

## Shedding Light Upon the Contemporary Women's Movement<sup>(1)</sup>

In 420 large sized pages, this book tries to introduce the contemporary women's movement, its origin and its expansion in the world and in the Arab East. It points out the claims of feminist leaders, which consist in allowing women to enjoy equal rights with men, according to the principles of the United Nations Charter, proclaimed in 1945 and again at the Mexico Conference in 1975 and ratified by the General Assembly in 1979. The contents are divided into two main sections. The first comprises four parts: Part one contains a brief history of the movement as presented by leading feminist writers like Adrée Michel, Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Elise Boulding and others. In part two, there is emphasis on the following: Femininity as an ideal imposed by tradition, traditional socialization which restricts a woman's role to that of wife and mother and condemns every other ambition she may develop; definition of the new personality which a liberated woman should acquire through education and continuous culture. Parts three and four discuss the spread of the movement, its universality and the role of women's international organizations, women's studies' centers and international conferences, in pushing it forward.

Section two has a more local scope. In the first part, it discusses certain educational and social problems in Lebanon between 1940 and 1980. It voices the claims of the women's associations regarding urgent reforms in the educational and social fields: in schools, personal status laws, public health, etc. Part two in this section deals with the problems facing the emancipated woman who divides her time between education, home and outside work. Finally, in the last part, the main articles concentrate on the family in its traditional aspect, defines the role of this institution in building a democratic state and its failure to perform this role in Lebanon and the other Arab countries.

Readers of this collection of articles and studies will not fail to conclude that women are everywhere victims of entrenched traditions which deform their personalities and impede their normal growth: physically as in China, where their feet are bound; in African and Asian countries where their sexual organs are mutilated; intellectually because they are relegated to menial tasks which deprive them of promotion and of the opportunity for cultural development; morally because poverty and injustice may lead them to prostitution; socially because, as individuals, they have no social status and have to depend on a husband or another male relative to give them an identity. In developing countries, personal status laws do not give them the same rights as men to divorce and inheritance. This book is recommended to all those interested in women's problems which form an intrinsic part of the world's problems. The enslavement of women reflects the universal injustice which is being fought by the United Nations Organization as well as by all people who believe in humanitarian principles, whose neglect has resulted in catastrophic wars and ultimate misery.



(1) In Arabic *Adhwa' ala-i-Harakat-in-Nisa'iyya-i-Mu'asira* by Rose Ghurayyib, Publisher Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World. Beirut, 1988.