

Al-Raida

International Women's Day



**Mother's Day and Women's Day.
The Women of the Maghreb: Algeria,
Morocco and Tunisia.**

by Rose Ghurayyib

**A Background to the
Feminist Movement
in Egypt**

by Homa Hoodfar

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Letters

Reference to a hatchet Job

I am writing in response to your article "Has Feminism Failed?" (Spring 1991, Volume IX, No.53), which was culled in large part from coverage on the international women's movement in Newsweek and time magazines.

The feeling in North America about this piece (the newsweek article by Kay Ebeling, "Has Feminism Failed?") was that it was a hatchet job. This is bad enough, but it is distressing to see a courageous and cutting edge feminist publication (al-Raida)- the major one in the Arab world and one looked to by feminists all over the globe - unquestionably picks up on what Time magazine defines as "feminism". . .

As for the activities of the International women's movement, as we well know, it is an explosion of energy in every region of the world. The international feminist movement embraces all issues as women's issues, from the debt in Latin America, to colonization struggles, to peace in the Middle East, to a free and self-determining Palestine, to disarmament and environmental concerns, etc. Women are the majority of the human species, after all, so there is no issue that is not a "feminist issue."

Let me take this opportunity to say how important Al-Raida is to me personally, and to activists for women's rights, for justice, and for peace all over the world. Even in the midst of such an unstable situation as Lebanon suffers, you still manage to produce a wonderful, courageous, and illuminating periodical. Brava!

Robin Morgan, Editor in Chief
Ms Magazine, The world of Women New York, USA

Appreciation of the Editorial and Articles Written

I have read with pleasure most of the articles contained in the last two issues of Al-Raida. I appreciate your editorial and your articles, especially your criticism about Helen Khal's oil paintings, your presentation of Nawal Saadawi's speech at BUC. I am glad to see that Al-Raida has doubled in size but feel sorry that only those who read English can benefit from this publication.

I would like to point out certain mistakes which may be called grammatical or due to careless printing and editing. I know it is impossible to produce an issue completely free from mistakes but noticing them might help avoid them.

Miss Rose Ghurayyib
Consultant, Al-Raida
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Sayings

Women's Liberation will not have been achieved until

. a woman can become paunchy and bald and still think she's attractive to the opposite sex !

. we read about an absent-minded woman driving away and forgetting her husband at the filling station !

. there are as many men as there are women rushing home from work to prepare dinner ! (Reader's Digest, June 1991 quoted from Gil Stern in the Wall Street Journal).

When the Arab husband accepts the idea that women's paid labor is not a reflection on his ability to provide, and is a source of pride for both, he is willing to change his attitude. (Dr. Suha Sabbagh from an interview with the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, July 1991).

There is no better no better person to be informed or used than the Woman. (Kenya Water for Health Organization taken from Women and the Environment by Annabel Rodda.)

A man's home may seem to be his castle on the outside, inside it is more often his nursery. (Claire Booth Luce b.1903, American ambassador and writer).

Woman's discontent increases in exact proportion to her development. (Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) suffragist).

When a man gets up to speak, people listen, then look. When a woman gets up, people look, then if they like what they see, they listen. (Pauline Frederick (1883-1938), actress)

No woman should be shame faced in attempting through her work, to give back to the world a portion of its lost heart. (Louise Bogan (1897-1970) Poet).

Men are taught to apologize for their weaknesses, women for their strengths. (Lois Wyse, b.1926, advertising executive).

My husband and I figured out a really good system about the house work; neither of us does it. (Dottie Archibald (twentieth century), writer).

The hardest thing about a girl's life is to prove to a man that his intentions are serious. (Helen Rowland, (1878-1950), journalist).

A Turbulent Spring

Algeria, Sudan, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, The Occupied Territories, Afghanistan, Turkey, Yugoslavia, The new Republics of the Ex-Soviet Union, Peru, Mexico, Burma, The Philippines, Sri Lanka, Sera Leone, Germany, and the United States of America. This is only part of the list of uprisings, chaos, violence and instability in the spring of 1992. It makes you wonder what is going on? Could it be a polluted spring weather bringing people to the edge of their nerves and making them lose control? Is it spring fever, new world order style, causing loss of rationality and nurturing repressed racial, ethnic, and other discriminating and destructive feelings? And then there are environmental catastrophes such as ozone layer depletion, global warming, outrageous levels of sea, water, noise, air pollution; chemical leakages and explosions, and the list goes on. On the health agenda there is cancer in all of its glorious forms and then there's Aids. Some skeptics may interpret such morbid happenings as the end of the world. Others suggest that they are expected and temporary symptoms of change. Well?! Why hasn't one form of change settled in? Is it in any way healthy? I, personally, would like to catch my breath if the world doesn't mind?

The threats and dangers to life and its continuity are alarming. Most frightening is the spread of wars as if a contagious epidemic. Once you get over the panic which hits when you first hear the news, you start to wonder about other components of our lives.

Hence, where does that put women's rights and human rights on the agenda of priorities? Normally, non-supporters and even supporters may justify the urgency of the other imminent problems at hand.

For instance, Algerian women's rights have been reduced to less than the bare necessities. Brilliant and active groups like the Arab Women's Solidarity Association of Egypt directed by Dr. Nawal Saadawy have been SHUT DOWN, for speaking against wars, and for daring to press for linking the women's issue to the other sectors of society. In Kenya, Wangari Maathai, an activist and ecologist who dared to speak up was arrested and imprisoned. In Peru, Maria Elena Moyano, leader of the popular women's movement in Peru was murdered and her body was blown up with dynamite.

At first, hearing women's claims sounded ridiculous. Eventually, women made themselves heard, by organizing themselves. Now that they gained exposure and coverage and achieved significant change and development, they have become dangerous.

The punch line here is that the women's movements succeeded in taking things into their hands and are powerful enough to exert pressure and achieve results. This is the success of the women's Liberation movement.

Hence, women's groups are organized and networking all over the world to support their sisters in Algeria, in Peru and other countries

where the systems are deliberately curtailing already established progress and rights. Nowadays, women have gone beyond speaking and being heard to implementing change and pressuring for guarantees of equality and privileges. This is not acceptable, furthermore, there are enough other things and more important issues to worry about.

Women have gone from being the excluded/passive sex to becoming indispensable, thanks to specialized knowledge, credibility and experience. Even in countries which are considered under-developed and lacking resources, there exists, at least a cadre of professional, experienced and capable women who reinforce and are reinforced by international networks, institutions and media.

International Women's Day this spring raised these questions in the minds of people. There is a global discontent and revolt against the negative developments taking place, if we may call them as such. The deterioration of the quality of politics, logic, education, morality, health, environment is a very noticeable.

Does anybody expect things to change for the better without a woman's touch ?

Randa Abul-Husn

International Women's Day

At the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World
Beirut University College

Wednesday, March 11, 1992

On the occasion of the International Women's Day, the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World organized a panel discussion entitled **Woman in a Man's World**. Scholars, women's groups, university professors and students, in addition to members of the press and the radio media attended the panel discussion which took place on Wednesday March 11, in Irwin Hall, Beirut University College.

The four panelists discussed the issue from the perspective corresponding to his/her field of specializations. (1) Dr. Ilham Kallab is a professor of Arab Literature at the Lebanese University, the Arab University of Beirut and previously at Beirut University College. She is a writer and researcher in women's studies and an active feminist. Dr. Kallab spoke about *The Social Image of Women in a Man's World*; (2) Dr. Maan Ziadeh, a professor of philosophy and sociology at the Lebanese University, and a prominent scholar in the region discussed *Male Pioneers and Women Liberation*; (3) Mrs. Mona Khalaf, an economist who conducted research on 'women and work' and was an instructor of economics at Beirut University College spoke about *Women's Economic Participation in Society*; (4) Dr. Kamal Yazigi, Chairman of the Social Science Division at Beirut University College spoke about *Women and Politics*. Mrs. Sonia Beirut, a leading female figure in the Lebanese television and press media, who has also written articles and short stories on issues related to women, served as moderator.



From left to right: Dr. Ilham Kallab, Dr. Kamal Yazigi, Mrs. Sonia Beirut, Dr. Maan Ziadeh, Mrs. Mona Khalaf.

Mrs. Sonia Beirut opened the panel discussion with questions regarding the title of the lecture. When one hears the title of this lecture he/she wonders if the so-called man's world is separate of the woman's world? What does "the man's world" stand for? Is it the world of economics, of politics, of production, of decision making, of the making of wars and peace?! Do women, especially Arab women, live in another planet called the house? And does this planet contribute, even remotely, to the shaping of the man's world? Beirut also wondered about the few women who have entered and proved themselves in the male dominated world: What are the benefits and losses they have endured? Were the men supportive or hostile? At that, Beirut left it to the four panelists to answer and shed some light on the issues she raised.

(1). **Dr. Ilham Kallab Bsot on the Social Image of Women in a Man's World:** Kallab noted that International Women's Day does not exclude men, and the problems of a society are based on the nature of relationships between its members, notably men and women. These relationships cannot develop and grow if one sex is oppressed.

Women are seen as marginal in our society, which (the society) is governed by patriarchal rules protecting legal, economic and social interests of men. Hence, from birth, males are favored in influential sectors, such as economics, politics, and intellectual development. Furthermore, women are responsible for men's honor, and laws which restrict and inflict harsher punishments on women for the same crime emphasize this image. Consequently, a woman's effective participation in society usually entails belonging and being accepted by men and their world

This image and the consequent status of women are but a reflection of an economic system where men are the central point and women remain dependent and marginal.

Kallab also indicated that economic independence for women is a key element for effective participation in society, in the man's world, and for producing the needed reform and change. Kallab's note seemed like a call for women to enter the labor force and to earn the independence they need to achieve a more influential and independent role and image in society.

(2) Dr. Maan Ziadeh on Male Pioneers and Women Liberation:

Ziadeh stressed that Women's Liberation must be a joint effort between men and women. He insisted that the cause essentially entails the liberation of society from backward ideas and attitudes. He encouraged women to have associations, organizations and movements demanding and pressuring for equal rights, but warned against hostility for men implying that men are not the enemy. Ziadeh said that success of women's entry into the so-called man's world remains limited if done in a hostile and excessively aggressive way. Thus, the mission should be based on cooperation between men and women. Hence, development and improvement of women's conditions involve the development and progress of society.

Ziadeh made reference to history and to male pioneers as Riffa Al-Qahtawi, and the Imam Mohamad Abdo who instructed Qasim Amin in Qoranic verses to call for women's liberation. Hence, the changes brought forth by these and other men complimented with action and struggles by women themselves, succeeded in improving the conditions of women in the Arab world.

(3) Mrs. Mona Khalaf on Women's Economic Participation: Khalaf noted that women's entry into the economic mainstream and into employment, a male dominated sector, is a recent phenomenon in the Arab World. This entry, she said, did not come easily but seemed mobilized by a financial need in the family. Hence, women's participation in a male dominated market came as necessity not an option or a choice.

Khalaf gave features and characteristics of working Arab woman: 1) The relationship between women's education and women's employment is not one of cause and effect; 2) increase in employment of women with higher education is proportional to the decrease in employment of illiterate women; 3) change in social perceptions and attitudes towards working women motivated women to seek employment in the public sector and government offices; 4) employed Arab Women are often over-qualified for their jobs; 5) there has been an increase in the demand for women in the labor market due to a change in attitude of employers towards women's work.

In summary, the problems Arab women face in entering the labor market are directly related to three variables: educational level; norms and values; domestic obligations and duties.

To illustrate, Khalaf reported a case she encountered in her research. Thus, during an interview with an elderly woman in a rural, agricultural village, the most explicit reply to the question: What do you do? was: Oh! my child, I get up at 3.00 A.M everyday, and go with my husband into the field to take care of the crops, then I return home to feed and clean the herds. When that is done, I rush home to cook, clean, sow and check on the children and their needs. By that time the day is over. When do you expect me to find time to work?

4) Dr. Kamal Yazigi on Women and Politics: Yazigi complimented Ziadeh's recall of Arab men who pioneered for women's rights with their counterparts in the West, such as Auguste Comte, Saint Simon, John Stuart, and others in addition to pioneering women in feminist literature. Yazigi's indicated that the struggle began exactly two hundred years ago, and the greatest progress was achieved during the World wars when women played a leading role in the war and post war society.

Why did women start demanding for their rights only 200 years ago, when they have been oppressed for 2000 years? was the main controversy raised by Yazigi. He felt this trend (was)/is part of the democratic movement sweeping the West during the last two centuries. He explained that all the ideologies, whether economic or political fall into this trend for democracy and equality in rights. What is socialism but a call for economic equality, which (socialism) came in response to democracy, the movement for political equality?! he noted. Western women have demanded for their share of the equality, hence, they are influential in universities, in politics and in the labor market although there might still be a discrepancy in wages between men and women. Women in the Arab world still have a much longer way to go. They are subjected to the worse kind of discrimination imaginable? Women of the East are the "Fitna", and needs more than women's associations and the women's movement to solve their problems. The situation requires a liberal and dynamic leader who supports women, calls and implements radical reforms.

Yazigi also criticized women's call for equality in the midst of other forms of inequality and problems which plague the world; men themselves are not equal, he stated.

What the audience had to Say

The first lady to speak from the audience, Mrs. Fares, pointed out that she works in a man's world: She is a mayor. Yet, Mrs. Fares criticized the strategies of the women's movement as being faulty and failing to create the awareness needed among women themselves. *All the energy is channeled into making demands! Women achieve progress at some point and then seem to fall back. Therefore, there must be something wrong with the strategies. What is the degree of awareness all women have? Are all women really aware of the existing problems? How many women really want to see change and reform?*

Mrs. Khalaf agreed that liberation is a matter of awareness on one hand, and choice on the other hand: Hence, women should become aware of their rights and the alternative lifestyles they can have, and consequently, exercise the right to choose. On another hand, women should have the rights and the facilities to participate in any sector of society without encountering sexist discrimination from the system, men or women themselves. I feel we should not lecture women to live their lives according to

defined feminist standards, so to speak, if they do not want to! What is suitable for one woman, keeping in mind her educational and social background, may not be the same for another woman.

Ziadeh intercepted the discussion to add that creating awareness among women may be important, but creating the same awareness among men is necessary and inclusive. As far as faulty strategies of the movement are concerned, these occur because there is a tendency to separate women's causes and demands from other sectors of society.

Dr. Lamia Shehadeh, professor at the American University of Beirut addressed two questions to the male panelists: To Dr. Ziadeh she said: *You said that the women's movement should not be aggressive, and should cooperate with men for it is the liberation of men too. Are we to understand that women must wait for men to get liberated, and then ask their permission before they (women) can achieve equality? How is it that women should not be aggressive and that the movement cannot achieve positive results on its*

own, without the support of men?

Ziadeh replied I did not say that women must wait for men and ask for their permission for liberation. My point of emphasis is that the women's cause is a societal matter and should involve and include all the sectors and actors in society. However, I would like to clarify that some women's groups especially in the Western world, have excessively aggressive approaches which project them as extremists. The struggle and the development should be based on cooperation. Hence the development of society lies in the development of women.

To Yazigi, she said: *You said that women began their struggle and achieved some of their rights only during the last two hundred years, and afterwards you criticized the call for equality in the absence of equality among men! I feel that the equality being raised here is related to the question of choice that was mentioned earlier. Women ought to have the same choices in life and in society that men have.*

Yazigi replied: Since men are not equal, women should not be equal either. This is one form of equality.

He then addressed Mrs Fares, the mayor, on her comment about faulty strategies I disagree with your statement about failure due to faulty strategies in the movement. In fact, in the Western world, the movement has achieved the majority of its demands. The cornerstones have already been set.

The commotion created by these arguments between the audience and the panelists became louder than what was actually being said.

But what usually happens on such occasions is that the discussions continue in the lobby of the building •

R.A.H



International Women's Day In Lebanon March 8

For the entire week preceding March 8, women's associations, leagues, and groups conducted seminars and panel discussions, to evaluate the status of women in Lebanon and the Arab world, to reiterate demands and emphasize reform, equality, and women's human and legal rights. Lebanese Women's Leagues and groups came together and organized a series of national panel discussions and lectures throughout the country.

The first set of lectures was held on Sunday, 1st of March, in the Northern city of Tripoli. Among the panelist was Mrs. Nayla Mouawad, the only female deputy in Parliament and the first in over twenty years. Mouawad noted that this year's International Women's Day revolves around the pressure to have Lebanon ratify The United Nation's article for "The Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women" (which has been ratified by 109 countries including five Arab countries, namely Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen.)

The second set of lectures was held on Friday, March 6, in the Southern city of Saida and Baakline in Mount Lebanon; and again in Byblos, in the North on Saturday March 7.

The climax of this unified mobilization of Lebanese Women's League, culminated in a lecture sponsored by the President of the Republic in Beirut, on Sunday March 8. The first Lady, Mrs Mona Hrawi, gave the Key-note address on behalf of the President. The struggle to achieve women's rights should not be seen as a claim from Lebanon, but for Lebanon and for its development and progress. . . . After seventeen years of war, we demand the potential, capabilities,

and skills of Lebanese women and men be allowed to flourish openly and freely. . . . Hence, what would be the meaning of the women's struggle if it is not a national and developmental one. . . . Social development, educational development, cultural development and economic development are in need of the women's participation and contributions.

R.A.H



The First Lady: Mrs. Mona Elias Hrawi

International Women's Day by the Child and Mother Welfare Society

The first lady was the guest of honor at another panel discussion organized by the Child and Mother Welfare Society (on March 2) in the occasion of the International Women's Day. In light of national reconstruction, Mrs Hrawi stressed the role of the family. Thus, the welfare of the country lies in the welfare of the family.

Mrs Hrawi brought forth four development goals: 1) To strengthen bonds between members of the family and promote cooperation with each other in order to improve living conditions, subsequently, contributing to the economic development of the country; 2) To expand and improve bonds between families that they may contribute to cultural and social development in the country; 3) To develop the national identity of the family and encourage its integration in national development; 4) To develop the element of human compassion and

understanding of human rights in the family and consequently, the country.

Hence, to support and encourage action in this direction, she announced that the Government has declared March 1 of every year to be the National Day of the Family.

This year's activities were characterized by an explicit and open support from the government of post-war Lebanon, notably by Mr. Elias Hrawi, the President of the Republic himself. Could this mean a serious effort and intention to implement changes for equality and improve the conditions of women in Lebanon? (who admittedly is one of the most progressive countries in the Arab East). Or is it another series of scholastic panels. The first lady seems earnest and sincere in her claims and efforts we hope the rest of the Government is as sincere and willing to cooperate! •

Mother's Day and Women's Day

By Rose Ghurayyib

They were both created to honor womanhood, but each in its own way.

To most people, mother's day is an occasion for showing gratitude to mothers by offering them presents and flowers or singing hymns of praise to motherhood.

Women's Day hails the rise of the Women's Liberation Movement all over the world, a movement which is blessed and supported by the United Nations Organization.

These days come and go, like all other national or international feasts. They give people the satisfaction generated from performing or conforming to traditions. But alas, they rarely ever stimulate their thoughts and intellect.

In the following paragraphs, I shall try to consider these two days from a feminist point of view.

Mother's Day brings to mind the period when the matriarchal system prevailed during which descent and inheritance were traced through female lineage. The mother was glorified as the perpetrator of the race, the producer of heroes and the keeper of the family name. Mother worship persisted even after that period ended and continued to influence people's minds all through the ancient world and even later until the present time. When she received women guests in her house, Cornelia, the famous Roman matron, showed them her two sons (the Gracchi, who later became brilliant states-men) instead of displaying her jewelry, as was the custom then. "These are my Jewels!" she would exclaim. Simone de

Beauvoir violently criticized Cornelia for her arrogant attitude and her narrow visions which restricted her *raison d'être* to the function of bearing and raising children. Furthermore, mother worship was revived by the Romanticists of the 19th Century when they resorted to woman as a motherly creature giving solace and refuge, comfort and inspiration. Like Mother Earth, she showered her blessings and was ready to sacrifice herself for her children.

Women's Day represents a recent development, a new era, and an evolving mentality. It represents woman in the various stages of her life, from childhood to old age. It evokes a long line of women who shared men's interests and activities and did not limit themselves to a stereotyped function. Woman's Day speaks to all women of the world, without distinction of age or race, in a tone that awakens their dormant self, arouses their self-consciousness and leads them to self-discovery. Here I like to recall a poem written by Fadwa Tuqan, the well-known Arab contemporary poet, entitled *Wajadtuha* (I Have Found It). In this poem, moved by a sudden idea - like Archimedes who shouted "Eureka" when he discovered the law of specific gravity - Fadwa declares that "She has found herself". She rejected the myths which obscured her mind. She discovered the freedom to think, to choose, to act, and to realize herself by cultivating her capacities, without limiting herself to one activity or one way of life.

Each of the two Days carries a message or an idea for those who celebrate them. Consequently, people ought to discover and practice these

inherent messages. Hence, Mother's Day should raise the following questions: Is it enough to show our gratitude to our mothers by offering them a present or a bunch of flowers?

What are mothers' rights in the dictum of the Women's Liberation Movement? How far do they agree with those listed in the Charter of the Rights of Man? If she is a widow without a family or if her children neglect to provide for her, who will be responsible for her sustenance? Why doesn't she have the same rights of inheritance, divorce, testimony and guardianship of children that her husband has? Why is it that her multitude household duties do not receive the same evaluation as a regular profession, though they have the same importance and value? What is the use of Mother's Day if it only means encouraging women to go on with a life of self-denial, deprivation and sacrifice for their families?

Women's Day implies a larger set of questions and connotations. It is an opportunity for our numerous women's organizations or groups, to meet together, join hands, discuss and agree on strategies and solutions.

They would thus start an act of reconciliation to be adopted by men. They would take a first step in the difficult task of wiping out the effects of horrible periods of massacres and disruption. Starting with a process of self-criticism, those associated women should work on the evaluation of definite projects to be carried out rather than remain ink on paper.

Celebrations consisting of routine meetings and emotional, laudatory speeches are a waste of time.*

Middle Eastern and Arab Women Speak (*)

Prominent Arab women living in Western countries seem to be known more than their counterpart in the Arab World. Why is that? Is it cultural? Or is it mainly that achievement for women is more inherent in Western cultures than it is in Eastern cultures? Is it due to more opportunities for women? Is it related to the nature of the Western media which has a wider international scope than the Arab media, thus promoting the achievements of these women? Is it that women from a foreign culture have something *original* to offer to the West and are, therefore, more newsworthy and innovative? Or is it cultural stereotypes which do not represent the reality of the situation?

The questions are endless, and as each one is posed a new perspective is opened for debate. What do prominent Middle Eastern women who lived overseas and who have an advanced position in society have to say about Arab Women's achievements and attainments in their native countries? We took the liberty to extract some of the experiences and points of views of two women from an interview published in the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs.

1. Dr. Bouthaina Shaaban, member of the Faculty of English at the University of Damascus indicated that "the position of Arab women is quite similar to their Western counterparts. However, Arab women are continuously plagued with a cultural stereotype of submission and dependence. Having lived for six years in Britain and for a year in the U.S., I was dismayed by the continuous reinforcement of the image of Arab women as oppressed, docile and living in harems. Thus, even

Saudi Arabian women who are most typical of this stereotype have equal rights to education, are teachers, writers and university professors.

Dr. Shaaban pointed out that "women account for 40 percent of the professors at the University of Damascus and 25 percent of the members of the Syrian Parliament, and with the exception of two Arab countries (one of them being Kuwait), women have the same right to vote as men. In all Arab countries, the position of women is not very different from what is found in the West." She goes on to remark "which in my opinion is not very good." "Having said that, I can say that the position of Arab women, like that of women all over the world, is far from being absolutely equal."



"There are many things I would like to see changed in the situation of Arab women, so that we can give an example to the world of meaningful emancipation and equality (1) The first things I would like to see changed are marriage and divorce laws. In the Arab culture, the family is an important unit and the children are given absolute priority. Therefore, divorce laws aim to make it difficult for partners to divorce in an effort to avoid breaking the family. . .

What happens in reality is that families are kept together at the expense of the woman, because she is the one who has everything to lose from a divorce. First, she is granted guardianship of the children only up to a certain age (7 for boys and 9 for girls). Second, most homes are owned by men and, therefore, divorce means that the woman goes back to her family home or out in the street. How could a woman who has nowhere to go, throw her children away, and decide to be homeless? Granting women more rights in this regard does not necessarily mean a higher divorce rate. It might mean that men would think twice before asking for a divorce. Furthermore, if these laws aim at keeping the family together, Dr. Shaaban thinks it is more important to preserve a healthy family with a happy mother rather than an unhappy woman who has nowhere else to go."

2. Dr. Taghreed Alqudsi-Ghabra, assistant professor of Library and Information Science at Kuwait University stresses that as with everything in the Middle East, the situation is full of conflicting images. (2) To the West, Middle Eastern women are what the media have pictured them: i.e in Black veils, subordinate to men in the

family and suppressed and oppressed by society and the state. It is rare that the diversity in the Middle East is shown, let alone when it pertains to women.

Being from Kuwait, Dr. Ghabra gives the example of Kuwaiti women's achievements which tend to remain unknown. "Although Kuwait is located in the most conservative part of the Muslim world, women can drive."

Before the discovery of petroleum, many men were away for much of the year fishing, pearl diving, or trading. Women were left behind to take care of the family and business at home. After the discovery of oil, their skills were enhanced by the introduction of modern, state supported education. Presently, 41 percent of Kuwait University degree holders are female. As a result, Kuwaiti women hold positions in government, business, academia and the professions. Dr. Ghabra also notes that most Kuwaiti women have been exposed to the outside world through foreign travel.

Just as Huda Sharawi and others in Egypt pulled off their veils at the beginning of this century, signifying a new era for Egyptian women, a group of Kuwaiti women from prominent families burned their 'abayas' (the black robes worn outside the home) in the 1950s to signify a new and modern Kuwaiti woman.⁽³⁾

Furthermore, Kuwaiti women participated in the underground struggle against the Iraqi occupation just as their male counterparts.

New challenges face the small country of Kuwait and its people after the liberation. For one the new liberated Kuwait has a population that has been politicized to a point of no return. It is essential for women at this stage not to fall into the trap of indiscriminately accepting the political ideologies of the different groups, and end up being used by

all of them.⁽⁴⁾ Kuwaiti women, along with other Arab women, Middle Eastern and Muslim women, still face battles in improving a reality imposed on them (family, marriage, divorce laws and work laws and regulations) by traditional societies and an image imposed by Western media biases and stereotypes.*

R.A.H.

(* Reproduced in part from "As A Middle Eastern Woman, What I would Change in my Country: Three Views," The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, July 1991. Abridged by Randa Abul-Husn.

- (1) Ibid
- (2) Ibid
- (3) Ibid
- (4) Ibid



Jordan University College for Women^(*)

Under the Ministry of Higher Education, the Jordanian government administers four major universities: The University of Jordan, Yarmouk University, Jordan University of Science and Technology, and Mu'tah University. Combined, these four national universities matriculated 8,875 students in 1989 - 33.9 percent of the 26,180 students who passed the Tawjihi exam that year. The government estimates that some 40,000 Jordanians are studying abroad, due partly to insufficient university spaces at home. To enable more students to pursue university education in Jordan, the Ministry of Higher Education in 1986 authorized the establishment of private universities. The

Jordan University College for Women, established in 1991, is one of the first private universities to open.

Jordan University College for Women comprises colleges of science; architecture, art, and design; medical sciences; business administration; and humanities and social sciences. It operates on a credit-hour system, and the academic year runs September to June in two semesters. In the year of establishment, the library was expected to offer 10,000 volumes plus 500 periodicals in various disciplines •

(* from Membernews: a publication by AMIDEAST's Institutional membership Program, Number 8, Fall 1991.

A Background to the Feminist Movement in Egypt

By Homa Hoodfar^(*)

The discussion of feminist movements in the so-called "Third World" often explicitly or implicitly assumes that such movements are not indigenous, but rather merely recent imitations of the West. This mistaken view is then echoed by third world conservatives with the intention of discrediting local women's movements. In fact, feminism has not been imposed on the Third World by the West, nor is it so new. In many Eastern countries its history dates back to the nineteenth century (1). Feminism, like other social movements, is engendered by socio-economic changes affecting women. Similarly, the goals and characteristics of women's movements are shaped by their particular socio-cultural contexts. What is particular to such Third World feminist movements is that they are inseparable from anticolonial, national movements.

During the reign of Mohammed Ali (1805-48), Egypt was a forerunner among Eastern countries in attempting to introduce a systematic plan for industrialization and its attendant social restructuring. Modern education was introduced to produce a suitably skilled labour force. In this context, the issue of female education took a political dimension. Upper class girls had always been educated at home, but the question was whether or not changes in women's role were essential for "development"

According to the published material that survives, the debate was initiated by male reformers and it was only later that women participated openly. There are two broad opposing views. Conservatives, including many religious leaders from al-Azhar university as well as many secular, western-educated nationalists argued that women were by nature assigned to tasks of nurturing which were best

performed within the domestic domain. They used Islam to justify their position. Conservative nationalists suspected that any change in the education of girls, the mothers of future generations, was intended by the colonial power to destroy Egyptian identity and culture.

Religious and secular nationalist advocates of reform argued that a strong nation cannot deny basic rights to half the population, women. Although not everybody in this camp agreed on the agenda for change, they did agree that education and the improvement of women's intellectual abilities was essential. In reply to Islamic conservatives, Kassim Amin (1865-1908) wrote the highly controversial books *Women's Emancipation* and *The New Woman*. He argued in favor of education for all women, condemned polygamy and the divorce laws and supported his claims with quotation from the Koran

Like most other reformers, he claimed that it was not the true Islam, but rather corrupt practises maintained in the name of Islam, that prevented women's advancement. The reformers viewed the backwardness of Arab women as determined to Arab society and sought to rectify in order to build a strong Arab nation.(2)

Simultaneously with these developments women of the upper classes organized themselves in groups, large and small, to debate issues related to women's position. By 1914 there had already appeared in Arabic fourteen specialized magazines on women's issues, founded and edited by women (3). The major demands of women were the right to education for all women and the reform of family law. They also started to scrutinize the Islamic origins of the veil. The women's movement

remained upper class mainly because these issues were primarily of concern to this class.

Ironically, women of the privileged classes were subject to greater restrictions. Poorer women always played an active economic role, particularly in the delta region (Tucker 1985). Polygamy was very rare, since men were not able to support two families or to come up with the mahr which is a sum specified in the marriage contract (in accordance with Islamic law) to be paid to the bride at any time during or at the termination of marriage. This practically prevented easy divorce for men. The right to education was also irrelevant, since neither men nor women of modest origin could afford to join the feminist movement at that time.

Women adopted various strategies to overcome the social and familial opposition to their organizing themselves and taking public position. Since Muslim women have, by law, full control over their wealth, they were able to found many charitable organizations such as hospitals, schools and training centers where they worked as nurses, school teachers, and managers. In this manner, they created tolerance for these new and unconventional roles. The engagement of upper class women in these jobs boosted the status of women and made it easier for women of other classes to take up such occupations.(4)

Women also joined nationalist parties and participated in anticolonial movements. This initiative afforded them many more sympathizers. And despite their participation in anticolonial movements, they retained their political independence and continued agitating for the improvement of the position of

women. Further, they used the charity institutions they had founded as a channel to mobilize women of all classes (al-Sayed Marsot 1978). In 1919, women boycotted British goods and organized a demonstration in the streets of Cairo against the British. As the London Times reported:

... (the women) descended in large bodies into the street, those of more respectable classes still in veil and shrouded in the loose black coat, whilst the courtesans from the lower quarters of the city who also caught the contagion (of political unrest) disported themselves unveiled and arrayed themselves in less discreet garments. In every turbulent demonstration were well to the front shouting for "independence" and "down with the English" and waving national banners ... (quoted in Philip 1978, p.289).

Despite the partial success of the nationalists in winning a new constitution, women gained little. In response, many more women's groups were established. Huda Sharawi, one of the most militant activists, founded the Egyptian Feminist Union in 1923. It became the main association concerned with women's issues but also supported anti-colonial activity.

In 1924, returning from an international feminist meeting in Rome, Huda Sharawi and two other women decided to de-veil and, in a symbolic action, threw their veils in the sea at the port of Alexandria. Later, they organized a march where upper-class women marched unveiled in the streets of Cairo. This act rejected not just the actual veil but also an ideology which incorporated seclusion. Egypt thus became the first Islamic country to de-veil without state intervention.

The more recent assessment of the de-veiling has dismissed its importance, on the grounds that the

veil only affected a limited number of upper class women. But, although women of low income classes never veiled their face, and wore dresses which do not prevent movement, they nevertheless regarded the upper class veil as an ideal. It was not ideology which prevented them from taking "the veil", rather it was the lack of economic possibilities.

After 1924, feminists continued to agitate for change. By stressing their respect for true Islamic teachings, while rejecting "corrupted traditions" which they claimed were designed to keep women backward, they were able to diffuse much of the opposition

recognized and a very liberal labour law gave women maternity leave. Education became free and compulsory for Egyptians, male and female. Family law, however, was only slightly reformed. In 1957, the first time women could vote or stand for office, two women were elected as members of parliament. In 1962, only five years after Ellen Louks Fairclough became the first Canadian woman to hold a federal cabinet position, Hekmat Abu-Zaid was appointed the first female minister in Egypt.

In the period between 1957 and 1970, despite the increasing participation of women in all levels of education and the labour market, the feminist movement declined. It suddenly found itself facing a regime which not only recognized most of its demands, but also actively reinforced them. In the revolutionary atmosphere of the 1950s, the women's organizations and activists were incorporated into the state and the women's movement lost its momentum.

During the 1970s many elite women used their personal contacts to reform the personal status law governing marriage. This pressure was identified with

Jehan Sadat, the president's wife. As a result, a broad spectrum of more enlightened social forces, usually associated with the left wing and anti-establishment politics, did not actively support the reform. In 1985, after the assassination of President Sadat, the newly revived religious political groups successfully pressured the parliament to repeal the reformed laws.

Shortly afterwards, feminists scrambled to enter the political arena to ensure that no ground was lost. Ironically, the attempt by Islamic conservatives to impose their limited view of what constitutes women's Islamic rights and what should be their



to the reforms they sought. In 1942, the feminist activists established the Women's Political Party. In many ways it resembled any other secular, nationalist Egyptian party, except that constitutionally it gave as much weight to women's equality and the revision of family law as the anticolonial cause. Since many of the existing women's organizations joined the party it became a center for coordinating feminist activities.

By 1952 women had become such a political force that no party could afford to ignore them. With the winning of independence in 1956, women's full political rights were

The Women of The Maghreb

Reviewed By Rose Ghurayyib

social role has given a new life and impetus to the feminist movement in Egypt. Hundreds of active women's groups, large and small - representing all shades of the political spectrum, from Islamic to socialist and radical feminist - have been born during the last few years. •

Notes:

(*)By permission of Dr. Homa Hoodfar, from *Le Bulletin/Newsletter*, Institut Simone de Beauvoir Institute, Vol. 9, No2, 1989, pp.18-23

(1) For a summary of feminist movements in selected eastern countries, see Jayawardena 1986

(2) See Abdel Qader 1988 for a full discussion on the debates.

(3) See Philipp 1978, p. 280, for a list and date of these publications.

(4) For a more detailed discussion about the strategies women adopted in order to participate in the public and political life of their society, see al-Sayyid Marsot 1978.

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I had the chance to meet a few of them at a conference organized by IWSAW. Highly educated women who have assimilated the best of Western culture. They spoke and wrote in flawless French. Their dress, conversations and manners revealed a modern, good taste, free of ostentation and artificiality. Their foreign education did not prevent them from developing a powerful national identity, which aroused their revolt against the traditions impeding the awakening of women compatriots and the development of their countries as a whole. Emerging at the beginning of the century, following many years of colonization, their liberation movement grew slowly. Lately, the development of international relations and contact with the United Nations Organization helped create a movement of cultural cooperation between East and West.

A pamphlet about the women of the Maghreb *Femmes du Maghreb* was produced, by the Women's Committee of CEAD (Center of Arab Studies for Development) (1) in Canada. A committee of nine women, members of CEAD--supported by ACDI, the Ministry of Cultural Communities and of Immigration and the State Secretariat, Canada--worked together to produce this thirty page report of which we give the following abridgement.

Algeria

In Algeria, the FLN (Front of National Liberation) which won the battle of independence in 1963 and dominated the country as a unique political party, had to face various internal problems, particularly a severe

economic crisis which led to the increase in national debts, overpopulation and unemployment. Consequently, the fundamentalist (religious) group, moved by Wahhabite influence and the intrusion of the Muslim Brotherhood, took advantage of the situation. Accusing the political system of being a failure they preached a return to fundamentalism. Thus, political sermons invaded the mosques; schools were filled with Islamic zealots; and a revolt against the one party regime broke out in 1988. The party called IFS, Islamic Front of Salvation, became popular. Accordingly, Algerian society, in its thirst for social justice, refused to build its economy on the capitalist principle of giving priority to economic interests. It preferred the social fundamentalism acclaimed by the IFS. In 1990, the municipal and departmental elections resulted in the victory of the fundamentalists with 50 percent of the communes and 33 percent of the electoral body. Immediately, several reactionary measures were imposed: the family code of 1984 considered women as minors for life; men were granted the privileges of polygamy and divorce; even the right of women to vote was threatened by the new wave.

On March 8 and May 10, 1990, women's organizations joined in large demonstration (2), claiming the abolition of the code of 1984. The legislative elections which took place in 1991 expressed the determination of each of the antagonistic parties running for election. The struggle is supposed to continue until the emergence of a third party having the democratic tendencies needed to earn the confidence of the general public and the support of the Women's Liberation Movement.



Women and Human Rights in Morocco

Morocco, like Algeria and other Maghreb countries (3), is ruled by an imposed anti-democratic regime. Economic exploitation of the Moroccans is carried out by a feudal class cooperating with Western capitalism and its political supporters in the East. This system is upheld by another network of cultural and religious traditions which rejects change and defends the status quo. The following paragraphs will discuss the status of women in the context of human rights and the socio-economic system.

In 1982, the general ratio of illiteracy was 65 percent: 78 percent for women and 51 percent for men. In rural districts, the percentage was double that of urban areas.

The majority of illiterate women work in the domestic sector or in the

textile, agricultural and industrial sectors. A few are employed in services of the public sector. 56.5 percent of them work in personal and domestic services. This figure does not include little girls who work as apprentices, and receive food and dress (barter) instead of regular salaries. Sixty two percent are employed in the textile industry where they receive a starvation salary. The seasonal work of rural women is neither evaluated nor compensated financially. Furthermore, the trained personnel (cadre) is 100 percent male; the non-trained is 100 percent female.

In public services, female participation rose from 16 to 28 percent in 1989; 53 percent practice menial occupations such as housemaids, receptionist, etc. . . and 36 percent are employed as teachers, secretaries, nurses, etc. . . .

Prostitution increased dramatically

when the country was invaded by oil merchants from Arabia, or who fled Lebanon and found resort in Morocco. Many of these men married needy women, temporarily, whom they repudiated at will.

The vast majority of women of Morocco are divorced or widowed. These two categories, being liberated from male guardianship, must work for sustenance because the family code(4) does not allow them economic independence.

In the seventies, the spread of education favored the dissemination of liberal ideas advocated by a number of leftist practices. The women's movement gained ground in spite of government repression. Men and women protested against the reactionary policy adopted by the royal family and rejected the family code which confirmed male domination in all institutions and all fields of activity.

Tunisian Women

Tunisia, at the crossroads of ancient civilizations: Carthage, Egypt, Rome, has often been considered as the land of dialogue, and the country where women enjoy a more privileged position than their sisters in other North African and Arab countries (5). In fact, this country witnessed, in the early part of the century, the rise of a feminist leader, Tahar El Haddad, who was, in his call for women's liberation, even more daring than Qasim Amin of Egypt. He condemned the veil, polygamy, sex segregation, the unilateral right of divorce and demanded equal rights in education. Tahar El Haddad was rejected as a renegade; his book, "Our Women in the Shari'a and in society" was condemned. Yet, his ideas did not fail to bear fruit.

Bourghiba's accession to power, and the Personal Status Code in 1956 was to make Tunisia one of the most advanced Arab countries in terms of its legislation for women. According to the Code, polygamy was forbidden; forced marriage prohibited; civil marriage recognized; unilateral repudiation replaced by a legal one decided by court; the custody of children equally shared by both parents; and a law for the adoption of children was established.

In spite of these reforms, Tunisian women complain about the gap between legislation and implementation of the law. On the other hand, the Islamic law that gives women half the share of a man in inheritance remains effective. The same is true of the law prohibiting the marriage of a Muslim woman to a non-Muslim while allowing a Muslim man to marry a Christian or a Jewish woman.

Common Factors of Slow Progress in the Maghreb

Common factors impede the feminist movement in the Maghreb as a whole, by creating priority for other national issues:

First, an economic crisis resulted from the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) causing a decrease in export from the Maghreb to Europe. Second, the Gulf war and its sequels ended tourism from the oil countries. Third the opening of the markets East-European countries to West Europe acted as a powerful competitor and affected business in the Maghreb. Fourth, the pressure from the fundamentalist movement produced leaders who seem to take advantage of the failures of local

governments and profess radical changes affecting women. Hence, one of the main items of the fundamentalist program is to reinstate the veil and order women to go back home.

All of these factors reduced public interest in social reforms especially those related to women's rights and demands. Women's groups share the critical economic problems at hand, yet refused to ignore and postpone their struggle for liberation. Their reaction to the fundamentalist movement took two forms: (1) they suggested that Islamic Shari'a or legislation should be reinterpreted from a more progressive point of view; (2) they proposed to secularize the state by secularizing all constitutional laws and recognizing civil marriage. Women argued that since the economy of the state was not subjugated to religious laws, women's status should also be freed from this subordination.

Neglect by the government induced the women's groups to reorganize themselves. The Tahar El Haddad Club became the center where they meet to discuss their problems. Thus, the General Union of Tunisian workers includes a Women's Commission; and the Tunisian Association of Women Democrats was officially recognized in 1989.



Tunisia has produced very active women's groups and a large number of women researchers, writers and poets. Some of them occupy leadership positions like the Ministry of Family Affairs. According to Evelyne Accad(6), The Tahar El Haddad Club is the most exciting and leading group in the women's movement, and succeeded in founding two bilingual feminist papers: *Leila* in 1940 and *Nissa'* in 1985-87.

The "Cahiers du Feminisme" (Papers of Feminism) published in 1990 raised the banner of "Progressive Islam" or "Secularism". Still their struggle for sexual equality has a long way to go. Sukaina Buaoui, one of their prominent journalists says, in a book published in 1988, that the Tunisian women of today have to face two problems that hinder their progress: first, is the conflict between granting equality and the necessity to compromise with traditions; second, the struggle against socio-cultural prejudices resulting from the menial tasks to which women are relegated and which serve to weaken their position.

Conclusion

The women of the Maghreb -- Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco-- share with their other Arab sisters the problems which hinder complete liberation. Hence, they share underdeveloped or rudimentary politics; entrenched stereotypes; and fundamentalist movements trying to assert themselves by reviving religious fanaticism.

In 1982, The Moroccan lawyer, Amina Massaoudi Hawary, prepared a study for the UN, which was summarized in *Al-Raida* No. 31, 1985. In this study, she shows: first, the intrinsic relation between women's needs and those of the country to which they belong, "underdevelopment in Morocco is inherent to women's backwardness."; and second, that the inferior condition of women is more a result of entrenched traditions than of the Moroccan Constitution or Muslim Laws, both being misunderstood or implemented in favor of traditional behavior. The author mentions that in Tunisia, Iraq, Syria and Turkey,

polygamy has been abolished and demands the same measure for Morocco. She calls for reforms in the Personal Status Code such as those regarding inheritance, divorce and mixed marriages.

Since 1982, little change has occurred in the status of the women of the Maghreb. But the struggle continues, everywhere, sustained by the faith and courage which characterize the members of the second sex •

(1) CEAD: Centre d'Etudes Arabes pour le Development

(2) Also see "The Price of Independence: The Case of Algerian Women", *Al-Raida*, Vol. IX, No. 50, August, 1990. pg. 6-7.

(3) Lybia and Mauritania
(4) for more information see Personal Status Code in Morocco", *Al-Raida* Vol. IX, No. 50, August, 1990. pg. 10.

(5) Evelyne Accad, "Women in contemporary Tunisia", *Al-Raida*. No. 33, August 1, 1985.

(6) Ibid.

Miss Rose Ghurayyib,

her name has become a landmark in children's books and the women's literature.



Born in the village of Damour, in 1909, she received her high school diploma from Sidon High school and then enrolled at Beirut University College when it was still known as Junior College. In 1934 she received a Bachelor's degree in Arabic Literature and History and in 1945 a Master's degree in Arabic criticism from the American University of Beirut. She taught Arabic in a number of schools in the country including Beirut University College between 1955 and 1973.

Among the achievements of Miss Rose Ghurayyib are: 3 books of songs and musical plays; 35 books of

poems; stories and plays for children; 4 story books for young people; 2 books on modern literature and criticism; 1 book on Gibran; 2 Arabic reading books for beginners with a teacher's guidebook; 1 study on May Ziadeh published by IWSAW; over 150 newspaper, magazine and journalistic articles; 1 research on contemporary Female poets, and a book entitled *Overview on the Contemporary Women's Movement* also published by IWSAW.

Between 1974 and 1984, Miss rose ghurayyib joined the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World at Beirut University College as the editor of *Al-Raida*, in addition to conducting and writing research, books and articles related to the women's issue and continues to contribute to *Al-Raida*.

Population and the Health of the Mother and the Child (*)

This study was presented at the Conference on *Population and Basic Needs in Jordan*, which took place on January 22-24, 1991. The research was conducted by a team of doctors and scholars from the Department of Gynecology/Obstetrics of al-Bashir Hospital, the Ministry of Health, and Jordan University Hospital.

The objectives of the study were:

- To examine health conditions and causes of mother and child mortality in Jordan.
- To evaluate health services offered to the mother and the child in all health related sectors throughout the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.
- To present a comprehensive overview of the services for the welfare of mother and child and to propose future recommendations with emphasis on helping women space their pregnancies.
- To review the history of development starting with the first project founded by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF in 1955.

The study concentrated on specific issues, notably (1) the health of the mother; (2) the health of the child; (3) services for the welfare of the mother and the child.

The Health of the Mother.

The following indicators summarize the health condition of the mother and compares them to worldwide

conditions in order to access development and health in the Kingdom:

Deaths related to pregnancy average to 40 in 100,000 deliveries, compared to 140 deaths in 100,000 deliveries in developing countries, 59 in 100,000 in semi-developed countries, and 9 in 100,000 in developed countries.

A decrease in death rates was noticed in the 80s due to an increase in the number of women seeking and receiving medical care during pregnancy. The percentage of deliveries which are supervised by qualified doctors is 89.5 percent (compared to 28 percent in under-developed countries, 46 percent in developing countries, 84 percent in semi-developed countries and 99 percent in developed countries).

The use of birth control increased further reducing death among pregnant women. Hence, use of birth control led to spacing of pregnancies and a reduction of deaths caused by repeated and consecutive pregnancies. The average of women using birth control is 35 percent (compared to 6 percent in developing countries, 34 percent in semi-developed countries and 73 percent in developed countries).

The research team noted shortages and discrepancies in the information reported in official records, thus, hindering the assessment of specific causes of death. Nevertheless, the available information show heart and blood diseases to be the leading causes of death among pregnant women, i.e. 25 percent. The additional causes of deaths assessed from death reports are: cancer tumors amounting to 6.4 percent, and blood pressure diseases

amounting to 3 percent. Other causes of death could not be deduced.

The Health of the Child

Official records of child mortality in Jordan are also incomplete. Therefore, Health conditions and mortality rates are limited to 1990:

There is a notable decrease in mortality of children of breast feeding age due to the development and improvement of services for the welfare of the mother and the child including health, environmental and other disease prevention efforts. Hence, in 1990, child mortality rate at breast feeding age is 37 per 1,000, excluding still born children (compared to 118 per 1,000 in under-developed countries, 67 per 1,000 in developing countries, 27 per 1,000 in semi-developed countries and 9 per 1,000 in developed countries).

Jordan still suffers from a high rate of child mortality rate around time of birth due to a high fertility rate and a shortage in human and medical resources. Mortality rate of children around time of birth is 21 per 1,000 of all birth (including still born children). Available documents reveal three main cause of death: (1) premature birth; (2) deformities; (3) acute infection of the respiratory system.

The study's review of the common health problems children face identified the four most common illness in 1990 to be: (1) respiratory diseases; (2) intestinal diseases and malfunctions; (3) Digestive disorders; and (4) malnutrition. On the other hand,



vaccinated children suffer mostly from nose, ear and throat infections followed by eye problems.

Services and Facilities for the Welfare of the Mother and the Child.

The number of organizations specializing in Health of the mother and the child have increased. Consequently, the number of specialists in obstetrics has increased by 95 percent between 1980 and 1990. Centers for the Welfare of the Mother and the Child total to 161 and most are located in the urban cities. There are twenty clinics specializing in dispersing and spacing pregnancies in addition to five clinics by the Jordanian Organization for the Protection of the Family.

Hospital facilities for the mother and the child increased significantly between 1980 and 1990. Records show a 35 percent in hospital beds for

women in the gynecology/obstetrics care and a 45 percent for children.

The level of services offered by centers for the welfare of the mother and the child have also grown significantly. Hence, in 1990, these centers accommodated 53 percent of the children born during the year. In the same year, the number of pregnant women registered in these centers was 59.5 percent. Furthermore, the number of home deliveries supervised by these centers amounted to 2.2 percent in the same year, whereas, hospital deliveries increased to 74 percent (it was 43.5 percent in 1987).

Recommendations brought fourth by the study

- (1) To improve and develop information systems and precision in record keeping.
- (2) To improve and develop health services and their quality.
- (3) To support and encourage

scientific research in order to better plan development.

(4) To organize the administrative sector and reduce centralization of health services.

(5) To support the National Health Programme for the spacing of pregnancies and births and to introduce further coordination, cooperation and networking between the National Population Council and the Ministry of Health •

R.A.H.

(*) Excerpts from "Al-Sukan wa Suhat al-Umm wa al-Tofl" (Population and the Health of the Mother and the Child) Al-Sukanlyah, Quarterly newsletter of the General Secretariat of the National Population Commission, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Queen Alia Jordan Welfare Fund, No. 3. 1991. Translated by Randa Abul Husn.

Problems Facing The Women's Movement in Lebanon

Interview with Lawyer Laure Moghaizel

by David Livingstone (*)

Laure Moghaizel has been involved in the women's rights movement in Lebanon since the late 1940s when she was still a student of law. She began by fighting for women's right to vote. Today, she is a founding member of the Lebanese Association of Human Rights and heads the legal committee. Maitre Moghaizel spoke to David Livingstone on the problems facing the women's movement.

Q Where do Lebanese women stand today in comparison to the most conservative Arab countries and the most liberal?

A. As far as civil law is concerned, Lebanon has a modern legislation, and differs from other Arab countries. In all the Arab countries, the legislation for family rule is based on the Shari'a or the Moslem law, which has been modified only in some of these countries. For instance, in Tunisia, Egypt, and Iraq there are new interpretations of the Shari'a in the family law. Hence, in Tunisia, women and men have equal inheritance rights. In Tunisia, Iraq, and Yemen (especially before unification), polygamy was abolished.

In Lebanon, the situation is different. The plurality of religious communities precludes the respective plurality in family law. Notably, there is no civil marriage law. If you are from one of the six Catholic communities, you follow your respective law and courts; non-Catholic Christians including the Orthodox, the Chaldeans, the

Assyrians, the Armenian Orthodox, also have their own particular laws. Furthermore, in the Moslem communities, laws vary between the Sunnites, Shiites and Druze. For the Sunnites and the Shiites, polygamy is legal. These two sects have the same laws but differ on practical terms. For instance, an only daughter, in a Shiite family, can inherit all of her father's wealth, whereas she has to share it with her father's brother(s) in a Sunnite family. Therefore, many Sunnite Ministers and Deputies of the Lebanese Government have converted in order to secure the inheritance for their daughters. The Druze are very different, they can leave a last will and testament giving their daughters and sons equal shares if they so wish. Divorce is not permitted for Catholics, granted to some non-Catholic Christians; and conditions for a divorce vary between the other non-Orthodox communities. For Sunnites and Shiites, there are repudiation rituals whereby men do not have to go to court to divorce their wives; The Druze is the only community in which the spouses must appear in court, and may divorce by mutual consent.

As you can see, we have many laws. Sometimes, the State itself has its own separate laws for Muslims and Christians. For instance, the State rules on inheritance issues for non-Muslim citizens. On the other hand, the judges of the Muslim courts are appointed by the State and are considered government employees. The situation is completely different for other Arab countries where Moslem law applies to everybody.

Q. If inequality is built into the religions, it will presumably take a weakening of those religions for the inequality to be phased out. Isn't this out of the question in Lebanon which was formed around the 17 religious communities ?

A. Yes, you are right. Personal Status Laws reinforce inequality of women, although in different degrees depending on the religious communities. The most conservative are the Sunnites and the Shiites. The Druze have a new and better law that has been codified by the state, hence, they do not have polygamy; a woman can ask for divorce; and inheritance is fair. Nevertheless, the Family Law or the Personal Status Code defining women's legal rights and status remains functional and powerful because it is considered as sacred.

Q. Women must still have permission from their husband to do trade. Is this practiced, however?

A. There is an international convention of the United Nations for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. In 1979, it was ratified by 109 states, including five Arab states. However, it was not ratified by Lebanon because of article 16 of this convention, which supposed the equality between men and women in the family. So Lebanon, in this aspect is not very advanced. In civil law, a married woman cannot practice business without the permission of her husband. This authority can be

expressed or tacit. But in practice, I don't think this is a big handicap for women. In any event, the proportion of women who are involved in trade is small.

Q. How large is the gap in salary between men and women doing the same job with the same experience?

A. We do not have new statistics, therefore, I cannot give you a number. There is no disparity in the public sector, and there is equality in the banking sector. Furthermore, by law, there should not be any discrimination. There is a convention for equal pay for equal work and Lebanon ratified this convention, however, implementation is something else. Unfortunately, women are not very active in trade unions. Consequently, trade unions are not pushing this issue.

Q. How much sexual harassment is there in the work place ?

A. I don't think this problem can be really addressed. When the woman is working for an employer, it is assumed that she has to be very kind to him. Even if there is sexual harassment - and I'm sure there is, there must be! - I don't think she will tell anybody about it. She will not tell her parents because she will not be allowed to return to work. We have more than 100 women's associations in this country, but we do not have specialized groups who deal with such a problem, because it is not a public issue, nor can it be made public. It is a taboo issue in Lebanon.

Q. A husband finds his wife cheating on him and kills her. What happens to him ?

A. This is what we call crimes of honor, which is not really a question of honor. Before the war, we addressed the issue through lectures and publications (1). We also made attempts to abolish article 52 of the



Penal Code because Lebanon is not the retrograde of all Arab countries with the exception of Saudi Arabians. We have two kinds of situations: If a man is suspicious of his wife, daughter, granddaughter, grandmother or sister being in an equivocal situation and he kills her and her lover, he has a reduced punishment because of attenuating circumstances if the judge so decides. In the other situation, where he sees her in bed with her lover and kills her and her lover, he has a full excuse and the court cannot tell him anything. The judge cannot punish him, and is obliged to judge him innocent.

Q. If polygamy is mistreatment of women, but written into the Koran, how can that be changed ?

A. We are not asking to change the Koran. We are not even asking to change the Personal Status Law. All we want is a civil law, which guarantees equality, liberty and non-discrimination. We prepared the legal texts for such a law and placed them in the hands of the Parliamentary Committee of Justice and Administration. The head of the Committee tells me that every six months he attempts to raise the issue, but realizing that he could get killed, he returns the file to the drawer.

In Tunisia, they are working on a new interpretation to prove that inequality is not dictated in the Koran itself but in social customs.

Lebanon is different from other Arab countries. Even if equality is given to women, it is not enough. We are asking for equality not only between the sexes, but between women themselves and men themselves. Thus, if the laws differ among the religious communities even men are not equal.

This civil law we are calling for does not abolish The Personal Status law. We are proposing an optional law, i.e. an opportunity to choose between Personal Status Law and the proposed civil law. How can we speak of a democracy that does not entail equality by the law? With 17 laws, there is no equality between people. For example, during the war, many people died leaving behind a large inheritance controversy. There is no inheritance between Moslems and Christians, i.e. a Moslem man cannot bequeath his possession to a Christian wife. The State gets it all. We had many court cases, where nothing could be done.

Q. What is the worse case of discrimination you have come across ?

A. I cannot tell of one particular case. The world is done by the men, for the men. Women may work outside the home, but cannot ignore or neglect their domestic duties, which mean a double load. Their work (domestic) is not paid, not prestigious, nor highly esteemed and has no limit. Men, in general, are not sharing these responsibilities. I still do not know of a country where this particular problem has been resolved.*

(*) David Livingstone is a free lance reporter.

(1) The Institute for women's Studies in the Arab world published Laure Moghaizel's book *al Mar'a fi al-Tashri' al-Lubnanl, Women (rights) In the Lebanese legislation.* in 1985.

Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing

by Margot Badran, and Miriam Cooke, ed.(*)

Reviewed by Dr. Evelyne Accad

This is the first collection of Arab Women's feminist writings including poems, tales, excerpts from novels, short stories, essays, journalistic articles and speeches, as well as interviews. The voices are those of Arab women who both did and did not call themselves feminists. Their discourse addresses universal issues such as education and work, rights concerning marriage, and suffrage, at the same time it confronts more Arab gender related problems. They come from countries that experienced European colonial rule and/or western imperialist hegemony. Because of that, their feminist voices often ran the risk of being discredited as anti-nationalist or anti-religious.

The selections are organized "within a deliberately fluid classificatory framework that opens a new way of thinking about women's writings." The division under the rubrics -- **Awareness, Rejection, and Activism** -- is an interesting one which shows a progression in feminist consciousness.

Many of the authors are not yet known. Many of the excerpts were translated from Arabic or French into English. The anthology presents women of the nineteenth and twentieth century from a geographical area that stretches from Morocco in the West to Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula in the East. The broad range of authors and voices offers a unique opportunity to

learn more about the complexity of Arab women writing styles and themes. "An analysis of Arab women's discourse allows us to see feminism where we had not previously thought to look." This remarkable collection of other stories, essays, poems, speeches, interviews, excerpts from novels, etc., gives us an understanding of the Arab world from the women's points of view, an aspect often occulted by the more dominant male discourse. •

(*) Margot Badran, and M. Cooke, ed., *Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, 412 pages.



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Women and Community in Oman

by Christine Eickelman

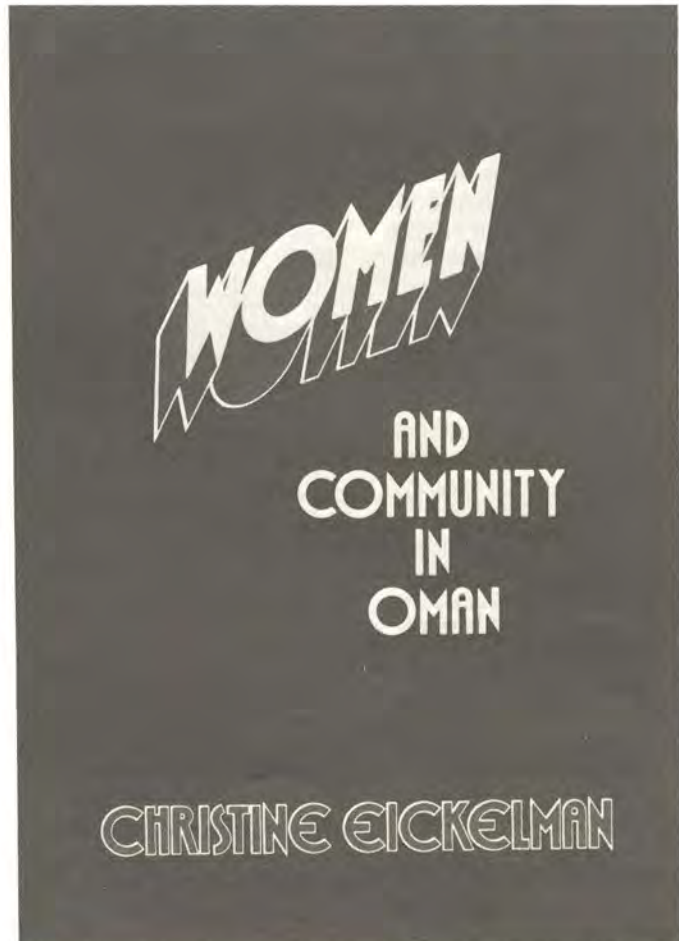
Despite its contemporary strategic significance, Oman remains less known . . . than neighboring states, such as Saudi Arabia (1). This was exactly why I picked this book. It seemed to me that many tend to generalize whatever knowledge or information they have about women in the Arab Gulf to all the countries of the region.

Christine Eickelman gives a vivid anthropological account of women and the community in Oman. The Omani women of her book are from Hamra, an oasis in the interior, where she lived with her husband (who was there on a research grant) and their five year old daughter. She introduces her book, and her chapters with brief and explicit descriptions of *the people, the topography of the cities -of Muscat and Ruwi during the first few days before moving into the interior -* and the oasis, in addition to daily chores and sex-roles in the Omani society. Omani women are then placed within context with more elaborate details about habits, patterns of speech and conduct, domestic chores and social rituals and customs. The analyses and observations are complimented with the personal contacts and experiences of the author with the women, dated and written in the form of a personal diary. Even the smallest details are depicted: such as coffee-drinking, a primary social ritual of Omani society, as well as customs related to the organization of domestic work like fetching drinking water, washing, cooking, hospitality, eating, visitation, invitations; and marriage; birth; death; social space; family clusters; neighbors; motherhood; children; education; gossip; etc. . . .

Eickelman outlines her chapters into basic social units, i.e The household, the Family Cluster, Sociability, Neighbors, the Community, Children, and the Hamra Oasis: past and Present.

Hence, in the introduction, while still in Muscat and Ruwi, Eickelman reviews ethnical and religious backgrounds, noting the prevalence of *Ubadism* (2), the first difference

between Oman and other Muslim countries in the Gulf and North Africa. Then, she distinctly describes the city of Ruwi noticing the absence of street vendors, blaring radios, the crowds of men, the prayer calls, and the women on their balconies or roof terraces so characteristic of neighborhoods in other Middle Eastern and North African cities. Furthermore, unlike the other countries, there was no bargaining in the market. Omani



men wore long white tunics, *Dishdasha*, and covered their heads with turbans. Yet, not all Omani women were wrapped from head to toe in long black *abayas*, some wore a shawl and patterned tunic over embroidered pantaloons. Women in the city did not socialize openly with strangers and therefore, it was a while before Christine Eickelman and her daughter were accepted in the playground near their temporary apartment in Ruwi. Eventually, Eickelman was invited to coffee-drinking visits (dates were served with coffee) where she understood the importance of the ritual in creating and strengthening social bonds. She also describes the variations in hospitality, such as what was served with coffee and the other women invited, depicting family and socio-economic status.

The other eight chapters of Eickelman's book examine in length

the rural community of the oasis and its women. Noticeably, the women were friendlier and more inquisitive than their urban sisters. Furthermore, Eickelman was distinctly aware of status variables among the women of Hamra, i.e. the *Shaikhly* women (related to the Shaik, leader of the oasis) and *nonshaikhly* women. As status increases she noticed more jewelry and herb coloring on their faces and foreheads. The *Shaikhly* women visiting patterns were more formal and numerous in the oasis and they tended to do their washing and chores more privately than women of the lower classes. *Shaikhly* and *nonshaikhly* households organize domestic work differently. Furthermore, *nonshaikhly* women in the oasis carry mini-business to supplement the money of their husbands, such as sewing and embroidering pantaloons, children headcaps, and making rose water among other small tokens. It is not

suitable and acceptable for women of the *Shakhly* families to engage in such trade.

Probably, the most important aspect of the lives of women in the oasis is managing water. *In a country where water is scarce and running water was still unavailable, the Falaj (the river) is essential to most household tasks.* For most of the day, the head of the *Falaj* is reserved for women⁽³⁾. Eickelman elicetly describes the fetching of water, the washing of pans and pots and clothes, the socialization and conversation of the women along the *Falaj*. Social space in the house and the segregation of the sexes also follows elaborate patterns dictating architecture of the houses, separate entrances, separate guest rooms for male and female guests.

Family Cluster, Hayyan, are the basic social unit of Omanis.

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Mrs Emily Nasrallah at the Conference on Women, Democracy and Islam

The House of World Cultures - Haus Der Kulturen der Welt - held a conference about Women, Democracy and Islam, on March 31-April 4, 1992 in Berlin. Mrs. Emily Nasrallah, a prominent female Lebanese writer was a main participant in the Conference. She was invited to speak in the panel discussion about *Literature as a Mean of Expression for Arab Women*, a discussion on *Feminine Creativity in Arab Literature*, along with panelists, Salwa Bakr from Cairo, Egypt and Nadja Al-Baghdadi a specialist in *Feminine Arab Literature* from the University of Berlin, who is half German and half Iranian on her father's side. Mrs. Emily Nasrallah was also reserved a session in which she read passages from her book *A House Not her Own*, *Stories from Beirut*. with a discussion following the reading.

The program of the Conference included other prominent women scholars and writers in the Arab world, such as Fatima Mernissi (Morocco), Rashida Enneifer (Tunis), Khalida Messaoudi (Algeria), Najda Moustapha (Egypt), Islah Jade (Ramallah). These women joined in a series of panels and workshops to discuss: *Conditions of women in the Arab-Muslim World and How Women can actually change the mentalities; Breaking the walls of Silence* based on the results of the research project "Maghreb Women Horizons 2000" with further emphasis on *Women and Media - Strategies for the Future* by Fatima Mernissi, *The experience of a writer's workshop* by Rachida Enneifer, and *Women and laws in the Arab Maghreb* by Nouredine Saadi. Another day concentrated on *The Palestinian Intifada: What is the significance of militant culture on the domestic life of women?*

The Conference ended with an artistic touch, a belly dance from Layla Haddad (Tunis/Paris). The Institute for Women's Studies awaits the proceedings of the panels for further review in *Al-Raida* •

R.A.H



(1) Eickelman, Christine. *Women and Community in Oman*. 1984. New York: New York University Press. pg. xiv.

(2) *Ubadism*, which is similar to the Sunnite in theology but differs from, both, Sunni and Shia' in practice, notably the emphasis on the pious and credible qualities of the Imam as opposed to descent and lineage to the Prophet.

(3) Eickelman, pg. 49.

(4) *Ibid*, pg. 83-84

The First Female Speaker of the House of Commons (UK) in 700 years (*)

Betty Boothroyd is the first female speaker in the House of Commons (UK) in 700 years. She now presides over the house consisting of 651 seats of which 60 are women.

The speaker cannot take part in debate but can direct it by determining whom to recognize. Her predecessor as speaker recall that he had to help

other deputy speakers control the Commons in its most unruly moments -- but not Boothroyd. She was elected by her mostly male peers. It was her natural authority that led many conservative MPs to support her. She brings to the job a brassy self-confidence.

(*) Information taken from *Newsweek, International* May 11, 1992.



Appeal To Uphold Algerian Women's Rights (**)

At the end of 1991, Algeria was getting ready to vote to elect its members of parliament: These were the first free, multi-party elections since its independence in 1962, and we could even say the first free elections, because during the 130 years of French colonization preceding independence, no elections were free and honest.

In the first round the Islamic Front for Salvation (FIS) won the majority of 188 seats. Indeed, the FIS announced that as soon as they had won the second round of the elections, they intended to make major changes in the Algerian constitution, some of which are that women would have to stop working outside the home, and sexual relations outside marriage would be punishable by death.

When the results of the first round

of elections were announced, a considerable number of demonstrators marched in Algiers and in other Algerian towns to demand the union of all democrats to stop the FIS from coming to power; the large number of women in these demonstrations is quite remarkable; it is also very interesting to point out that all styles of clothing, supposed to symbolize the politico-religious beliefs of the women wearing them, were represented: veiled or not, sporting jeans and make-up These women were demanding freedom of expression, a secular state, were saying "no to sadness".

Messages of support to uphold the rights of Algerian women can be sent to: Coordination des Associations des Femmes Algeriennes, c/o Nadia Liassine, 12 Parc Poirson, El-Biar, Alger



(**) taken from an Alert for Action by Women living under Muslim laws, International Solidarity network, BP 23-34790 Grabels, Montpellier-France, February 1992.

Global Assembly Recognizes Role of Women(***)

The Global Assembly held recently in Miami, Florida, reminded the international community that women in the developing world have a critical role as managers of the environment.

More than 400 delegates from every region heard some 300 success stories about women who had made a difference by developing products, technologies and community systems which were environmentally friendly.

In much of the developing world, women cultivate food crops, are responsible for domestic water supplies, and gather fuel. The majority of these women are also poor. They are rarely consulted on matters of critical importance to the environment and they are commonly ignored by Governments and other agencies. Although they could have an impact on national productivity and development, they seldom receive

technologies and know how which could lighten their workload and boost their output.

Delegates to the Assembly were reminded that women, representing 50 per cent of the population, wielded enormous power as producers and consumers. They could determine energy use, and influence the protection of natural resources and the disposal of wastes. Policy-makers, however, tended to ignore their needs and their potential to reshape the environment locally and globally.

Mrs. Sharon Capeling-Alakija, Director of the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), said that as long as third world politicians and statisticians ignore the role for women in their societies and fail to measure their productivity in cash terms, many millions of women would remain *invisible*. Meanwhile, women had become both agents and victims of

environmental degradation.

In urging women attending the Assembly to develop their success stories into models which could be shared and replicated, the Director of UNIFEM said: *Where we appear to be weakest, is our ability to convince policy-makers that women do indeed have solutions to social problems. While we claim that development will occur more rapidly and effectively if women are integrated into all areas of human endeavor, we have only limited success demonstrating that point. As yet we have only a few models, a few effective strategies which others might replicate. We have to establish many of our experiences as facts* •

(***) Reproduced in part from update, United Nations Centre for Science and Technology for Development, No. 48, Winter 1991/92, p. 3.

International Conference on Women and Environment

The High Institute of Public Health at Alexandria University is holding an International Conference on Women and Environment in Alexandria, Egypt, on December 1st-3rd 1992.

The objectives of the Conference include focusing on women as the traditional invisible work-force and backbone of the family; emphasizing the role women should lead as environmental conservationists; examining the barriers hindering women from leading their roles in environment and development and scope needed efforts; identifying the

role women should take in environmentally disastered areas; and providing a forum for critical review of literature published in the neglected area of the environment degradation, impacts on women and children and analyzing specific case studies in order to achieve lessons and guidelines for these cases. . . .

The papers at the Conference will address issues related to women as conservationists for the environment and natural resources and women's role in water, sanitation, food, fuel, environmental pollution, tropical diseases, human settlements; and the

role of international, governmental and NGOs in promoting the role of women in environment.

For more information contact:

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165 El-Horriya Ave., Alexandria
Egypt.

Tel: 002 (03) 4215575/6
Fax: 002 (03) 4218436

Arab Woman and the Environment A National Conference

organized by
the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Beirut University
College
and the Frederich Ebert Foundation

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) of Beirut University College and The Frederich Ebert Foundation are sponsoring a national Conference entitled Woman and the Environment. The Conference will take place on October 8, 9, and 10, 1992, in Beirut.

The organizing institutions and scholars realize the growing and critical need to emphasize the role of women in environmental issues since women are the primary users of the environment. Hence, the goal of the Conference is to create public awareness and to motivate women to play a more active role in preserving and protecting the environment.

The panels and workshops will discuss the social, the economic and the political variables and issues related to women and the environment. Once, the variables are identified and the link to women is examined, the conferees aim to produce a practical guide for healthy and constructive use of environmental parameters. The guidelines, in the form of a simple booklet, will address women of all social classes and backgrounds, equally.

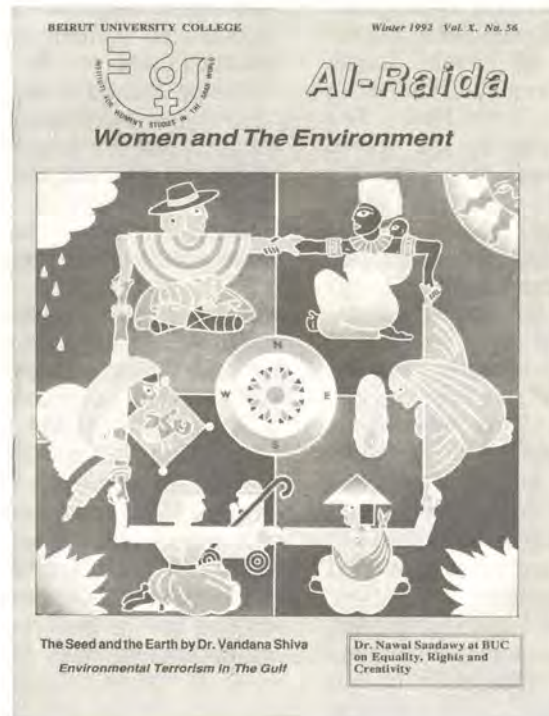
The Conference is expected to host forty to fifty participants ranging from leading individual scholars and environmentalists (men and women), to concerned institutions and

organizations, educators, government officials, notably from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of the Environment, as well as the only female member of Parliament, Mrs. Nayla Mouawad. The panels and workshops are closed in order to allow the participants to reach firm conclusions and solutions for the problems at hand.

The relationship between women and the environment is real and evident. Like the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the Global Assembly on Women and the Environment in Miami, Florida, and other small

developmental projects by various concerned groups and NGOs like ourselves, this activity is part of the Global concern and efforts for creating environmental awareness and preservation.

Hence, such a Conference is needed to emphasize it, to motivate women to become more active, and to provide them with scientific and environmentally healthy advice. The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World also aims to hold a Arab regional conference about Arab women and the Environment in the near future •



Series of Panels on Physical, Sensory and Mental Disabilities

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) organized a series of four panel discussions about Disabilities, on the last Wednesday of each month beginning with February, at the Beirut University College's Irwin Hall. *The lectures were funded by the World Rehabilitation Fund, to whom the Institute (IWSAW) and all those concerned extend their sincere thanks.* Each lecture covered one form of disability, respectively: 1) Physical Disabilities, 2) Blindness, 3) mental disabilities, 4) Deafness. The purpose of the lectures was the creation of public awareness about disabled children and people. Speakers discussed the medical aspects; the social and psychological aspects; and the rehabilitation and treatment aspects of the disabilities. They also emphasized the urgent need for expanding special education; specialized personnel and institutions; and promoting awareness and facilities encouraging the participation of the disabled in society. The speakers included heads of specialized local institutions, social workers, specialists, doctors, educators as well as disabled people themselves or their parents who told of how they coped. The lecturers used audio-visual material to illustrate necessary data and procedures.

The first panel discussion of February 26 concentrated on Physical disabilities. The first speaker, Dr. Nazih Muffarij, a neurosurgeon, explained the medical aspects of physical handicaps using audio-visual material to illustrate the various forms of disabilities. Among the four panelists were two social workers who

have had to cope with a physical disability themselves and later became pioneering members and workers in specialized centers. Thus, Miss Nahla Ghandour who suffered from Polio as a child is now an education and therapy specialist. She emphasized psychological and physiotherapy in rehabilitating a physically disabled child. Mr. Hassan War'iyeh, who lost his arms in an accident explained the technical and psychological aspects of rehabilitation related to the installment of artificial limbs. Dr. Moussa Sharafeddine, the moderator, summarized the various discussions and emphasized the importance of dismissing the notion that disabled people are a nuisance and a burden to society. The panelists stressed the importance of a supportive and active role of parents. The need for training and rehabilitation centers was raised calling on the government to take a more efficient role.

The second panel discussion of March 25 concentrated on Blindness. The moderator, Miss Laudie Jurdak, a blind person herself, holds a Master's degree in Mass Communication from Beirut University College and works in the Lebanese School for the Deaf and Blind. Her moderation was characterized by wit and humor in her tales of problems and hardships encountered in society as a result of being a blind person. Mr. Mou'niss Abdel Wahhab, who is blinded from birth, holds a Master's degree in Arabic Literature from the American University of Beirut and teaches at the Huda Institute for the Deaf and Blind in addition to being a member of the

The Friends of the Handicap Association of Tripoli. Mr. Mou'niss emphasized that a blind person's handicap is loss of sight not mental retardation, nor deafness or physical disability, and therefore should not be treated as having all of these handicaps. He offered the audience insights, instructions and advice on how to deal with blind people in public, notably on the street, in restaurants, in social gathering. His discussion was also characterized with wit and humor. Miss Amal Ibrahim, who lost her sight at the age of eight, and now holds a Master's degree in Educational Psychology from the American University of Beirut and works as a principal at the Huda School for the Blind and Deaf, recounted her experience. She noted the difficulties of learning Braille at older ages, the struggles with anger and denial of her condition and her determination to lead a normal and active life. Miss Ibrahim noted the sad fact that volunteer readers for blind students at universities have almost disappeared, and called upon students to assist their blind classmates. Two additional panelists/specialists, not suffering from blindness, concentrated on treatment and education of the blind. Dr. Nadim Farah, an eye specialist, played a videotape describing the various form of blindness and the causes of blindness which may occur with age. Mrs. Waddad Lahhoud, Principal of the Lebanese School for the Blind and the Deaf in Baabda noted the importance of allowing blind children to explore their surrounding. She emphasized the importance of special education and encouraged a healthy atmosphere for children with sensory disabilities.

The third panel discussion of

Wednesday, April 29 concentrated on **mental disabilities**. Dr. Waldtraut (Vallie) Merhej, The owner of the Diagnostic Center for Special Children, of whom we presented a profile in the previous issue of Al-Raida, moderated the discussion. Dr. Merhej stressed the urgent need for special centers, recognition of the disabled segment of the population by the government who continues to exclude them from the constitution and from development projects. Dr. Mousa Sharafeddine, Director of the Center for the Friends of the Handicap which acts as a school for Mentally Handicapped children explained the medical aspects and symptoms of Mental retardation. Mrs. Hana Salem, a model mother who has a down Syndrome child, presented a touching and encouraging description of her experience. She stressed the importance of early prevention and the various techniques parents can use with parents. She noted the primary role of the family and the parents in giving their children a chance to grow as normally as possible emphasizing patience and repetition of physical and mental exercises. Mrs. Leila Dirani discussed early prevention and education for mentally disabled children. She reiterated Mrs. Salem insistence on the importance of time which mentally disabled children cannot afford to lose. Yet, Mrs Dirani warned against rushing and pressuring for extraordinary achievements. Mrs. Samar Shalak showed a videocassette of Rehabilitation centers in Lebanon, which illustrated the various skills being instructed and performed by mentally disabled individuals. The purpose of the videocassette was to emphasize training and job opportunity for special people allowing them to become independent and productive.

The fourth and last lecture, of Wednesday, May 27 concentrated on **Deafness**. Among the panelists was Dr. George Zeitoun, an ENT

specialist, who explained the biological mechanism of hearing as well as medications and situations which cause deafness. A psychiatrist, Mr. Antoine Romanous, explained the psychology of treatment of the deaf and the despair and condition of parents. As far as educating and working with deaf children, Miss Mona Shalala spoke of teaching methods; and speech therapist, Miss Salma Jabr, gave the audience insights about how to communicate with the deaf children such as teaching them words which sound different and do not have silent vowels, linking words with facial expressions and avoiding to try too hard to articulate which only confuse the deaf child. The Moderator was Mrs. Randa Khoury, Director of the Nursery School of International College, an instructor of psychology of the young child at Beirut University College and a previous staff member of IWSAW.

This series of panel discussions serves as a first attempt to create public awareness among university student, educational, medical and social specialists, and the general public. The primary suggestions and demands produced were: **the urgent need for the creation of specialized centers; getting special funding for further development and care of special people and their needs; and the establishment of education for special people curricula and training in the universities.** Consequently, Beirut University College is studying the establishment of a special education training program for pre-school teachers. A lot remains to be done and awareness is only the beginning, for early prevention, training and incorporating the disabled sector of the population in development and society.

Hopefully, this activity will prove to be a sound and effective beginning, and more public awareness lectures and activities will be organized in the future •

The speakers:

(1) Physical Disability:

Dr. Najih Mufarj, Neurosurgeon; Mrs. Nahla Ghadour, Education and therapy of physically disabled children; Mr. Hasan Wa'riyeh, rehabilitation specialist; and Dr. Mousa Sharafeddine as moderator.

(2) Blindness

Dr. Nadim Farah, Ophthalmologist, Mrs. Waddad Lahoud, Principal of the School of the Blind in Baabda; Miss Amal Ibrahim, teacher at the Huda School for the Blind and Deaf, spoke of her personal experience as a blind person; Mr. Mu'nis Abdel Wahhab, a Rehabilitation specialist at the al-Huda School for the Blind, also blind by birth; and Miss Laudie Jurdak, who also hold a degree in Mass Communication from BUC, acted as moderator.

(3) Mental Disabilities

Dr. Mousa Sharafeddine, Director of the Center for the Friends of the Handicap; Mrs. Leila Dirani, education specialist; Mrs. Hana Salem, model mother; and Dr. Waldtraut (Vallie) Merhej, owner of the Diagnostic Center for Special Children, of whom we presented a profile in the previous issue of Al-Raida, acted as moderator.

(4) Deafness

Dr. George Zaytoun, E.N.T. at the American University of Beirut Hospital; Mr. Antoine Romanous, Psychologist and professor at the St. Joseph University; Miss. Mona Shalala, personal experience; Miss Salma Jabr, speech Therapist; and Mrs. Randa Khoury, Instructor of Psychology at BUC and director of preschool at the International College, acted as moderator.

Children's Book Carnival and Play

A Book is a Window into the World!

Choose a book you like and begin to read. The more books you read the more you learn about the world in which you grow and which you will change and improve. It must be a world of friendship and peace, a world of beautiful books and happy children. Choose your books wisely, books you will want to read again. (Wojciech Zukrowski, uncle from Poland who writes books for children, IBBY)

May 11-20, Beirut University College

For ten days the campus of Beirut University College swarmed with little people. Approximately 7,000 children, from 20 local schools, ages 6 to 14, came in their school buses. The event was a selected book Exhibition and a play entitled "The Mountain of Elves".

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, (IWSAW), and the Lebanese chapter of the International Board on Books for Young Children, (LIBBY), organized the Carnival and the play within the context of their annual activities for promoting reading for children. The books were selected according to the standards of The International Board on Books for Young Children, (IBBY)(1), which take into account educational, psychological, moral, ethical, and the entertainment qualities of children's reading material. The Arab Cultural Club supported the activity and donated the stands on which the books were displayed. Ten local publishers(2) exhibited their children's selection and sold the books at a discount of retail prices.



School teachers, members of LIBBY, the staff of IWSAW, and the personnel of the respective publishing houses made sure that the children had enough time, space, guidance and assistance in selecting their books. Books were displayed according to age brackets (3-5, 5-7, 7-9, 9-12, 12-14 years old). It was noted that almost every child left with two new books they added to their library.

Old and new books in the Lebanese market and from overseas were selected and introduced in the Exhibition. For months prior to the Exhibition, members of LIBBY selected the books, by reading them, evaluating them and categorizing them according to ages. LIBBY is also planning to follow up by publishing a

1992 updated list of the selected books. This list may be used by parents, teachers and schools to direct the reading of the children and to have an educated and credible choice of the books in the market.

(1) IBBY, The International Board of Books for Young Children operates under the umbrella of the UNESCO

(2) Book stands included publication of the following Publishing Houses: Levant Distributors, Nawfal Group, Librairie Samir, Librairie Du Liban, Books and Pens, Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, Dar al-Shourouk, Tala, Nadim Tarazi Library, al-Ahlia li-nashr in addition to the publications of The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW).



The play, "The mountain of Elves", complimented what a child would read in a book. It included dance and play. It told the story of a shoemaker's family who was being blackmailed by an evil woman, while the shoemaker himself was away in the service. They were in debt to the evil woman who kept threatening to foreclose the shop. The fairy from the mountain of elves came to the help of the the shoemaker's wife and daughter, so did the people of the village. In the end the shoemaker was reunited with his family, the shop was saved, and an atmosphere of happiness, peace and love prevailed. Hence, the play brought forth ethical and moral concepts such as peace,

helping the to the poor, cooperation and team work among the inhabitants of the village, fairies portrayed as friendly, etc . . .

The children were mesmerized by Crombo and Finella, the friendly fairies on mission to do something good for humans. The play was directed by Dr. Shakib Khoury, a reputed producer and production professor at Beirut University College; and dance and choreography by the famous ballet teacher Mrs. Georgette Gebara.

One is short of words to describe the innocent reaction and behavior of

young children. The innocence and excitement is breathtaking. Their little remarks and fairy observations leave you speechless. In the play they watched, eager and anxious to join the friendly fairies. In The Exhibit they were impatient yet carefully scrutinizing the books on display. A child would hold a book in his hand and run to his class teacher to get advice and approval to purchase the book.

Every year, LIBBY and IWSAW organize a reading activity for children, in continuous emphasis on the importance reading the selection of sound reading material •

R.A.H.

My Window

By Suha Naimy Haddad

-What were you doing?

-I was watching the rain, listening to the music outside and to the music inside.

-What music outside and what music inside?

-The music of the rain. I can hear it playing rhythms on my roof. What music it has! And the music inside, the cozy warm rhythm of my heart and the flow of blood in my veins. The waves inside me are not clashing nor crashing at this minute. I feel tranquility and peace.

I have been watching the rain for the last thirty minutes. Tchaikovsky's concerto number one is on. How serene! I lean my head on the window pane where the rain makes a Picasso painting. Rain is dropping. I am following this drop. It fell on my window. It seems young, sliding down quickly and in full strength. Does it know that it will soon end? Why the hurry, then? It is still sliding until - ouch! It hits the iron frame of my "outlet" to the world. Maybe if it weren't for this barrier, the drop would continue its way to the center of the Earth. Who knows? Maybe it would extinguish a teeny-weeny "drop" of fire as big or as small. Am I a drop of water, of rain, of dew, dropping on a window whose frame I shall collide against?

Here is another drop. This one is slower than the previous one. But it did not collide with the edge of the window; it just melted and lost its shape, but I can still see clashes, its left-overs. This is how I will lose my shape into another thing, but my essence will remain there. I know it will.

I believe that nature is the grand master. It reveals messages to humans about themselves, their existence, their post and pre-existence, but they are - I am - too blind to see. My death is not my end, just like the death of this drop of water on my window. I saw life

ending and beginning on my window tonight.

Once, I wanted to be like the water, lucid and transparent. I worked on it.

I still have a long way to go, but I have achieved one millionth of my dream, that of being like water. I don't mind the incessant arduous trials. I don't mind the long way. What really keeps me going is the shy progress I achieved.

I need ages to accomplish the rest, to obtain clarity. I am not complaining. Some day I will fulfil all my goals..

-You know, (silence) I wanted to be like the sea.

-The sea? How is that?

-I feel that the sea has so much anger, even when it is calm. It expresses so much rebellion and revolution, in silence; and in its anger, there is so much silence and confidence. So, I decided to to be like the sea.

-Did you succeed?

-To some extent. But I was never exactly like it. The more I worked on myself, the more I shrank. My world grew bigger and wider. I never realized that I could have such wide dimensions. I myself was an endless sea. The more I dug, the bigger was the treasure buried in the bottom covered with sand and wreck.

Through my persistence, I was able to blow away some webs, but I was not able to know what was under the thick blanket of sea dust. I tried to link myself, to imagine every cell in me linked to every drop of water in the sea, the universe. I felt strengthened. Again, the more I dug, the more certain I was I could never be like the sea. Echoes of the water around me echoed in the flux within. Suha! Did you hear that? The sound of blood flowing in my veins. . . It was . . . no word to describe it . . . simply beautiful; it was identical to the sound of the sea produced from a shell. I have a sea in ME!

I was getting more and more attached to my world; it was widening gradually; my horizons were elongating and spreading endlessly. This cannot be seen . . . My world was so immense that I realized I really Am a world of my own. How rich I am!

With time I was gradually loosing social contact. I lost friends. I turned down invitations, did not return phone calls, and refused peer groups. I was isolated and to myself. It did not bother me one bit. I was completely satisfied. I felt my silence. YES, I FELT IT. Socially speaking, I was defined as passive and cold, but I was not. I was more alive than any other time. I was melting in the sea, being unified with it. I was silent; silent in my words and silent in my silence. I was losing myself to the bigger realm of myself. My rivers were joining their sea, their center, their self. The millions of Suhas were decreasing in number. I wonder how much time I need to be only one Suha. Definitely ages and timeless moments. I cannot exceed, surpass nor trespass time. I guess the Suhas will keep on struggling inside. Their struggles are less nowadays, but they still exist in me.

One day, I was pinched. A voiceless echo screamed in full-strength through my system. I woke up dizzily. I was drifting away from the outside world. I should not. I should keep a certain distance between my world and the external one. I tried to socialize again. The silence in me was still there but the silent-angry, angry-silent sea was weakening. How much silence do I still preserve? Does it have a value, a meaning? I don't know. I know it is the world to me. So, answering your question if I succeeded in imitating the sea, I would say I partly succeeded and for a short span of time. One day I will completely melt in it •