

What is wrong with our family traditions ?

The following paragraphs, which reveal certain aspects of family life in the Arab World, have been quoted from books dealing with social problems in this part of the world.

"Our Common Family Diseases"(¹)

"The traditions imposed on the socialization of children in our country serve to corrupt their personality and contribute to the creation of an anti-nationalist generation.

"The child, especially the male child, is brought up with the idea that he is the idol of the family. Everybody is supposed to work for him, to save for him and to tolerate his whims. Instead of creating his own assets, he relies on those of his father and ancestry. Instead of utilizing his personal efforts, he resorts to the intercession of saints and to the mediation of relatives and friends. As soon as he is aware of his environment, he keeps hearing the same melody: "May we attend your wedding! " "May we share the joys of your wedding-day! ", "May you soon become a bride-groom! " Such expressions, inherited from tribal days, when the main occupation of the tribe centered around increasing the number of its male fighters, restrict the boy's horizon to a minimum, making him believe that he is the center of the world, and that marriage and procreation are his only *raison d'être*. He thus becomes blindly attached to the family that idolizes him, and enslaved to its traditions. He considers the members of other families as his natural rivals. Instead of cooperating with them, he tries to work against them and to encroach on their rights.

"These prevailing traditional practices are directly opposed to the concept of nationalism which should unify the people of the same country, teach them to transcend the limits of family and tribe, and act according to universal values and humanitarian principles."

"Profiles of Social Characteristics"(²)

"Among the Bedouin, an individual has little or no identity in his own right. Membership in a household, a clan, and a tribe serve to place him in a meaningful social context. He perceives himself and is perceived by others in these categories."

(1) From "Su'ar min al Hayat" (Images from Life) by Dr. Shaheen Saleeby, Dar ul-Kitab el-Lubnani, Beirut, 1979, pp. 184-185.

(2) From "Saudi Arabian Bedouin" by Saad E. Ibrahim and Donald P. Cole, Cairo Papers in Social Science, vol. 1, monograph 5, p. 11, The American University in Cairo, 1978.