

Women, Higher Education and Society: A Gender Perspective

Case Study of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

■ Abu Bakr Ahmad Ba Kader

Sociology Professor, King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Although liberal Islamic teachings stipulate that education is a mandatory right for all Muslims regardless of gender, and encourages the pursuit of education and wisdom from the cradle to the grave, and despite what is written in the *hadith*¹ concerning the Prophet's positive attitude towards education for both genders, some scholars and rulers in the past have not given importance to education for women. Historically, education for women has been restricted to the realm of religious matters. As a "means to an end" and "in fear of causing unrest," some have endeavored to persuade Muslim communities to "deny" women the right to literacy and to discourage them from furthering their education.

According to written biographies, many women made considerable educational contributions during the time of the Prophet and the caliphs. This was also the case during the zenith of Islamic civilization when prominent writers such as Ibn Saad, the Baghdadi Speaker Al-Sakhawi and Ibn Asaker wrote about several of their contemporary Muslim women who excelled in all kinds of Arabic and Islamic sciences. However, the number of such women dwindled considerably over time. As true female intellectuals decreased in number a new kind of women emerged who were educated only to a certain extent.

They were slave girls and bondmaids who were only educated to be entertaining to their owners; they were required to be funny, witty, beautiful, and good companions as well as excellent dancers and singers.

Perhaps the slave girl, Tawaddud, mentioned in *The Arabian Nights* and popular Arabic literature is a pertinent example. Most free women were required to wear the *hijab* (veil) and were allowed to leave their homes twice in their lives; first, when they move into their husband's house and, second, when they are laid to rest. In addition, they were "deprived" of studying science and literature so that they would not be a threat to men, and they were forbidden from learning how to write so as not to use this skill dishonorably, or write about matters of the heart. However, there were rare exceptions of women who acquired a certain level of education: usually the courts and high-class leisure places called for the presence of a few educated slave girls, who knew poetry as well as music to entertain "patrons." The slave girl, or bondmaid, with such talents was regarded as "knowledgeable." Usually, her training, skills and knowledge were the reason why she was in high demand for the fine company she could provide, and for which she commanded a high price. Most of these bondmaids were



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beautiful slaves brought to the Muslim world from the outside.

The presence of these “women” — in spite of their extensive knowledge and education — was not regarded as a challenge to the hegemony of male authority in society. On the contrary, it most likely reinforced and helped extend the latter. The triumph of the slave girl, Tawaddud, in her debates with her educated rivals in a wide variety of arts and literature was not considered a threat to those scholars, but rather a means of entertainment and good company. Furthermore, Tawaddud's knowledge was considered neither a threat nor an act of defiance to the existing rules governing the relations between males and females. In any case, it was preferable that freeborn women not play the role of “Tawaddud” for it conflicted with the prescribed roles of women that forbade them from appearing in public places, from mixing with disrespectful men, and from being the object of flirtations or compliments.

The education of slave girls, such as Tawaddud, was aimed at satisfying the male ego and asserting that a woman was a unique toy, despite her intelligence, sensitivity, and wit. Furthermore, this sort of woman upheld the patriarchal structure since, according to her training, Tawaddud aspired to please those around her and not to prove that women are capable of doing all that men can do. For if this was the case, she would “deserve” to be treated as a human being who is the equal of man and could play roles and perform functions similar to his in her family or public life. These concepts simply did not exist. Thus, in spite of being highly knowledgeable and skillful, Tawaddud was meant to be subordinate and a means to sustain - and not undermine - patriarchal authority.

However, the 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of a new kind of educated woman who asserted that her education should essentially allow her to enter a man's world, playing crucial and important roles in public life. This dramatic development would inevitably bring about radical changes in the relations between the two sexes, the results of which would threaten the patriarchal system that had previously dominated Arab culture.

It is important to note that this development was not prevalent — far from it. However, a few pioneers of women's liberation from the constraints imposed by Arab culture have become leading and renowned figures in public life, be it cultural or social. Thuraya Al-Turky and Camilia Al-Solh's book *In My Country I Search*,² represents a way for women to stand up against such constraints and obligations. The book focuses on Arab women who specialize in the social sciences, who insist

on conducting research in their own societies despite all the obstacles and circumstances that might prevent “female researchers” from conducting such studies. As such, these women do not conform to the traditional current “reality” of society, but rebuff it and replace it with a new one that does not fundamentally conflict with customs and values, yet endows women with a new sense of worth and distinction in Arab society.

Obviously, the lives of these specialists have not been at all easy; however, their determination has allowed them to conduct their research. What is striking is that many of these women, perhaps because they defied traditional patriarchal authority, had to study or work in foreign institutes and establishments. It is apparent that the education available to women in the Arab World does not ultimately satisfy them, forcing them to accept a limited and predefined role or occupation, as was the case with “Tawaddud.” On the contrary, it has led to an emphatic demand by women to expand their boundaries and alter their relations in society. Hence, it is not unusual that most of the women written about by Al-Turky and Al-Solh were interested in the situation of women from a gender perspective. Although these examples are of significant importance, they are far from being widely acknowledged. Similarly, the transformation of society to allow gender equality and mutual respect between the two sexes has yet to be realized. However, the very existence of such women and the expected increase in their number as well as their promising acceptance both socially and culturally are positive signs pointing towards a long-awaited change.

Between “the slave girl Tawaddud” and the women of *In My Country I Search*, there have been significant key developments, one being the creation of schools for girls and women. King Faysal Bin Abdul Aziz's initiative, undertaken in the 1960s to create governmental schools for women and girls throughout the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, ushered in a new developmental phase for women and society in this country.

Before the 1960s women's educational opportunities in the Kingdom were very limited, and only existed in the large metropolitan areas. Only a few traditional teachers taught girls the fundamentals of reading and the arts of embroidery and sewing. Few girls knew how to write because their parents fiercely opposed this kind of teaching. However, wealthy upper class families keen on educating their girls traveled to several Arab capitals, particularly Cairo, in order to provide their daughters with an education.

Although the government's decision to build public schools for girls was well received in some cities, it was fiercely opposed and disputed at length by scholars and

clerics (particularly in the Hijaz region) who regarded the decision as a threat to the values and structure of society. Nevertheless, King Faysal insisted on pushing forward, but at the same time bowed to tradition by delineating certain aspects of education, particularly at the university level, that would remain closed to women.

Even though some people reluctantly and cautiously approached the issue of women's education in the early 1960s, the education of women throughout the kingdom soon became a popular demand. Reinforced by the government's initiative to open new schools, even in remote areas, locals ardently demanded that their daughters be afforded the opportunity to obtain a modern education. Today, Saudi citizens no longer oppose women's education but rather persistently call for their daughters to acquire an education. The number of female students enrolled in universities reflects this clearly. In 1998, there were 138,000 female students compared to 134,000 male students. That same year, the number of female graduates reached 15,542 compared to 14,721 male graduates.³ These official statistics unmistakably show the extent of the social transformation with respect to women, particularly when it comes to university education.

Women's pursuit of a higher education following high school is one of the most preoccupying matters for Saudi families, particularly progressive ones. While the number of high school graduates is increasing continuously, universities only accept a limited number of applicants with the highest scores, which makes these girls' families intent on not only having their daughters graduate from high school but also have high scores that would allow them to be accepted at one of these universities. Another option is to send their daughters abroad, and, while many families find it hard to send their daughters abroad to pursue a college education, a growing number of families are following this path.

Women and University Education

University education for women in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia began in the early 1970s through the creation of programs at existing Saudi universities, led by King Saud University and King Abdul Aziz University. Out of respect for laws as well as tradition, female sections were created that were separate from males. When needed, some courses were held via videoconferencing under female supervision so that female students could continue their studies.

The statistics cited above clearly show that the number of female applicants to Saudi universities has been on the rise. Medicine, biology, business, economy, literature, social sciences, education and home economics are fields open to women, although female students are still

denied access to the disciplines of architecture and media since they are two fields deemed "unsuitable" for women. Nevertheless, Saudi women have strongly held on to their right to a university education in all available fields. A good number of them have been able to acquire master's degrees in these fields and have taken faculty positions in universities, consequently enabling future female students to pursue higher education in the kingdom.

As expected, women's education has affected job opportunities, public life, and development as well as the concept of the ethos, identity, role, and social standing of Saudi women. The educational field, which is non-mixed and therefore does not conflict with most traditional customs and social norms, is the main academic discipline in which Saudi women are majoring. Their hard work and willingness to contribute to the education of their female compatriots in even the most remote regions has underlined the importance of their mission. Moreover, their contribution to the workforce is a remarkable success story.⁴

Although Saudi women have had an effective and important presence in the field of education, they have not limited their activities to this field alone. Graduates from medical, nursing and paramedical schools have worked in public health and have established a strong presence in most government hospitals, particularly in big cities. It is important to note that because this field entails mixing with men, it is an issue of social and cultural contention. Furthermore, as enrollment in medical schools and institutes increases and competition among specialists intensifies, some female graduates are finding it difficult to secure positions in the field of their choice.⁵

Saudi women also have made considerable contributions to a number of other fields, such as social services. They have helped women's philanthropic organizations increase awareness and strive to change the viewpoints of society with respect to several issues.⁶

Thanks to their educational and managerial training and skills, several Saudi women have come to occupy leading positions in business and commerce. Several women have started their own successful enterprises.⁷ Yet, in spite of these successes, the number of women in the labor market compared to the number of graduates is quite low. Women and their families are continuously asking for more job opportunities in the fields open to women instead of being restricted to what current mores dictate. Still, one should keep in mind that even many of those who ask for an increase in the female workforce strive to maintain the essence of Saudi traditions and social standards.

The success story of women's education in the Kingdom, and the increase in its scope and quality, should not over-



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shadow the significant obstacles still inhibiting women, particularly the limited choice of specializations available in higher education. Overall, women still face basic structural obstacles, at the heart of which are institutions, values and practices that ensure the prolongation of the traditional patriarchal structure which, although it has given women the chance to pursue an education up to the highest levels, is still hesitant to share public life with them.

Impediments to Higher Education and Women

Although the number of male and female students as well as graduates is almost the same, the chances of pursuing a higher education and acquiring a master or doctoral degree are clearly in favor of males. Although many Saudi families are intent on having their daughters acquire a university education, they are more inclined to encourage their sons to aspire for a higher education than their daughters. Women's chances of accessing higher education are negligible and limited compared to those of men. Most women pursuing a higher education are restricted to studying within the Kingdom, be it in Saudi universities or joint programs with European universities.⁸ In the past, women were forbidden from studying abroad, although today this is no longer the case. However, this "openness" comes with several conditions that some girls may fail to meet, such as getting their parents' approval and being accompanied by a male guardian when they travel.

Should females pursue a higher education locally, they mostly suffer from inaccessibility to educational centers and libraries dominated by males. For example, these centers, libraries or institutes are open to males all week long, however, they may be open to females only for a limited number of hours, for instance on the weekend, which prevents them from acquiring needed information quickly. Furthermore, with the exception of medical schools, women are only allowed access to advanced institutes for a limited number of hours during specific times, which often necessitates more time to complete their assignments. Due to the existing gender segregation, the process of checking references and looking for sources of information becomes a very difficult task. Thus, women, unlike their male counterparts, are only able to conduct specific kinds of research and studies that are limited to females.

Since supervision in graduate studies is paramount and female faculty members with supervision rights (according to academic hierarchy) are scarce, many female students pursuing a higher education must accept the supervision of male professors. This would probably be easy if female students were able to meet with their supervisors face-to-face. However, traditions as well as

academic mores call for indirect supervision of female students, i.e., that they use the phone, Internet, or the post to submit their work. This is time consuming and may not help the student understand everything, as would a face-to-face conversation with the supervisor. In addition, this has caused real structural problems in the sense that female students benefited so little from such supervision, which in most cases undermined their training. Strikingly, when both the female student's family and university policies demanded indirect supervision of female students by male supervisors, a few female students become less interested in pursuing their academic studies, and even for those who remain interested in furthering their education, the supervision period is prolonged.

Once women complete their higher education, professional development within academe becomes the new challenge. Although it is officially permissible — albeit only to a certain extent — to attend and take part in practical conferences and seminars, several female professors have to be chaperoned by a *mahram* (unmarriageable male person) and must have the consent of their families, be it fathers or husbands, to take part in such events. This further confines women and prevents them from benefiting from such practical experiences, which would otherwise enable them to climb the academic ladder. This also affects academic promotions since male professors have easier access to educational centers, libraries, institutes, seminars and conferences than their female counterparts, they generally make more scholarly progress and are promoted faster. Consequently, male superiority and hegemony within the college and university communities are maintained.

Furthermore, male professors can much more easily acquire new skills by occupying positions in the private sector, or working as consultants in the public sector, despite the equal administrative opportunities available to both genders. Rarely do female faculty members or other professional women occupy consultancy positions, limiting their ability to influence their respective communities, in spite of the efforts of some pioneering women.

In general, Saudi women are torn between their traditional roles as wives, mothers, homemakers and social figures on the one hand and their new roles as career women and public figures on the other hand. Primarily, in much of Arab society, the roles women play are to be nurturing and caring wives and mothers, and failure in fulfilling these roles is considered a failure in all aspects of life.

Women's success in their traditional roles often requires them to accept "slight variations" of their role and social standing by virtue of cultural mores. Within their family

and in society, they are necessarily required to “submit” to and respect their husbands’ or guardians’ authority. Even though social mores may conflict or interfere with their own, women are required to respect them. More often than not, women have to “submit” to the superseding socio-cultural requirements to be able to realize some of their aspirations.

As is the case in most traditional societies, both males and females in Saudi society still do not recognize women as being knowledgeable and educated persons. Female Saudi doctors have revealed that some of their patients insist on being examined by male physicians in spite of the formers’ high qualifications and noteworthy achievements. Leading women functioning in all fields sometimes face resistance from those they are trying to help.

Overall, educated women are expected to accept the socio-cultural conditions that traditionally define relations between the two sexes. It is true that the education and employment of women have led to the improvement of their family and social situations. It is also true that many women have earned independent financial incomes, which in turn have increased their decision-making abilities, at least those related to expenditures. However, women in much of the Arab world still have a long way to go before their society and culture recognize them as individuals with their own talents and experience. This requires far-reaching and radical changes within society that will lead to the improvement of the status of women and their traditional cultural identity.

Arab societies often criticize educated women because of their modern aspirations, which include having an education or a profession in such fields as medicine, education, or business, that are deemed “unnecessary” for women. Perhaps the harshest critics are the ones who claim that by clinging to such modern aspirations women neglect their “natural role” as mothers or females. Some highly educated women have told me that they have had to accept such traditional names as “dependents” (i.e., incapacitated and in need of the protection and support of a man), or they have been accused of being emotional, verbose, and courting the attention of the opposite sex. These women have become so accustomed to hearing such comments — be they from males or females — that they have acquired an ability to “ignore” and not engage in “enduring” discussions to change or correct such views or stances.

Despite the progress towards liberation and equality that some women are achieving in the Arab world, customary public perceptions continue to measure success in studies and or work as the benchmarks of excellence in male

achievements, whereas the standards for measuring female achievements are still assessed on how well a woman succeeds in the traditional female roles upheld by society. Perhaps her educational or professional success is one of the reasons she is criticized and measured in relation to the extent that she succeeds in fulfilling her traditional duties. Arab society requires a woman to preserve her honor (her hymen to be exact), not to mix with men, and to make her husband or father happy. Should she not abide by these rules, even with the consent of her family, her behavior is criticized and rejected both socially and culturally.

These views have compelled highly educated women to form their own communities, if they have enough time to interact with one another. However, when they do spend time with other women, in general, semi-traditional and customary daily concerns shared by women are often the subjects of conversation. In other words, women who have acquired a higher education have yet to become role models that will employ their newfound power to enact change in the social order. However, with time, these women may champion the cause for radical change in society.

Educated Women and Job Opportunities

Saudi women make up no more than 5% of the total workforce⁹ in the labor market in spite of the four million plus workers, most of whom are female, who work in education, fashion design, and medicine. Saudi women can work in these fields without having to interact with men, which conforms to their socio-cultural situation.

The educational and socio-economic conditions of the country require a radical reevaluation of the contribution of women to the labor market. This would identify and help fulfill the needs of Saudi women and allow them to take advantage of the available opportunities in the labor market, even if such a move would require some modifications and an adaptation to new ways of living and working. What does society stand to gain from limiting the opportunities available to half the workforce by excluding women from working in numerous fields, and wasting significant economic resources in the process? Instead of inhibiting the growth of Saudi nationals employed in the workforce by constantly counting on foreign labor, at least half of them could be utilized by affording Saudi women the opportunity to contribute to fields involving the development of their country.

The state’s interest in the Saudization of positions in the public and private sectors, by encouraging both male and female Saudi nationals to enter the labor market, is one of the constants of the state’s development policy which stipulates that women should no longer be marginalized from contributing to the workforce. The Saudi



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labor market nowadays is struggling to accommodate an increasing number of female graduates seeking to fill all available positions. These developments are mostly based on the aspirations of women, along with their parents, to hold down independent jobs from which they can derive incomes that will allow them to contribute positively and equally to their families' finances and subsequent lifestyles. That this is occurring in a society which, until recently, did not acknowledge women's ability to contribute in such a way, represents a tremendous improvement with respect to women playing important roles in the finances of their family, and in social life overall.

Female graduates have managed to meet the needs of the labor market in the field of education, and they are working on achieving that same end in the medical field, withstanding the conditions imposed by society and its culture. There are also many employment opportunities in several fields such as couture, tailoring, textiles, food processing, and computer manufacturing. In addition, there are several administrative positions where women can perform without mixing with men or being exposed to exhausting physical hazards, which conform to social and cultural mores. National policies are expected to work towards creating such opportunities, which will more expediently and efficiently ensure the integration of women into the workforce.

Recently, female jobseekers have exceeded 30,000 in the Kingdom. The Civil Service Office has failed to find available positions for them either because their specialization was not required and /or because the applicants did not want to work far from their area of residence. Nevertheless, the fact remains that a growing number of female university graduates are seeking to enter the labor market. Moreover, this applies to both the public sector and private sector as the number of Saudi women working in the private sector jumped from 8,374 employees in 1989 to 11,257 in 1993.¹⁰ The number of Saudi businesswomen numbered more than 20,376¹¹ in 1991. This new data illustrates how the issue of finding work for educated women is both a public matter and a social concern. Unemployment no longer only affects males and remains an urgent issue requiring an immediate solution.

Women's contributions to the employment market and their subsequent independent sources of income are an undeniable aspect of Saudi life. In the past, a woman's financial contribution to her family was viewed as unwarranted, but now, employed women have become economic partners that enable families to enjoy higher standards of living.

If there is a need to modify and improve the quality of

higher education for males so they are better equipped to enter the labor market, there is also a necessity to educate women. Many underline the importance of reevaluating and perhaps restructuring the educational curricula to meet the demands of the labor market, not to mention the development of training programs that would improve the skills and capacities of female job seekers. As a giant leap forward, Saudization programs, which encourage Saudi nationals to enter the labor force, are now involving and benefiting males and females alike.

However, it is a general requirement that women's social aspirations be contingent on the consent of their guardian (father, husband or male relative acting as legal guardian), thus strengthening existing traditional laws and values. In addition, as expected, getting the consent of the guardian, the husband to be precise, is one of the major factors women have to take into account when undertaking outside work. Often families make sacrifices to afford women better chances for education. Many husbands request a leave of absence from their jobs in order to accompany their wives for a year or more when the latter is posted to a job in a remote region. However, this requirement of a chaperone has often prevented women from achieving their aspirations. Of course, this does not apply to males, as women are required to travel with their husbands wherever the husbands' jobs may be located.

If the job involves a lot of stress, women have to leave these work related problems at the door when returning home to be able to "absorb" the problems and concerns of the husband and children; however, this does not happen very often. That is why some husbands resent the idea of their wives' work competing with the requirements of their marital life when all they want to find when they come home from work is tranquility and calm. Some even claim that employed women come home tired, which makes them incapable of attending to their husbands and children. This assumes that women cannot ask their husbands to help them ease their troubles after a long day's work. Under current traditional domestic roles, juggling work, social, and family responsibilities generally means employed women will be burdened with more difficulties than men will. The traditional concept of roles that relegates all domestic matters to the care of women has to be changed and replaced by new values and mores that underline the necessity of contribution and cooperation between all members of the family in all aspects of family life. Certainly, the abundant availability of foreign domestic workers has seriously delayed raising and addressing this issue; however, it will surely emerge as a contentious topic at a later stage.

Educated Women in Family Life

Some believe that because women contribute to the family budget they are able to play roles that are more active in the family's decisions regarding matters of expenditures and lifestyle. Some may even assert that women have come to ask for a higher standing and role in the lives of their families. The spread of the independent nuclear family has helped them acquire an improved social standing, which has caused them to expect that their husbands treat them equally on the one hand, and support them in their public and professional lives on the other.

However, views vary concerning how educated women should in turn educate and raise their children. Some studies say that women have become more responsible in managing their time, and more committed to educating and raising their children. Learning from their own educational experiences, these women tend to raise and educate their children systematically. Additionally, because they command an independent income, they can better care for and educate their children by: introducing more lessons, encouraging children to attend special courses, applying to clubs and choosing useful hobbies, and helping expand their knowledge by traveling or introducing them to other educated families. That is why educated women have become the brides of choice for eligible bachelors intent on getting married.¹²

Educated and employed women tend to organize their time more reasonably. They use their free time to visit and attend parties of other female friends, provided they do not do so at the expense of their family time. Educated women also attend voluntary lectures and seminars instead of only going to traditional women-only visits and parties, and some even create their own unique social world. Coworkers are more often than not friends outside of work, which leads to the emergence of lifestyles linked to educational levels and employment positions.

The Cost of Higher Education for Women

Should women decide to pursue higher education and specialization, more often than not they find themselves forced to make very important decisions: to delay or forego marriage. It is common knowledge that the pursuit of higher education requires delaying marriage. Nowadays, the ideal marriage age for most members of society is either when a woman graduates from college or when she acquires a certain educational level that allows her to find employment. Perhaps the prerequisite of education and employment upheld by most modern families in marriage contracts¹³ is a confirmation of the necessity for the husband to provide his wife the opportunity to pursue a higher education and secure employ-

ment that would provide her with some financial independence.

However, most women who desire to pursue higher education and specialization might often postpone marriage, sometimes for a very long period, which may lead to "spinsterhood" (a woman who remains single all her life). This issue has become a social phenomenon in some fields, namely medicine, or similar higher studies that require many years of education, because those who pursue such fields must continue studying, and they postpone marriage indefinitely.

This raises the issue of marriageability in the sense that education and the desire to climb the professional ladder might stand in the way of committing to the establishment of marriage for males and females alike. However, while males can count on the support from their wives caring and serving them while the latter strive for a higher degree, females hardly get the same kind of support from their husbands. It is rarely accepted that a man makes sacrifices for a woman who pursues an education. The results of such a decision are not benign as they cause an unwanted disparity between the wife's educational and social level and that of the husband's. The marriages where such a disparity appears are considered "marriages of convenience" whereby someone of very limited education marries a woman of higher social standing, which is often unacceptable socially as many men prefer that they have higher social standing than their wives.

Some men hesitate to allow their wives to keep their careers after marriage, which may lead to family problems or even divorce because of the field in which the wife works. In medicine, for example, the nature of the job requires a certain amount of limited gender mixing, which is still problematic, particularly if the wife is extremely good at what she does. Professional scheming and begrudging may affect her family life, causing a great deal of trouble. Many women with higher education believe they must be excessively traditional and uphold society's cultural constraints and mores in order to avoid any misunderstanding or improper treatment. Thus, educated women can fail to become pioneers and leaders affecting social change because they are conservative women who believe in the continuation of patriarchal authority, although paradoxically their very existence challenges this authority.

Over the course of this brief examination, we have determined that today's educated women are not the embodiment of the "slave girl, Tawaddud." Rather, they are employed women who are realistically involved with their society, and whose efforts contribute to the development of their community, not solely for the benefit and plea-



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sure of the male ego. Even so, educated women in Saudi Arabia are rarely publicly critical of the existing patriarchal society, and rarely do they publicly endeavor to abolish and replace such societal relations in order to achieve and guarantee women a standing on par with men. The new wave of educated and employed women represents a

transitional transformation. It may gradually bring about changes to the essence and basis of the patriarchal authority and, who knows, may eventually lead to the latter's demise.

Translated from Arabic by Nadine El-Khoury

Endnotes

1. A written record of Prophet Mohammad's sayings, within which education is considered one of the important religious duties of both men and women alike.
2. See Al-Turky, Thuraya and Al-Solh, Camilia. (1993). *In My Country I Search*. Beirut: Center of Studies of Arab Unity.
3. Achievements of Development Plans, 1998, p. 308-320.
4. Saudi women who undertake to teach in remote rural regions and the problems they face makes for one of the hottest topics in the Saudi press, and it confirms Saudi women's determination to retain their right to work.
5. However, this has not stopped them or their husbands from calling for their right to continue working.
6. See, for example, Al-Hajji, Assaad Ahmad. (2000). *Women's Social Associations in the GCC Countries: A Documented Study*. Kuwait: Published by the Author.
7. Some have risen to high positions within the United Nations and other fields; however, they are far from being role models for employed Saudi women.
8. In other words, they enrol and participate in doctoral programs offered at some British universities while staying in Saudi Arabia.
9. Sixth Development Plan, 1995.
10. Al-Hazmi, Hussein: "The Reality and Future of Women Working in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia." Seminar of the Reality and Future of Women Working in the Kingdom, 1997.
11. Al-Husseini, Aysha. (1991). *Job Opportunities for Women in the Saudi Private Sector*. Riyadh: Gulf Publishing Center. Al Hussein, Aysha. (1993). *Assessing the Contribution of Saudi Women to the Labor Market*. CITY: Educational Publishing Center, King Abdul Aziz University.
12. Ba Kader, Abu Bakr. "Marriage Trends in Jeddah in Light of Marriage Contracts" in *Faculty of Letters and Humanities Magazine*, 1985.
13. Op cit, pp. 206-223.

Forthcoming: Arab Diaspora Women