

## Will to Power

Human identity in the past was mainly dictated by biological needs and man's struggle to satisfy them. Today, the advance of knowledge in developed countries has lessened man's dependence on his environment. He has an unprecedented freedom to choose his work and to indulge in activities that will transcend the bare necessities.

Behaviorists, educational experts and also humanists are increasingly interested in what they call "identity crisis" which seems to occur for lack of, and be cured by finding, the work or cause or purpose that "evokes man's own creativity", or "...work of his own that contributes to the human community and carries forth human society."

The need for self-realization is fundamental in man. Psychologists and philosophers call it "will to power", "self-assertion", "self-actualization" "transcendence of the self". They affirm that it does not imply aggression or competitive striving in the usual sense; it is "the courage to be an individual"; it is a new concept of normality which postulates that man is happy, self-accepting, healthy or without guilt only when he is fulfilling himself and serving his environment.

Few people in the past had the opportunity for self-realization in the sense already described. But the spread of culture and social consciousness is likely to increase the number of those committed to the service of truth, the help of suffering humanity and the liberation of potential talents.

Potential talents may be forfeited everywhere, but more particularly in developing countries where people are restricted to the fulfillment of bare existence needs. The population explosion which threatens the world at present, for example, is mostly due to the state of ignorance and abjection to which the majority of the world's inhabitants are reduced. This condition applies mainly to women and children who are more exposed than men to suffer neglect and to endure injustice.

It was for the purpose of handling this situation that the Woman's International year was held in 1975, and the International year of the Child will be held in 1979.

If the suffering of the world has increased through the complexity of living conditions and the impending scarcity of food production, the activities of those working for general welfare have equally intensified. Severe crises have turned ordinary people into heroes and successful leaders.

## Contents

	Page
<b>RESEARCH</b>	
From "The Feminine Mystique" to "Self-realization" .....	2
"Operation Flood" in India .....	3
<b>PIONEERS</b>	
Mary Ajami (1880-1965) .....	4
Nawal Saadawi .....	5
<b>ARTICLE</b>	
The Law Applied to "Honor Crimes" Is a Disgrace to the Law .....	6
Record of Infanticide .....	6
Mortality in Asia .....	6
<b>POEM</b>	
To Wash Their Shame Away ....	7
<b>FICTION</b>	
Pink Curtains .....	7
<b>STUDIES</b>	
Evaluation of Home-based Employment Programmes for Lebanese Rural Women .....	9
Factors Affecting the Arab Women's Role in Rural Development .....	10
<b>CONFERENCE</b>	
Integration of the Arab Woman in Development Discussed at a U.N. regional Conference ....	11
RECEIVED BY IWSAW .....	11



# From "The Feminine Mystique" to "Self-realization"

Social institutions are subject to a movement of flux and reflux because they are essentially related to human nature which remains enveloped with mystery. While scientists succeed to a large extent in unfolding the secrets of nature and submitting it to the service of man, the components of society, including political, moral and economic life, undergo a continuous change. Every system that is worked out, is readily counter-balanced by an opposite system. Theories which for a long time enjoyed popularity are sooner or later exposed to severe criticism and rejection.

One example illustrating this fluctuation is the feminist movement which flourished in Europe and America in the 19th century. Led by a group of strong-minded women, it produced a good deal of agitation. One of its American leaders, Lucy Stone, organized public meetings in which she condemned all forms of slavery, including that of women. To prepare herself for this activity, she practiced public speaking in the woods because girls were forbidden to speak in public. In the pact which joined her to Henry Blackwell, her husband, she included: "This act on our part implies no sanction of, nor promise of voluntary obedience to such of the present laws of marriage as refuse to recognize the wife as an independent, rational being, while they confer upon the husband an injurious and unnatural superiority".

Those pioneers succeeded in obtaining the following rights for women:

1. The right to education
2. The right to speak in public
3. The right to own property (which Arab women already enjoyed)
4. The right to vote

## The reactionary movement and its factors

Feminism was tolerated before 1920. After that date, the movement started to decline. Romantic philosophy, though it favored the liberation of women, insisted that they should enhance their womanhood as a source of inspiration to men, and find their fulfillment in motherhood instead of trying to share man's struggle to build civilization.

Freud's theories (1856-1939) confirming sexual determinism and considering women inferior "by God-given, irrevocable nature" contributed much to create the anti-feminist movement in Europe and America. Nietzsche (d. 1900) had equally degraded woman in his philosophy which asserted that her only aim in life was to bear a male child in whom she would find a compensation for her deficiency.

In America, the anthropologist Margaret Mead, influenced by Freud's theories, and her studies among the tribes of South Sea Islands, declared that woman's function as child-bearer more than outbalances man's function as

producer. "She joined the other functional social scientist in their emphasis on adjusting to society as we find it, on living our lives within the framework of the conventional cultural definitions of the male and female roles." (1)

Researchers of the period, from Freud to Margaret Mead, neglected cultural relativity and drew their theories from the limited culture which they investigated. Yet their ideas spread like fire in educational centers. Everywhere the call resounded to fight masculinity in women and bring them back home.

Anti-feminism was most active in America in the fifties and sixties, during the McCarthy control of liberties. The campaign tried to make college girls concentrate on home economics courses and repudiate those courses that "do not fit women, like maths and engineering". As a result the number of college women was greatly reduced, the average age of marriage was lowered, and the fertility rate reached a proportion never attained before.

## "The Feminine Mystique"

This is the name given by Betty Friedan to the anti-feminist movement of which she made a major research study, carrying this same title, which was published in 1963.

Among the promoters of the Feminine Mystique were some followers of Freud and Mead, who attributed to women's liberation the failure of American soldiers in the Vietnam War. They said that American women had created in their homes a suffocating atmosphere which forced husbands and children to run away, as shown by some of Tennessee Williams' and other dramatists' plays.

Betty Friedan's study showed, however, that depressed American soldiers were not the children of liberated or highly educated women. Their mothers were neither career women, nor feminists, nor used their education, if they had any; they lived for their children, had no interests beyond home, family or their own beauty.

Chiefly responsible for the Feminine Mystique campaign were the merchants and businessmen who said that "if all women get to be scientists and such, they won't have time to shop. By all means we must try to keep them at home". Since women represented 75 % of the buying power in America, businessmen were ready to spend millions on making housekeeping an attractive occupation and a full-time profession for women. Housewifery was expanded to fill the time available. "Study after study revealed that housewives were spending as many, or even more, hours a day on housekeeping as women thirty years earlier, in spite of the smaller, easy-to-care-for homes." On the other hand, women who worked many hours a week outside the home did the house-keeping on which the full-time housewife still spent sixty hours a week, in half the time."

The most important point presented by Betty Friedan's study was the existence of "a problem that has no name", a sense of dissatisfaction, "a yearning that women suffered in the middle of this century in the United States." Its victims were mainly the very "feminine" women who had devoted their lives to marriage and children and had no material problems of any kind. "I feel as if I don't exist", said one of them. They suffered from an absence of identity and personality. New neuro-

(1) "The Feminine Mystique" by Betty Friedan, 1963, pp.126-149



ses were seen among married women, and a frenzied, desperate search for a man among unmarried ones.

"The problem that had no name" had its roots, as the study showed, in the fact that women were prevented from using their full capacities. For "capacities clamor to be used and cease their clamor only when they are well used. The unused capacity or organ can become a disease center or else atrophy." (2)

### Need of a new life plan

Accordingly it was shown that women need a new life plan by which they pledge, at an early age, life-long commitment to creative work in the form of art, science, politics or profession. The educators who encourage a woman to postpone larger interests until her children are grown make it virtually impossible for her to acquire them.

The new life plan for women implies the idea that self-realization or self-actualization, is equally needed by men and women.

People who achieve self-realization "customarily have some mission in life, some task to fulfill, some problem outside themselves which enlists much of their energies."

They are less self-centered and more concerned about other people. "They work within a framework of values that are broad and not petty, universal and not local, and in terms of a century rather than a moment."

These people are capable of continuous growth, unhampered by age, and of a wide capacity to love others and identify with them without losing their individuality. Love for them is not motivated by need but by a kind of spontaneous, disinterested admiration. Their love is free from jealous, artificial and diffident behaviour. Studies showed that "education and independence increased woman's ability to enjoy a sexual relationship with a man and to affirm more fully her own sexual nature as a woman."

A woman can realize herself by sharing the experience of another and actively contributing to it. One example of this possibility is Mary Haskell who was to Gibran a counselor who inspired him and criticized his work. She was thus able to realize herself by writing her wonderful letters and journal, which are indispensable for those who study Gibran's life and works.

But can a woman truly realize herself through her husband and children or some other person? The answer is 'no', because 'self-realization' or a 'will to power' requires self-reliance and independent achievement.

[2] A.H. Maslow, quoted in "The Feminine Mystique" Op. cit. p. 316

## "OPERATION FLOOD" in India

A successful program which has brought about profound economic and social change.

"Operation Flood is the best nutrition program that has ever been introduced in India," said Dr. Jul, a departmental head with the Ministry of Agriculture of Denmark, who led an evaluation mission that reviewed the full impact of the project. "Its biggest achievement is that it has created the knowledge and awareness in the small and poor farmers that unity and cooperation are strength."

"The backbone of Operation Flood is formed by more than 1.2 million farm families who produce a 'flood' of milk that is marketed primarily in four major cities: Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras." One of the keys to the success of the project has been the contribution through WFP (World Food Programme) of massive supplies of milk powder and butter oil from EEC (European Economic Commission).

Aside from increasing the income of farm families, the O.F. program has brought about profound social change in the country-side, as shown

by the case of the village of Khadgodhara.

This village, located on the far edge of the Kaira district, was deprived of a cooperative society while some 800 village cooperatives were established in Gujarat state through efforts of the Kaira District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union.

Facing the opposition of Dairy Union officers, of well-to-do farmers who saw the cooperative as competition, and of officials of the State government, Mrs. Jashmatiben Mayeta, a diminutive, determined widow, decided to work for the creation of a cooperative in Khadgodhara. In 1967, she succeeded in registering her society and constituting a management committee of which she became the chairperson.

The by-laws of the society stated that no men would be included in the 261 voting members or in the management committee. Why? "Because the milk business is ladies business," says Mrs. Mayeta. "Women

have long had the responsibility of running the dairy economy of rural India. They look after the milch animals, milk them and carry the milk to collection centres. However, they have not been accorded institutional positions commensurate to their manifold possibilities."

The formation of the Society immediately had a significant social side-effect. The cooperative in the neighboring village had always refused to accept milk from untouchables. But Mrs. Mayeta, though a Brahmin and therefore of India's highest caste, decreed that Untouchables would be treated like every one else.

Today all the societies of the district accept Untouchables as members, even though ten years ago (1967) the caste system was still strong.

(Condensed from an article on "Operation Flood" by George Dorsey, World Food Programme News, April-June 1978)



# MARY AJAMI

## [1880-1965]



The 19th Century in the Arab World saw the rise of pioneering figures who strove to revive Classical Arabic literature. They produced important linguistic works which prepared the way for further achievements. They were succeeded, in the late 19th and in the early twentieth century, by a group of committed authors who laid the foundation of modern journalism, essay-writing, drama, fiction and modern poetry. They produced a neo-classical literature and, in spite of variety in the topics they treated, their works were characterized by deep interest in social reform.

The revival included the Arab Countries which had come in contact with the west: Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria. It spread into the lands of emigration in the Americas where a group of talented Syro-Lebanese authors upheld the message of renovation and modernism which greatly influenced the Arab World.

Women as well as men participated in the movement. A number of women writers appeared, who not only claimed emancipation for women but joined in the general claim for national independence, social justice and educational reform. Their claims, set forth in papers and magazines, were supported by reformers like Qassem Ameen of Egypt, and by poets and writers who, influenced by the Western Romantic School, devoted a sizable part of their works to the rehabilitation and glorification of womanhood.

Mary Ajami was born in Damascus. She grew up in an atmosphere of burning national zeal, nourished by the prospects of an Arab revolt against Turkish domination and an Arab empire to be founded by King Hussain and his sons. She received her education in a Russian school, then in an Irish school and was able to master English and possibly to learn some French, while she achieved a solid knowledge of Arabic. Her interest in journalism was early awakened when she started publishing in papers and magazines articles dealing with social reform and poems with a romantic flavor.

In the meantime, she practiced teaching and was led to accept an administrative position at the Coptic Schools in Alexandria, Egypt. But her journalistic bent proved to be the stronger and, in 1910, she decided to start a women's magazine: "Al-Arouss" (The Bride), at Alexandria, Egypt, where she presented it to the readers as "a bride dedicated to the service of society which plays for her the role of Bridegroom". The magazine contained three sections: one for literature and history, another for domestic

science, health and child care, a third for fiction, discussions, anecdotes and recreation. The editor stated that she had contacted western women colleagues who published leading women's magazines, and obtained their promise to contribute to her magazine. "This", she said, "should encourage our women contributors to offer the best they can".

After moving her magazine from Alexandria to Beirut then to Damascus, and incurring a temporary suspension during World War I, she finally had to stop it in 1925. In recognition of her contribution to feminine journalism, a reception was held in her honor in Beirut by a group of feminists and leading literary figures in the Arab world.

Her name is mentioned in connection with the nationalists who struggled against Turkish domination and paid for it with their lives in 1916. Her keen interest in political questions led her to support the nationalist movement with her pen and her speeches. She had the courage to visit its leaders in their prison, carrying to them food and encouraging words. She even tried to intercede in their favor before the Turkish ruler but without success. During the French mandatory period, she continued her struggle for national independence and social reform, using for this purpose her prose writings, her poems and the speeches she occasionally delivered at public gatherings.

Mary's poetry shows the influence of Western romantic poets. To them she owes her affinity with nature, her ability to use it as a source of inspiration, her handling of new themes like those of childhood, country-life, orphans and laboring classes.

Her interest in innovation is also shown in her attempt to write prose poems in the Gibranian style which was then in vogue. In this genre she achieved some success but in her regular poems she was more successful.

Her biographers mention, among her many talents, her conversational ability and the ease with which she directed the regular literary meetings that she held every week in her house and which attracted a large number of journalists and men of letters.

It was probably her versatile character which made Fares-el-Khoury, a distinguished politician and literary man, compare her to her famous contemporary, May Ziadeh, when he said in verse form:

My friends, take it from me,  
I say that Mary Ajami  
can match with May Ziadeh  
For skill and ingenuity.



# NAWAL SAADAWI

A physician and fiction writer who has dedicated herself to the task of struggling against harmful stereotypes concerning women in the Arab world.

Nawal Saadawi is an Egyptian physician who expresses through her activities and her writings certain ideas which are generally approved by the enlightened class of women in the Arab world but which remain latent in their subconscious because of fear, inadequate experience, or lack of competence for writing.

In her works she not only speaks to the cultured elite but she also addresses ordinary men and women. For this reason she sometimes resorts to novels which arouse their interest and make her ideas more accessible to them. Out of nine books that she has published four are novels, while the rest contain historical biological and psychological studies of woman's past and present, her problems and her needs. A large part of her research is drawn from her clinic where she comes in contact with thousands of women who come to her for treatment.

The main topic she treats is women's emancipation. Though the subject is the same all through her books, the reader can find in each of them some new ideas inspired by her new experiences and extensive readings.

"Woman and Sex" is the title of one of her books which has been published three times since 1971. It contains frank and honest information about the nature and characteristics of sex in women, indicates the false concepts which have been circulated regarding this topic, and discusses the commercial aspect under which it appears in marriage contracts and in family laws which assert man's control and subjugation of woman and of the family.

The adversaries of woman's liberation exaggerate the difference between male and female in sexual structure and emotions. In fact, the differences between them are very small though they may not appear to be so. In each sex the hormones of both male and female exist but in different proportions. No man is 100% male and no woman is 100% female.

Various myths have been woven about sexuality. One of them is Freud's theory about the "penis envy" in which he attributes a girl's bitter attitude toward the other sex to the fact that she envies the boy's possession of an organ which she does not have. Early in life a girl is told that her virginity, as symbolized by the hymen, is "her most precious possession". Dr. Saadawi informs us that due to the existence of various types of hymen, one of them being elastic and uninjured by defloration, makes this membrane an unreliable evidence of chastity. She condemns the stereotyped admonitions imposed on a young girl, creating in her a state of morbid anxiety regarding sex and chastity, making her the guardian of the "family honor", while a male member of the family may be a thief, a killer or an adulterer without thereby damaging his "family honor". A girl who has been so repressed and frightened on account of her sex develops certain complexes which hamper her normal growth and make her a prey to romantic fantasies or to abnormal sexual behaviour.

Another myth related to women's biology, says Dr.

Saadawi, is the theory which says that a woman is less intelligent than a man because her brain weighs less than his. This theory has been refuted by the fact that the weight of a woman's brain in proportion to her body weight is more than that of a man's brain in proportion to his body weight.

After expounding the historical factors which led to the inferior position of woman, the author emphasizes the economic ones and concludes that a change in the politico — economic system is necessary for the promotion of woman, provided that laws and regulations be put into practice.

Saadawi notes that people's attitudes toward sexual taboos are not uniform. Some of them tend to be lenient and to forbid violence while others are exceedingly severe and savage. In primitive tribes of Africa and Arabia the circumcision of young girls is still practiced as a means of ensuring their virginity and inhibiting their sexual impulses. Marriage is generally based on materialistic interests; it is a kind of transaction or legalized prostitution. Family laws give the husband complete ownership of the wife and unrestricted power to divorce. Illegitimate children are considered as social outcasts, enjoying none of the rights of legitimate children.

Another myth that needs elimination is the traditional idea which considers love as a relation between master and slave. True love implies no ownership and no selfish interest. It is not a purely physical relation, it is not this morbid condition described by our inflamed songs, full of longing and lamentation. It is not madness, nor excessive sentimentalism, nor self-sacrifice and immolation as the romantics pretend. True love consists of mutual understanding, respect and recognition of the other person's equality, freedom and independence. "It is the highest process by which a person's physical, moral and intellectual powers are induced to perform their highest function."

Nawal Saadawi's books, as we have tried to show, derive their value not only from her daring to say what others refrain from saying but also from their reliance on both personal experience and documentation.

Her readings induce her at times to commit mistakes which other researchers have committed when they thought that a change in the political system is necessary for woman's liberation. Political regimes, whether socialist or capitalistic, have been created by men leaders and are subject to manipulation and change which upholds their own interests. In an article written by Simone de Beauvoir and quoted by WIN vol. 4, no. 2, Spring 1978, p. 82, the famous author states that socialism has not succeeded in ensuring woman's freedom. Women's condition in socialist countries is no better than in other countries. Saadawi's attitude towards sex adopts that of some Western researchers who overemphasize in it the pleasure element and claim for women an equal sharing in this pleasure. She equally gives a poetic or idealistic description of love which is a subject of controversy. It is true that real love should be free from coercion, exploitation, enslavement, affected sentimentality and other traits that destroy a person's liberty. But the feelings of longing and frustration expressed by most love poems and stories seem to show that ideal love is very rare, often of short duration, bound to vanish or to be replaced by friendship. Love, when sincere and mutual, may be a help to self-realization but it is never a substitute for it.



# The law applied to "honor crimes" is a disgrace to the Law

by Nabeela Saab Barakat (1)



If the right to divorce is unilateral, i.e. restricted to the husband unless the marriage contract states otherwise, the law of the personal status in Mohammedan communities compensates the wife by imposing on the husband certain duties which he must fulfill if he decides to divorce his wife: first he has to pay her the "mahr" or dowry required in the marriage contract; second, in case he has children from the divorcée, he has to provide her with the regular allowance necessary for their support.

In some cases, however, the husband may resort to dishonest means to get rid of his wife without incurring any loss, by bringing to the court witnesses who would falsely assert that the wife is an adulteress. In this case, she would have no right to the "mahr". The husband might even consider himself justified if he kills an unfaithful wife, since the so-called "honor crimes", i.e. crimes committed to save the honor of the family, are considered by law as minor infractions whose penalty does not exceed a few months, imprisonment.

Tradition and public opinion generally support this harsh attitude toward woman's adultery. Why? Because the patriarchal system which makes the husband the head and supporter of the family imposes on his wife complete chastity by which he can be assured that the children he supports are his and not another man's.

On the other hand, the husband's adultery has little importance from the legal point of view, though from the social point of view, it may have serious results. A man who keeps an affair with another man's wife may ruin the reputation of that woman and cause the disruption of her family. By betraying his own wife, he is apt to create trouble in his own family and start an antagonism which may lead to separation or divorce.

It is worthwhile to point out in this respect that the woman's position now-a-days should be viewed from a different angle. In many cases she shares the household

expenses and the husband is no more the sole provider of the family. Even if he were, the wife's contribution as housekeeper more than counterbalances his contribution. If in the past her economic rights were neglected, if she accepted to perform all the housework duties in return for mere maintenance, it is now high time for her to protest against injustice and claim complete equality with man before the law, as well as equal rights in personal status and family laws.

The penal law in Lebanon, Egypt & other Arab countries states that a husband who surprises his wife in the flagrant act of adultery and kills her under the influence of anger, has the right to benefit from alleviating circumstances and receive a light penalty. The wife, in contrast, has no right to benefit from alleviating circumstances if she surprises her husband in the same act.

Needless to say that this unequal treatment of husband and wife is by no means justified since they both suffer the same kind of injury and are both equally provoked. Besides this flagrant injustice, art. 562 which deals with "honor crimes", may give rise to another form of injustice due to the difficulty of distinguishing between premeditated and unpremeditated crime. The killer may affirm that his crime was committed offhand while it was not. He may also produce false witnesses to support his claim. The judge, on the other hand, often yields to the influence of public opinion which incriminates the wife and acquits the husband.

For all the above reasons, the abolition of the said article becomes imperative and it is only fair to respond to the claim of the "Women's Rights Committee" and all other feminist groups demanding its abolition. In consequence, the word "honor" should be wiped out as a term which unjustly serves to justify atrocious crimes committed by wicked individuals who seek thereby to cover their own shame by simulating a dignity which they lack.

(1) A Lebanese lawyer. The article is translated from Arabic.

## Record of Infantile Mortality in Asia

A study published in New Delhi on Oct. 4, 1978, by the Indian Council for scientific social research, reveals that India and Iran have the highest rate of infant mortality among Asiatic countries.

According to this study, the rate of infant mortality in these two countries reaches 13.9% while the average in all Asia is 10.2%.

The study mentions also the rate of infant mortality in the following

countries: Iraq, 9.9%; Thailand, 6.5%; Sri Lanka, 4.5%.

One of the main causes for high infant mortality rates, says the study, is the neglectful treatment which baby girls receive from their parents, who are still enslaved to the tradition which says that a girl is a burden on her family.

(from L'Orient-Le Jour, Beirut, Oct. 8, 1978)



# To Wash Their Shame Away



A poem by Nazik al-Malaika, written in 1949.  
Free translation by Rose Ghurayyib

"Ahl Mamma! " the fateful cry pierced the air,  
A pool of blood submerged the head, the ebony hair,  
A final shiver from the corpse, lying inert,  
"Ahl Mamma! " Only the executioner heard.

Tomorrow dawn will peep and roses will awake,  
A call to youth, to dreams will be heard at daybreak  
But the green fields will answer,  
the red poppies will say:  
Yea! She is gone! to wash their shame away!

The executioner and his friends will meet again.  
He'll say, wiping his knife:  
"We've done away with shame!  
We're again free and honest, our honor is restored!  
Bring the cup, barman, fill it and take my gold!  
Call the perfumed, the languid,  
the sweet cabaret girl,  
Her eyes are more precious to me  
than gold or pearl! "

Fill the cup, O assassin,  
Be merry and be gay!  
Thy victim's blood will surely wash  
Thy shame away!

O women of our quarter! O maidens far or near,  
Tell your lords, tell your men to  
be of good cheer  
With the tears of our eyes we'll  
knead the bread we eat,  
We shall cut off our locks and skin  
our hands and feet,  
So their clothes may remain pure,  
shining and white.  
No smile, no laugh, no sign, no look  
to left or right,

And tomorrow who knows? How can we ever guess  
How many of us will be thrown in some wilderness,  
To wash their shame away!

# PINK CURTAINS

Sameera Azzam, a Palestinian short story writer who died in 1967, published several collections of short stories which show her ability to describe details and bring out local color. Many of her stories give a living picture of the life of unprivileged classes and common people.

Abou-Khalil, the merchant whose shop in the street corner exhaled perfumes of cinnamon, pepper, cloves, nutmeg, henna, caraway and other spices, was evidently a skirt lover but, as he proudly declared, only within God's law. He swore that he never had more than two or, very rarely, three wives at a time while his religion allowed him four. The number of women who had the chance to belong to his harem exceeds ten. All were repudiated, one after another, except his second wife, Umm-Mahmoud, whom he kept because of her even temper and because she gave him Mahmoud, his favorite son. The time came when Abou-Khalil had only Umm-Mahmoud in his household. So we concluded that the man had decided to give up his favorite hobby and to grow old peacefully, free from the quarrels and intrigues of co-wives. But my mother refused to admit the idea, affirming that whenever a woman crossed the street, Abou-Khalil hurried to stick out his tarbooshed head, and started examining her from head to toe until she was out of sight, then he would withdraw while his bony fingers caressed his short beard dyed with henna.

Abou-Khalil's shop stood at a short distance from our house. In the same location he owned an old house which we overlooked from the small window of our kitchen. In that lodging, he once kept one of his wives, a frivolous young woman who, whenever Abou-Khalil was her night guest, showed her mirth by pinning a large rose on the edge of her gay-colored scarf, made up her face with thick coats of powder and rouge, and started playing the tambourine for a dancing performance. When Umm-Mahmoud heard about her co-wife's merriment, she only laughed and said: "Only God is everlasting. To-morrow he will repudiate her! "

"Tomorrow" might mean a month, several months, but never more than a year. The small lodging kept filling and emptying until one day the rumour spread that Abou-Khalil had decided to bequeath his property to Umm-Mahmoud, her six children and two other children from his repudiated wives. My mother shook her head saying: "This does not mean that he has given up remarrying. Otherwise he would have given the rooms for rent. Why should he keep them empty? "



My mother's argument was right. One morning, we saw the window of the room facing our kitchen open wide. A woman was there, wiping the dust off the worn-out shutters. "Didn't I tell you?" Said my mother, poking the neighbor who had come for a morning visit, "Abou-Khalil has a new wife!"

The woman who stood at the window seemed to be over sixty. She had an old white veil on her head. She could not be the new wife, we thought, for Abou-Khalil's ideal woman should be one with bulky hips, painted eyes, heavy breasts and hands painted with henna from his shop.

The news spread all over the place. From every window in the neighborhood, a woman stuck out her head, winking to her neighbor. Eyes were fixed on Abou-Khalil's house until he was seen coming in the evening, leaning on a cane, wearing the "bridal suit" as the neighbors called it, which consisted of a pair of shining trousers, a long jacket from which dangled a golden watch. His beard was dyed with henna and he smelled rose-water. Then every one was convinced of the "happy event" and more than one company gathered in the evening to discuss Abou-Khalil's matrimonial activities.

They impatiently waited for the morning to bring further news. Morning came and the worn out curtains moved, showing a white, pinkish face with a pair of large painted eyes. The woman was young, not yet twenty. Seeing that so many eyes were fixed on her from the neighboring windows, she grinned in a somewhat stupid manner and while she glibly chewed the chiclet which filled her mouth, she hurried away and was no more seen except three days later when Abou-Khalil went back to his shop, slowly pacing with his short legs and protruding stomach.

As soon as the new bride was alone, the women of the neighborhood flocked to her house for news. They came back with the conclusion that she came from a very humble and destitute home, otherwise she would not have accepted to marry an old man who kept her in a poorly furnished room, with only an old bedstead, a squeaking closet and a few shaky chairs. The fact that her mother stayed with her confirmed the conclusion. Her mother, inserted one of the neighbors, must be a wily old woman who gave her daughter to this old man with the hope that he would soon die and leave her a fortune.

— The girl seems to care for nothing except her stomach, said another neighbor; whenever she looks out the window, she is up to chewing something that fills her mouth.

— A fat and gluttonous young woman, said a third neighbor, will surely bring about the old man's end.

Only three months later, we heard a repeated knock at our gate and in came Umm Faheema the bride's mother, inquiring about the nearest doctor in the quarter. Abou-Khalil was suffering from a severe pain in the chest due to high blood pressure. My mother indicated to her the nearest doctor's clinic and she hurried to call him. Since that time, Umm Faheema started visiting us from time to time. She sat like a heap on the floor near the door, took from inside her skirt a small tin box filled with fine tobacco, rolled between her fingers a half-filled cigarette and started smoking contentedly.

When asked why she did not bring her daughter with

her she answered that the man was jealous. When he was at home, she had to stay with him. When he was away, he often sent a boy to inspect and make sure that she was at home, because he thought that the neighbors' company might corrupt her.

During one of those visits, my mother took the liberty of asking her why she gave her young daughter to that polygamous old man. She said that her daughter needed someone to provide for her. The man seemed to be well-to-do. He bought her a pair of bracelets, ear-rings, three dresses and a dozen of perfumed soap cakes. He would take care of her as long as he lived. If he died, she would marry another. "Wasn't he better than a young man who would beat her every night, as did her father to me?" she concluded.

My mother's curiosity, or interest in the woman's condition, led her to further question her: Does your daughter expect any inheritance? The old woman's face darkened when she said: "Believe me, dear neighbor, my daughter is stupid. She has been unable to obtain any promise from him. Should he die, Umm Mahmoud would not allow her any share in his wealth. Worse than that, she has not born him a child, though we have tried on her all sorts of treatment. She is unlucky, like me."

When the man fell sick, Umm Mahmoud sent one of her sons every half hour to inquire about him. Umm Faheema hurried to us every half hour to smoke a cigarette and complain:

— We failed to think of blood pressure. Should the man die, Umm Mahmoud would not allow us to spend one night more in the rooms. I hear that he has bequeathed the place to her. We have been stupid because we did not claim even some decent pieces of furniture.

I wonder if my mother was serious or kidding when she advised the woman to let her daughter ask Abou-Khalil, at the proper time, to make a sacred vow that, if God cured him, he would fill the room with new furniture.

The old woman was hilarious at the idea. Two days later, she came back running to announce that the man promised her two new bedsteads and a new closet if he recovered from sickness. He even asserted that he would buy her a sheep to be slain at his door on the Feast of Sacrifices.

Abou-Khalil recovered. Was it by the doctor's treatment, the intercession of saints or Umm Faheema's vows? We don't know. He went back to his shop. Umm Faheema passed by our house carrying a sum of money with which to buy new curtains. Shortly after that, the old, worn out curtains disappeared, new pink curtains ornamented the window. New pieces of furniture brightened the bedroom. Faheema kept looking out of the window every morning, eternally chewing her chiclet and smiling her empty smile.

But one day, she failed to appear. Instead of her, we saw her mother hurrying to fetch the doctor for Abou-Khalil who had another attack in the chest.

"This time," remarked a witty neighbor, "if Abou-Khalil should die, nobody would feel sorry. With pink curtains and brand new furniture, Faheema would not have to wait more than three days to find a new husband!"



# Evaluation of home-based employment programmes for Lebanese rural women

This study which was prepared by the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) & published 25 Aug. 1978, is a follow-up to an earlier study entitled "Institutions and Organizations concerned with the participation of Lebanese rural women in development," published by ECWA, 23 Oct. 1974.

It attempts to "assess the actual impact which the home-based self-employment programmes have on their rural women recipients and to determine measures for making these programmes more effective."

## Population of the study:

It covers the beneficiaries of 14 Lebanese organizations, 12 non-governmental, covering all rural areas of Lebanon.

## Total number of respondents:

124 women, nearly one half under 20 yrs of age and 86 % below 30.

## Level of education:

More than 50 % had elementary education  
14 % illiterate or semi-illiterate  
30 % intermediate education

## Programme characteristics:

Developmental rather than service

Types of programme:	Number	Per cent
1. Carpet-making	18	15
2. Dress-making	23	18
3. Embroidery	23	18
4. Combination of crafts: dress-making & embroidery, Knitting, crocheting sewing	28	23
5. Multipurpose program: a combination of handicrafts, home economics and other educational components	25	20
6. Academic — technical programme involving a normal academic progr. & rural crafts	7	6

## Place of work

A majority of 71 % worked at home

One fifth worked in the centres of their respective organizations.

## Attitudes of parents and husbands

A certain resistance (25 %) toward their women's work outside the home. Preference for home — based employment.

## Motives behind participation

One third said that they sought financial benefit.

The rest considered this work as a way of escape from a socially strict rural milieu.

## Income

32 % got over LL 150 monthly  
35 % got over LL 50 or less monthly  
Average income for all centered around LL 100

## Recommendations.

1. Enlargement of the programmes to include additional crafts and to accommodate more girls.
2. Inclusion of basic principles of home-economics and first-aid under the general programmes.
3. Carpet-making and dress-making, because they have the greatest impact on income-generation, must be further promoted.
4. Other handicrafts to promote: basket-making, pickling, fruit-drying, making of children's clothes & toys.
5. Offering women who work in the fields some technical training related to various agricultural methods.
6. Providing more workshops run by the organizations as a means of helping to solve the marketing problem.
7. A marketing co-operative could be very effective as a means of selling products and expanding workshop activities.
8. Additional financial resources are needed to improve human and physical resources.



# “Factors Affecting the Arab Woman’s Role in Rural Development”

This is the title of a study made by the “Third Technical Periodic Conference of the Arab Rural Engineers Union”, held in Baghdad, 14-20 March, 1977, and published by the “General Union of Iraqi Women”, Secretariat of Studies & Research.

The introduction points out the important role that the Arab woman could play in rural development. Though her participation is relatively low in general economic activity, exception should be made of the rural sector where her participation in 1971 reached a proportion of 40.6%. Yet the rural woman suffers from various forms of injustice. Besides illiteracy, which according to 1970 statistics reached 85.7 % among women against 60 % among men, the rural women workers are deprived of regular salaries except those who perform seasonal work during a part of the year and whose proportion does not exceed 2.5 % of the whole.

## Educational & Social Status

If the percentage of illiteracy among Arab women was 85.7 % in 1970, it would be safe to conclude that this percentage is higher among rural women, i.e. at least 95%

Social upbringing tends to create in the rural woman an inferiority complex, preventing her from the opportunity to grow or to take personal decisions. Restrictive stereotypes impose a distribution of roles and responsibilities on the basis of sexual discrimination or class distinction without regard to preparation and personal ability.

## Health Conditions

The backward health conditions are shown by the high rate of infant mortality as compared with that recorded in more developed countries. It is clear that the fragility of the child results from conditions of malnutrition and inadequate health services offered to the mother during pregnancy, nursing and other stages of child care.

## Recommendations

The study suggests:

### First:

The creation of an Arab central statistical organization, connected with the Arab League, (or as a part of the Arab Organization for Rural Development), whose function would be the unification of rural statistical systems in the Arab World, and the collection of reports & studies

concerning the Arab countries and contributing to their general welfare. This central organization could also serve as a link between these countries and the international organizations interested in collecting statistics about them.

This statistical framework would also have among its functions:

- 1) Studying the human element in agriculture, its size, its level of training and achievement.
- 2) Working out a technical definition of rural areas including the districts whose economy rests primarily on agriculture.
- 3) Evaluating woman’s participation in rural production and the loss she incurs from being deprived of wages.

**Second:** Improvement of the administrative system. The rural sector is greatly handicapped by various deficiencies existing in the producing rural frameworks and the central administrative bodies.

One major deficiency comes from inadequate training and experience among the experts and technicians of the sector, leading them to adopt educational programs borrowed from western countries whose status and problems are different from ours.

This fact necessitates frequent meetings and conferences for a revision or change of the unsuitable programs.

The “Union of Arab Rural Engineers” should play a major role in this respect.

**Third:** The Rural Woman’s role. Professional organizations, social groups, and administrative bodies are invited to prepare studies concerning the rural woman and emphasizing the role she should play in the developmental process.

Rural administrators and other responsible officers should cooperate for the promotion of the rural woman and the furthering of her interests. As an example, we may mention the application of her right to join the municipal councils.

General campaigns could be organized by state officers and social leaders for the purpose of eliminating illiteracy and fulfilling the U.N. plan which fixed the year 1985 as a deadline for the complete eradication of female illiteracy in the world. This plan naturally implies the Arab countries’ adherence to it and their obligation to carry it out.

Professional organizations, social groups and particularly women’s unions and rural organizations should endeavor to insure the adequate representation of women in their legislative bodies, at all stages of leadership.



# Integration of the Arab Woman in Development

## Discussed at a U.N. regional conference

The Regional Conference for the integration of women in West Asian development was held in Amman, Jordan, 29 May-4 June, 1978. It was convened by the U.N. Center of Social Development and Humanitarian affairs, in cooperation with the Economic Commission for West Asia (ECWA). Ten Arab countries were represented by their ECWA members. The Arab League Secretariat and seven U.N. organizations were represented by observers.

At the inaugural session His Royal Highness Emir Hassan, spoke of the importance of developing human resources in West Asia and emphasized the role that women should play in Jordan's economy and public life, now that they have been admitted to the Council of National Guidance and given the opportunity to share in planning and executive action.

The U.N. assistant secretary for the center of Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs reported about the progress achieved on the international level by the integration of women in development, following the application of work programs and the preparation of regional work plans which took into consideration the specific problems of the various regions. She also indicated the positive results obtained from the establishment of the Voluntary Fund for Women's Employment and the availability of resources needed to finance the programs.

The executive secretary for the West Asian Economic Commission, Dr. M. Said al-Attar said that the regional plan of action in the West Asian countries received its inspiration and impetus from the political leaderships of those countries. He added that the general plan of action was based on the fundamental characteristics of the West Asian countries which though they represent a wide variety in the level of social and economic evolution, are

yet bound together by a common cultural heritage. Women, he said, should be given in the work programmes, every opportunity to serve in the various geographic, economic and social sections, so that they may fulfill their role as wives, mothers, home-makers and participants in economic development.

The work plans for the integration of women in West Asian development were reviewed and discussed by the participants. The delegate of the Voluntary Fund for Women's Employment indicated the importance attached by the U.N. to the national structures which should be capable of hastening the realization of equal opportunities for women in the developmental process. She mentioned, as a proof, two documents adopted by the general assembly in 1975 and 1976: "The World Plan of action" and The Programme of Woman's Employment for Equality, Development and Peace. "Some of the projects financed by the Voluntary Fund were mentioned by the Delegate, namely: the project of improved technology for extracting salt, based on the utilization of woman power; the project of regional workshops for the development of planning methods; that of creating mobile units for the training of rural workers, etc.

The Delegate explained that non-governmental organizations could request their government support of some of the projects submitted to the Center of Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs for the obtainment of financial help. Both men and women members of the same family could benefit from the Fund by commonly sharing in development. Projects supporting rural and bedouin women's participation fall within the criteria adopted by the Fund. The same is true of projects which aim at helping needy women.

### RECEIVED BY IWSAW

#### SEXUALITY AND BIRTH CONTROL DECISION

#### AMONG LEBANESE COUPLES.

by Mary Chamy

A study in 20 pages (Eng.), including tables and figures, analyzing sexual behaviour and factors related to birth control decisions among 530 women who used the facilities of the University Hospital Family Planning Program of the American University of Beirut in Lebanon.

The study was published in Signs vol. 3, no. 1 Autumn 1977.

#### "NEW WOMAN, NEW FAMILY, NEW GOD" (ENG.)

Report of a Consultation on the Impact of World Religions on Women and Development, Dec. 1976, Washington D.C. Center of Concern

A 24 pp. brochure, containing a report of the consultation, recommendations for future action, the list of 26 participants and the 5 Staff members of the Center of Concern.

#### WOMEN IN THE MUSLIM WORLD (ENG.)

Edited by Lois Beck & Nikki Keddie  
Harvard University Press  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
& London, England 1978  
698 pp.

"This book removes the veils of mystery and myth behind which Muslim women have long remained concealed from Western Eyes. Collected here are 33 original essays



written by experts who have lived and studied in the many countries discussed."

AL-YANBOOH  
(THE SOURCE)

PUBLISHER:  
NAUFAL PUBLISHING HOUSE  
BEIRUT

A collection of short stories by the Lebanese novelist Emily Nasrallah dealing, as in her former works, with certain aspects of village life in Lebanon, depicting some of the problems which the modern young woman has to face in this country or else where. Some of the stories carry the mark of the Lebanese war; they uphold the virtues of faith, vision, courage and sacrifice. Other stories take the form of tales inspired by villagers' legends. The style is rhythmic and imaginative, suggesting the atmosphere of dreamland and the reminiscences of frustrated love and lost opportunities. The setting reproduces the Lebanese landscapes and their colorful scenery.

## Announcement

The first six numbers of *Al-Raida* which, as a result of the painful circumstances in Lebanon, were issued irregularly, between 1976 and 1978, may be considered as vol. I.

Beginning 1979, we start vol. II and hope to have a regular quarterly publication. Missing numbers may be obtained from the Institute.

# The legal Status of Women in the Family a Source of Serious Social Problems

The Cairo Family Planning Association, in a seminar held on Feb. 14-16, 1978, published the following recommendations, condensed from WIN vol. 4, no. 3, Summer 1978:

"Studies and research indicate that the status of women in family law, currently carried out in Egypt, does not offer women a proper position in the family, a fact which leads to insecurity not only to woman but also to her family. To be constantly threatened by unrestricted divorce and polygamy causes women to lose psychological, social and economic security and exposes them to an uncertain future which they dread. As a result of which they resort to more child-bearing in the hope of attaining this security of which they are deprived. The increase in child-bearing results in the increase of population growth which is the main problem facing Egypt to-day.

Recommendations of the Seminar:

1 — To draft a comprehensive family code similar to the civil and penal codes etc. The drafting of such legislation enables every person male or female to take cognizance of their rights and obligations and of their specific legal status in advance, according to explicit and well-defined texts, instead of leaving these matters to the subjective interpretation and possible controversial views of jurists.

2 — To raise the minimum marriage age to the age of legal capacity for civil transactions for both sexes.

3 — Since work is a fundamental right for women according to the Public law, it is not permissible to restrict it because of marriage.

4 — Polygamy: it is not allowed for a man to marry another wife

unless he is permitted by the judge; this permission to be granted on the basis of justifiable reasons and the financial ability to maintain both wives; on condition that he advises both wives of his marriages. If the wife finds her husband's second marriage objectionable to her, she can sue for a court divorce and ask for indemnity.

5 — Divorce: Divorce should not take effect except on the pronouncement of a divorce sentence by the judge at the request of either party, after all attempts at reconciliation, by means of arbitration between the parties concerned, have failed. The judge should specify in his sentence if any abuse on the part of either husband or wife has occurred, in order to require an indemnity. If divorce takes place outside the court it is considered abusive and subsequently entails an indemnity for the injured party. Furthermore the man who divorces his wife outside of the court has to present a requisition for the registration of that divorce before the proper authority during a period of time to be legally determined. Otherwise he will receive the appropriate penalty set by the law.

6 — Custody: The girl should be in the mother's custody till her marriage. The boy should remain in her custody till the age of 14, the age at which his opinion should be taken regarding which parent he chooses to stay with. In all cases, consideration should be given to the conditions which qualify a mother to be the custodian of her children and, in all cases, the interest of the children should be paramount.

## INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES IN THE ARAB WORLD

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