

## Fi Tareek-el-Hayat

### (Traversing the Road of Life)



Dr. Jamal Karam Harfouche was the first woman doctor from South Lebanon. She received her medical degree in pediatrics in 1941 from the American University of Beirut. Besides her private practice in pediatrics from 1943-1946 and 1950-58 she was a Professor at the School of Medicine at AUB. In 1959 she received her degree in Social Medicine and Hygiene from Harvard University and six years later a doctorate in Public Health (see Al-Raida, Vol. VI, No. 25). Some of her current activities are:- Member of the Advisory Panel on Maternal and Child Health, World Health Organization, Geneva.

- Conducts consultation activities, including book reviews and graduate studies, at the request of local and foreign teaching institutions.

- Analysis of data on growth and development, breast feeding, traditional birth attendants, primary health care, and writing manuscripts for publication on these and other related subjects.

Last month, her book **Fi Tareek-el-Hayat**★ (Traversing the Road of Life) was published by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World. The following is what Dr. Harfouche wrote about this remarkable book.

"Life is a path which we traverse only once; its images cannot be replicated even if simulated... some of them penetrate deep into the heart, while others pass unnoticed without arousing our concern!"

(Introduction)

This book presents the reader with a series of images,

★ First edition, Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World. (Beirut 1987) 268 pages.

reflections, memories and lessons to be learned, addresses, and radiobroadcasts that the author has written in Arabic between the late 1940's and the early 1980's as a side-activity to a laborious and productive professional career involving a lifetime of service, teaching, and research in the areas of Maternal/Child Health and Nutrition.

In 268 middle size pages, the two parts of the book, expressed in a simple and appealing style, convey to the general public, as well as to individual citizens, members of clubs and societies, and to graduates of schools, colleges, and universities a sense of orientation for self-realization and the attainment of a balanced and healthy society by adhering to the principles of righteousness, human welfare, beauty, peace, love and faith. Man the creator of his own material means for survival loses his sense of direction as he cedes his mastery over the means to subserve wealth, political power, and technology. Had the decision-makers and rising generations been loyal to the high goal of existence and the traditional principles of constructive achievement since the attainment of national independence in 1943, Lebanon would have been spared the detrimental effects of the civil war.

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#### Part I

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In the first section of Part I, the author initiates a dialogue with the creator, raising basic questions, through a self-searching process, that are answered in part by quiet meditation and silent prayer.

"Who am I O Lord, but a small atom woven by your hand from the remnants of your eternal being!

I have seen you in all beings and all that the beings possess speak of your gracious abundance!

As I walked over the land, sailed over the sea, and soared over the cloud, the glory of your creative wisdom was revealed to me!"

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"In the deep silence of the night, I thought I was alone, but, there you were O Lord extending your arm to pull me out of my solitude!

From the deep valley, I lifted up my eyes to the summit far beyond the cloud, where your glorious light shines to disperse the darkness of my misery... O Lord, as your grace has enabled me to feel your presence, facilitate my path and show me the way to witness your glory up high on the summit".

In the second section, a dialogue between the sea and the sky culminates with the lonely drop of water that travels hard and long within the cloud to find its final haven and eternal rest in the collective reunion with other remaining drops that reach the heart of the sea.

This section also tells the story of a series of old trees scattered along the coast between Sidon and Beirut. They were strikingly obvious to the daily traveller by their declining top that became distorted in adapting to the repeated insult and humiliation of the storm initiated by the rough sea. It also relates the thwarting temptations and trying experience of the deserted poor young girl on the city street.

The third section has words and messages dedicated "to my mother who reared me as a child and guided me in the prime of youth, providing me with the best of tender concern...". Special inspirational messages are expressed on "Mother's Day", the recurrent event of "Meeting the Dawn as a Daily Life-Style", the "Story of Her Death", and the "Death of the Roses".

In the fourth section, addresses are dedicated to five outstanding friends who were honored by the community on different occasions for noted literary, scientific, or service achievement.

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## Part II

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The first section of this part contains a series of commencement addresses to graduates of schools, colleges, and universities.

The second section has a series of addresses that

were prepared at the request of leading institutions and societies in Lebanon and abroad.

Section three presents radiobroadcasts that were requested on special occasions by three leading national agencies - Beirut Municipal Council, the Lebanese Red Cross, and the National Society sponsoring the Annual Week of the Tree.

- The annual campaign of the Beirut Municipal Council launched on May 1, 1954, to promote cleanliness and uplift the level of health and general welfare of the capital city had a special significance that year, because for the first time in the history of Lebanon some of the outstanding women in the country were appointed as Council Members.

- May 5, 1969, marked the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the League of Red Cross, Red Crescent, the Lion and Red Sun Societies actively concerned with peace and human welfare throughout the world. Henry Davison, the founder of the League in 1919 and its first president, emphasized the universal impact of the League in rising above sex, color, race, and creed differences; giving human dignity the highest priority; and overlooking the boundaries of time and place. He noted, "We are not building for any one generation, but for all generations at all times".

- The week of the tree celebrated in December of each year has been an on-going national activity since independence. It is intended to promote the significance of the tree and, in particular, the cedar tree, emblem of Lebanon's historic prestige and national pride. Safeguarding forestry; protecting trees from fire, goat grazing, and hewing by the axe; and promoting the planting of nurseries and sowing of seeds are some of the emphasized themes.

Section four deals with the role of Lebanese women in public life, covering the topics listed below.

- The Contribution of the emigrant woman in preserving the Lebanese customs and tradition.

- Christianity and woman's right.

- Celebration of the woman's week (radiobroadcast inaugurating the campaign in support of women's political right, launched by the Committee elected by the National Council and comprising - Mrs. Laure Tabet, Miss Ibtihaj Kaddoura, Mrs. Najla Saab, Mrs. Helen Rihan, Mrs. Emeli Faris Ibrahim, Mrs. Nejla Kfoury, Maitre Laure Mughazel, Mrs. May Fayad, and Dr. Jamal Karam Harfouche.)

- Woman's right and the electoral law.

- An address supporting Mrs. Laure Tabet in her 1957 electoral campaign to enter the Lebanese parliament as the first woman representative from Beirut city.
- The woman as a health and social counsellor, delivered at the 1975 seminar sponsored by the Society for the Care of the Child and Mother.
- The role of the Lebanese woman in preparing the future generation, delivered at the 1975 seminar spon-

sored by the Ministry of Information.

In summary - this book covers a wide variety of important topics written over a long period of time. In addition to the interesting material contained therein, it registers important landmarks in the historical development of some of the most important teaching institutions and social welfare societies, especially the Lebanese Red Cross, the National Y.W.C.A., and the Lebanese Council for Women.

