

Women, Information and Social Structure

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Information has become like daily bread, for it is closely intertwined with world events. Access to the immediate time and place has become easy, while the mass media is within everyday's reach, under all eyes, and available for consideration and analysis. We Arabs today face constantly increasing challenges as a result of the revolution and rapid development of telecommunications.

The game of big nations is first embodied in the information war, based on economic power. They make the information material, and direct it for certain purpose. Then they measure the feedback, and start the provocation game of aggressive wiles that may sometimes become destructive.

The anti- Arab information proceeds from two objectives, seeking two purposes:

a) To defame the Arabs and Muslims in particular, through transmitting and magnifying false images, and reporting abnormal events and individuals, who live beyond any logic, secluded within narrow and stern convictions, hostile to anything new or uncommon. Some of them just reject the other, no matter who this other may be! The anti-Arab media then disseminate such a negative image on the largest possible geo-political scale, in order to attract grudge and anger, and to justifying aggressive and terrorist practices against the Arab nation, its targeted rights, lands and security. This is the role of deceptive "information", which

falsifies facts, and aims at the destruction and extermination of the other after luring the sentiments of the world.

b) The hostile information clothes itself with the guise of innocence, meekness and democracy as the victim of injustice whose rights are crushed, and whose security is threatened, just because it fosters democratic thought and hopes for a secure life, as it claims!!

This hostile information has adopted a practical technique and methodology of study, searches and security, defining targets and inventing devices to attain them.

Where dose this malicious information move?
Who dose it target? Why, and how? It has mastered the knowledge of other, the thinking, languages, style, aspirations and needs of other; and it has thus chosen the successful device to attain this double objective of introducing itself in the guise of an angel, and introducing the other as other as the devil!!

At the same time, the Arab information, with its numerous and channels, remained static, with no clear identity, unable to deliver its mission, unsuccessful in reaching its target. It remained reactive, rather than active, passive under the influence of others, rather than positively influencing others. It addressed itself rather than other, crying in a well, only to hear the echo of its own voice. It sang the previous glories of an ancient civilization, but remained unable to maintain it, to express it, or to convince the other of it in a practical way. The Arab information is still mostly demagogic in dealing with itself and with the world.

Do We Need a New Information Missions?

This missions is not only a basic necessity, but also a life and cultural requirement. This missions should define its target and express the identity and essence of our nation, the nation of the rich past, the scientific knowledge it offered to the world and saved mankind. Our nation gave the world great inventions, enlightened reformers, creative and productive culture. Our nation aspires for peace, with a keen desire for co-operation. Its ethics stem from high humanitarian and cultural concepts carried by divine religious and idea; of brotherhood among human beings. What must we do to deliver these qualities and values to the others? How can the Arab mass media express these values? It is useless to be satisfied with honeyed words. There must be implicit and explicit practice in real life, culminated by these values. We must all work with the spirit of trust, Love, respect, protection of the nation's resources, just distribution thereof, solidarity and guaranteeing the right and freedom of the other with the same force we use to demand our own rights and freedom. All these values are the essence of faith in the heart of the Arab nation. Can we transfer this faith to the mind, and thence to action, to future?

So, we need a new kind of information, with a clear aim and mission, realistically dealt with and compatible with the Arab identity, mission and essence in the past, present and future. No nation can become respectable as long as sons or regimes adopt the identity and mission of the other in a dumb way.

*** Information and Socio-Educational Challenge:**

The spread of space TV channels, the development of individual and mass consciousness, and prevailing of democracy in education have led to the decline of the role of family in the

formation of the personality. It is useful to discuss the influence of information on education, starting from the rational choice of marriage partners, with equal knowledge, economic integration, being of approximate age. Relations between parents and children should be based on education through candid dialogue including acquaintance with the physiological structure and tasks of the male and bodies. The parents must listen seriously to the feeling of both sexes during the childhood and adolescence of their sons and daughters. The family atmosphere should be supportive, full of love and understanding, paving the way to shoulder responsibility in a gradual way, compatible with age and mental capacities. The child should not be spoiled by giving him everything he /she desires. A child should have some freedom of thought and decision making, provided that he/she bear the consequences. These should be indirect supervision by the parents, with intervention at the right time; but this should be by way of consultation and advice, not through violent coercion or chiding. Such methods have terrible psychological repercussions on the character of the child. A person who grows up in a sound environment, full of love, respect, dialogue and knowledge in various fields will be able to deal with developed mass media. Such a person will be able to discover, understand, analyze and make decisions, with no fear of deviation, on the basics of candid clarity.

* Freedom of Recreation: Each age category has its own identity and hobby. Physical and mental exercises are basic for sound growth, while the techniques of our lines have become basic requirements for everybody. We must adapt ourselves to deal with them, lest we remain out of touch with reality.

* Folklore tales have a very important role in developing the imagination of the child. They offer him information indirectly, and have important of magic.

* The parents must stay with the child in the first three years, when the child watches cartoon films, children programmes and

books at pictures or magazines. This will contribute to the growth of his/her mind.

* It is important to involve the whole family in the discussion of certain scenes or video-clips in a way suitable to the age of the child. The consciousness of parents plays an important role here. A discussion before an adolescent differs from that before a seven-years-old child.

* When we adults do not like certain things because we have not known them in our childhood or youth, it is important to desist from making direct, violent attack on such things, because this will alienate the child. He may thus distance himself from us, believing that we do not understand him, because he is different. He may live alone in his own world, made by his mates and the TV space channels.

* Our educational and information institution should have constructive and productive relations, not confined to the school and the TV, but involving all those concerned with the new generations and society at large, including official and popular figures, as well as all the mass media.

* It is necessary to encourage children to develop reading as a habit, through action rather than just words of advice. We should extend their time before the TV set, the computer, or the Internet website, discussing things with them, in order to teach them and learn from them.

* **Globalism , Information and Women**

The impact of globalism on poor countries is very considerable; but it is even more pressing on women, due to the following factors:

1-Women's inability to enter the age of technological progress through its large gate;

2-The large size of women's social family tasks curtails their ability to move, travel and specialize;

3-The large scale of unemployment and the lack of job opportunities in line with women's capacities; and

Some customs and traditions still contribute to the marginalization of women's role and capacities.

* **Women in the mass Media**

A recent study has shown that 39% of the female samples had university degrees, 22% had secondary certificates or intermediate diplomas, 23% had degrees of higher studies, and 8% had specialized degrees. Of the total, 25% were working in the General Radio & TV Station; 36% of them had media work, 35% were employed in administrative affairs, and 24% in technical and engineering fields. Some 53% joined training courses, 88% of which were international and 11% external. Women account for 16.5% of the employees of the Arab Distribution Foundation, and 43% of those working in the Arab Advertisement Corporation.

* **Women's Image in the Media**

There has been considerable development in the presentation of women through the mass media in various roles and tasks, particularly in Syrian drama and some distinguished programmers. Yet, there are still stereotypes. Women's role in decision-making positions is still not clear or well defined. This role should be revised and upgraded. In the field advertisement, controlled by the forces of competitive marketing and sweeping globalism, there are still humiliating images of women as temptresses, compared to what is transmitted by other channels and TV stations. This whole industry needs to be restructured without doing damage to the various role of women throughout the cycle of their lives.

* In conclusion: What we want our children to become when they grow up is something that we must practice before them when they are young. This will consolidate their sense of responsibility, and deepen their national loyalty and family links. Thus, we can

have an effective weapon to strengthen our national capacities and reduce the risks jeopardizing our society, in its entity, identity, creed and future.

The performance of the mass media must be reviewed, and particularly the issues related to women and their involvement in public affairs, since information is the major field that influences people's behaviour. We want our information to illustrate all the tasks and social and family roles played by women as a citizens actively involved in educating and bringing up mew generations. We want it to promote and support ethical values in a nobler, more stable and secure life for all mankind, seeking cultural integration and exchange, thus expressing real democracy to foster creative innovation, progress, development and mutual respect.