وعلاج مشكلاتها إلى جانب الاهتمام بصحافة الطفل من خلال المجلات والدوريات المتخصصة في شؤون الطفل والمناسبة لعمره...

وأعتقد أن تجاوب الأسرة المصرية معنا في ذلك يبدو واضحاً ويمثل عاملاً قوياً في تحقيق طموحاتنا لمستقبل ثقافة الطفل في مصر.

## أصدقاء مكتبة الطفل

قامت السيدة سوزان مبارك بافتتاح أول مكتبة عامة للأطفال في حديقة «عرب المحمدي» وتعمل على تحقيق هدف زيادة عدد المكتبات العامة للطفل في مصر إلى عشر مكتبات في نهاية عام ١٩٨٦. وتؤكد السيدة سوزان مبارك على أن المكتبات العامة للأطفال هي من إحدى أهم الدعائم لبناء جيل المستقبل ورفع مستوى ثقافة الإنسان العربي ومجتمعه. ونتوجه بالشكر الجزيل إلى السيدة مبارك لتجاوبها مع نشرة «الرائدة» وذلك بالرد على الأسئلة المتعلقة بالطفل المصري وثقافته.

سؤال: منذ متى بدأ اهتمامك بالطفل المصري وثقافته؟

جواب: بدأ اهتمامي بالطفل المصري بل وبالمسائل المتعلقة بالطفولة ومشكلاتها منذ عشر سنوات تقريباً خلال فترة دراستي في الجامعة الأميركية بالقاهرة ومن خلال قراءتي لإعداد رسالة الماجستير التي حصلت عليها من الجامعة وكان موضوعها «احتياجات الطفل في المرحلة الأولى من التعليم». ولقد لاحظت من خلال دراستي تلك قصور المكتبات المدرسية خصوصاً في المرحلة الابتدائية وكانت هذه نقطة البداية للاهتمام بثقافة الطفل المصري حيث بدأت ومعي عدد من أصدقاء مكتبة الطفل في إنشاء هذه المكتبات المدرسية حتى بلغت ٢٦ مكتبة في أنحاء الجمهورية. وحين وجدت الاقبال عليها يتزايد بشكل يدعو إلى التأكد من نجاحها بدأت أفكر في إنشاء مكتبات عامة للطفل خارج المدرسة وقد تحقق منها الآن خمس مكتبات في أماكن مختلفة من الجمهورية، والواقع أنني أرى أن استعادة الطفل المصري للرغبة في القراءة تمثل مواجهة جادة لأجهزة التسلية والتثقيف الأخرى وفي مقدمتها التلفزيون والفيديو. فنحن نريد استعادة العصر الذهبي للكتاب الذي أثر في كثير من المفكرين والعلماء والأدباء من خلال قراءاتهم المتعددة في مرحلة الطفولة.

سؤال: لقد افتتحت أول مكتبة عامة للأطفال في حديقة «عرب المحمدي» هل من الممكن إعطاؤنا لمحة عن إنجاز هذه المكتبة؟

جواب: الواقع أن مشروع أصدقاء مكتبة الطفل يقوم أساساً على الجهود الذاتية والتبرعات ولا يعتمد على الجهاز الحكومي. وقد بدأنا بافتتاح أول مكتبة عامة للطفل في حديقة عرب المحمدي عام ١٩٨٥ لأننا نؤمن بأن مكتبات الأطفال هي في الحقيقة مؤسسات تعليمية وثقافية في آن واحد، فضلاً عن كونها عاملاً هاماً من عوامل التقدم التعليمي والاجتماعي والثقافي. ذلك أنه كلما ارتقى النظام الاجتماعي والتربوي في المجتمع وتطورت البيئة الثقافية والاقتصادية والاجتماعية اتسعت خدمات المكتبات وتنوعت لتشمل كل أفراد المجتمع بما فيهم الأطفال رجال الغد وعماد المستقبل.



## Friends of The Children's Library

### Friends of The Children's Library

Child development encompasses mental, physical and intellectual development of the child. His/her love for reading strengthens their intellectual abilities and creative potentials; it also deepens their knowledge and expands their comprehension preparing them for responsible citizenship.

*Suzanne Mubarak*

### Why Children and why Reading?

Children's libraries are not only significant in preparing the children to be good readers, but they awaken in them an interest to explore their environment and surroundings, thus complementing their basic school education.

While schools can make a child literate, libraries can help make out of reading a joy, recreation and a vocation.

Books, particularly in the language of the country, can preserve culture, provide national identity and stimulate interest in history, science, literature, music and folklore, thus broadening the horizon of the child and deepening his thirst for knowledge.

### Pioneering Services: School Libraries:

The successful pioneer experiment initiated by the «Integrated Care Society for Primary School Children» of establishing school libraries, 1979-85 inspired the Society to promote a more comprehensive programme in this vital field.

The ambitious programme aims at constructing, establishing and supervising ten children's public libraries in various urban and semi rural-urban communities throughout Egypt within a two-year period (1985-87).

The libraries will serve children of 6-15 years of age; the young people of the adolescent age from 12-15 will be given particular attention; to develop the habit of reading to help children become more creative intellectually.

### Short Term Goals:

- Promoting the objectives of children's libraries through the community and schools.
- Conducting a social survey of every community which invites the establishment of a children's library.
- Finding the sites for ten libraries and obtaining the proper authorization for the use of the sites.
- Recruiting staff for these libraries and offering them in-service training programmes before they take up their duties.
- Promoting periodic refresher training courses for the staff.

- Establishing a professional supervisory unit for children's libraries in the society's administrative office to provide professional guidance to the libraries.

- Establishing a legal basis with the responsible government authorities in order that the libraries will obtain an on-going continuity.

- Establishing a community-parents committee to support the children's library and encourage community participation.

### Long Term Goals:

- To introduce the concept of the importance of developing the habit of lifetime reading, by making reading and related activities interesting to children and their families.

- To demonstrate the effectiveness of stories, story-telling, reading and other activities in spreading the messages of cleanliness, health, good nutrition and other things that contribute to a feeling of well-being in children.

- To provide a model for children's library service that can be replicated by other communities in Egypt.

- To help stimulate the school systems, government and private, to reactive or expand their school libraries particularly those for the young child, from 6-15.

- To provide researchers with several types of vocations to do long-term research in the reading interests and problems of Egyptian children.

- To establish a small system of children's libraries that will provide a continuity for several years of experience to work with children and books in Egypt, in a non-formal educational setting.

- To involve the parents of the children as members of the surrounding community to take special interest in the children's library in order to encourage community participation.

### Library Programmes And Activities:

- Reading guidance, helping children to select books to read.
- Story telling and story reading.
- Organizing school visits to the libraries for the purpose of establishing stronger links between the schools and the library.
- Children's reading interest clubs.
- Competitive children writings of books, stories and songs, etc.
- Learning about children of other parts of the world.
- Children POarents discussion.
- Staff working with parents to encourage children read at home.
- Learning about their communities.
- Puppet shows.
- Film programmes and other media.

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