Woman and education in Algeria from yesterday to today

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Summary:

The relationship between education and culture is organic. They form the heads and the tails of the same coin. Both terms are often understood as bringers of evolution and wealth. But they can also be hijacked and dangerous to humans. Education and culture can hide terms such as hatred, alienation, slavery, and so on. The manner and content with which an individual is accompanied from childhood to adulthood influences his development and future. It is said in Arabic: "Man chabba ala chayin, chaaba 'alayhi "(what was acquired in youth, will accompany the individual until his old age). We will try to see through this culture/education relationship from yesterday to today, what kind of educational message the Muslim little girls receive and absorbed in formal education. Does formal education maintain the culture of containment and alienation? What values of traditional education are present in today's act of transmission? What are the impacts on women's lives and society? Education in Algeria (a former French colony), took a favorable turn in the schooling of girls after independence. However, in recent years, negative forces have been trying to stop their emancipation by claiming divine orders. We hope that our intervention will help shed light on this issue.

Keywords: Girl education, Women’s condition, Islam, Alienation, Emancipation.

Introduction

We will try to see in this culture/education relationship between yesterday and today, what educational message the Muslim little girls receive and absorb in formal education. Does formal education maintain the culture of containment and alienation? What values of traditional education are present in today's act of transmission? What are the impacts on women's lives and society? Education in Algeria (a former French colony), took a favorable turn in the schooling of girls after independence. However, in recent years, negative forces want to block their emancipation by claiming divine orders!

Aïcha Maherzi, Woman and education in Algeria from yesterday to today, World Voices Nexus: The WCCES Chronicle (ISSN: 2522-7483), Vol. 3 No. 3, Oct. 2019
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The time of resignation and submission. For many centuries, the condition of the little girl in Algeria, who, before puberty, was locked up between four walls, was similar to that of her sisters from other Muslim countries, whose usual educational practices we have just described. It did not improve during colonization. On the contrary, the Algerians, wanting to protect their daughters from Western influence, locked them up even more. The more oppressed they were, the fiercer they were towards the so-called weaker sex. It is known that the dominant who oppresses the dominated, claims to do so in the interest of the latter and for his own good!

For "good girls" did not go to school, they lacked instruction and knowledge. It was, as we have pointed out, to remove them from the influence of the settler who was himself fiercely opposed to the education of the natives as a whole, despite Jules Ferry's law of compulsory schooling that should have been applied in French Algeria (Achour, C. 1985)

We know from Annah Arendt that "The role of the school is to teach children what the world is." But with school bans, Algerian and Muslim girls in general, simply did not learn what was like world. They were totally bypassed, excluded and maintained in the absurd logic of ignorance and confinement. Most of them only knew the paternal house and its watertight walls. They did not go out anymore, did not see what could happen outside and received no instruction. It was said then that a woman must go out three times in her life: the first from her mother's womb, the second to go to her husband's home and the third, after her death, to a coffin to be taken to the cemetery!

This was achieved by two active forces that combined to oppose her access to knowledge: the men of her family and her society and the colonization itself for which the illiteracy of girls was almost universal. In 1962, there were 30 per cent of Algerian schoolchildren (compared to 98 per cent of European origin), and fewer than a third were girls. And among the latter, statistics do mention those who fell back into illiteracy because they left school very early and quickly forgot what little they had learned. The will to protect the children against the world in which the parents introduce them is certainly legitimate because they do not only give them life but Hannah Arendt tells us, "by educating them, they take responsibility for the life and development of the child, but also that of the continuity of the world" (Arendt, H. 2005).

Except that in the present case, by trying to "protect" their daughters, parents helped to weaken them early by preventing them from knowing the world. For the most part, they ensured the continuity of their customs and the reproduction of the relations between the sexes on the basis of dominant / dominated patterns, master / slave that they had inherited from the most ancient times. They did not want to change anything, especially not in the colonial period and this despite the Koran the content of which most of faithful recited without understanding it.

From birth, the future of the little girl growing up between four walls was known. She did not know anything about the world. She was completely estranged from it. "Being unable to

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move at will and having real contact with life, the woman remains in a late naivety" (Haddad, T. 2005).

Yes, women were doubly alienated: colonized by external forces on the same footing as men, they also experienced another form of alienation from within, that imposed by their own men who excluded them from the world, who made them survive on the edge of a society of which they could not imagine the slightest outline.

Two kinds of enemy united in their will to oppose the access of girls to knowledge. Two active forces got along and helped one another to keep them in ignorance: the men of the family and the settlers. All that remained to them was family education, the one which does not teach what the world is like. Tahar Haddad says: "Our girls only receive motherly advice that is immutably passed on from one generation to the next and is not influenced by social change. (2005).

If the mother was not here, another woman of the family, had to instill in her mind the art and the manner of resigning and obeying not only the future husband but all the males of his family, even those who were younger than her. (Maherzi, 2005). She will make her become a woman "often erased, reserved in her opinions and resigned to the servitudes of her condition." (Zerdoumi,1978).

In the family circle, the silence of the woman is a virtue and could only denote the modesty required by the customs. "The conception of modesty and reserve merges in our mind with an attitude of silence and confinement." Says Tahar Haddad, T. (2005: 181) and he adds: "Our methods of education rather inculcate girl an exaggerated shyness by repressing her feelings, believing they teach her the restraint and to the stability, but only to render her incapable of expressing herself. (2005: 184).

A girl who was silent and knew how to keep silence in all circumstances, was worth her weight in gold and was very much in demand for marrying. She was a "sabra" a patient one, who would not make difficulties and who would be able to face the adversity imposed by men, by bending, by accepting the blows delivered the husband. It was a sign that she would make a good wife docile and submissive (Zerdoumi, 1979).

For married and battered women, silence is certainly not gold but it is preferable to words which are very expensive. Even facing violence, they often resigned themselves fearing repudiation, which could forever separate them from their offspring. According to the law, in the event of a divorce, the young children were entrusted to the mother but in reality, things did not happen that way. Without work and having no means of subsistence, the divorced woman would return to her parents' home who often did not accept to take care of her children. She had no choice but to leave them to their father.

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The married woman was very careful with her husband and his family because the sword of Damocles was continually hanging over her head. She was not allowed to stare at her husband and she often did not eat in front of him, she was not allowed to leave her home under any circumstances, except in cases of absolute necessity, accompanied by him or by a male member of her family.

Every mother had to teach her daughter good manners, being self effacing in front of the future husband and also in front of her future in-laws with whom she was to spend most of her life, not to mention the darkest parts.

The mother-in-law had the role of head of the family in the absence of her son, she exercised her authority over her daughter in law: by bullying, verbal abuse and in some cases also physical violence. The woman had to bear this situation, especially when she was the mother of several children whom she could not take home to her parents in case of divorce, as we pointed out. The acceptance of this fate being moreover, always justified by the idea of sacrifice for her children.

In this context, it should also be noted that she lived continuously in the double fear of being repudiated as already mentioned above, or of seeing her husband take a second wife called "dharra" or pain. When he saw fit, the latter could pronounce the fatal sentence that she dreaded so much "taliqa" or "repudiated".

Relying on religion interpreted to his advantage and of which he did not often apply the other obligations and precepts, he assumed the right to send back to her parents the woman who no longer suited him. (Qacim A. 1999). He called himself a “Muslim” but he often does not practice his religion. He could drink, lie, steal, and do anything that is forbidden by Islam, which remains far from Islamic precepts. But with regard to his wife, he became "the perfect Muslim," the one who would apply the Islamic law by excellence.

The time of change: a new era?

The convergence of several factors - including the fight against colonialism, the independence of the country, the massive schooling of girls and boys, the abandonment of agriculture, rural depopulation, urbanization, the housing crisis, opening to the outside via the mass media, etc. - helped to bring about a great upheaval in the traditions and customs in Algeria. This did not fail to influence profoundly the society and the condition of the Algerian woman.

a-The anti-colonial struggle

The women's struggle with men had an impact on the conception of male / female relations and on the representation of society in the distribution of the roles of each.

During the war, all hopes were allowed since the ancestral customs were practically shaken up and sometimes swept away by the winds of colonial violence. "The woman who before the

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Revolution never left the house if she was not accompanied by her mother or husband, would be entrusted with specific missions such as going to Oran or Constantine or Algiers. For several days, all alone, carrying directives of paramount importance for the Revolution, she took the train, slept in an unknown family, with activists "notes Frantz Fanon (1975).

A real revolution took place in her attitudes and habits, in her mind and in man's mind too. From then on, she was no longer excluded from her society. She became an active agent for her future. New relationships took hold and "the activist discovers the activist and jointly. They create new dimensions for Algerian society" (Fanon, F.1975).

The women from both the cities and the countryside knew that the key to their independence was that of their country. They accompanied the men in the struggle against colonial occupation and oppression. The number of those who participated in the revolution is sparingly counted in some books. We often forget all those who are not registered, who gave what they could and beyond, to liberate their country.

They carried important messages at the risk of their lives, they carried weapons to the Jebel, they hid fugitives in their homes, they sewed banned flags then, they were prisoners, were raped, tortured without bending and they transmitted to their offspring the taste of fighting against oppression and the refusal of any domination. They understood that to emancipate themselves, it was necessary to take part in the eviction of the occupant. They had stood with their husbands, their brothers, and their fathers. They gave a lot and no historian has yet measured the price of their fight.

After the independence, the woman’s access to public life with first the right to education and then the right to work, was her greatest victory even though the desire to return home was not entirely absent in the minds of some. (Amran, D.1991).

b- The demographic factor

The demography plays a role in the emancipation of women. If, at the beginning of independence, the birth rate was encouraged by the power, it would eventually decrease, and fertility would be reduced. Couples found it difficult to raise many children and women wanted their fertility better. In 1986, the average was 9 children per woman, in 1992 it decreased to 7.7, and in 1995 to 3.85. (National Statistical Office, 1995).

A new thing is that the woman often chooses her partner, gets married at a less young age, and makes sure that she has advanced schooling and stable work. The average age of marriage rose from 18.3 in 1966 to 27 in 1998 and to 28.9 in 2002.

The pattern of the family institution will no longer be the same. The extended family will shrink to become nuclear especially in urban areas. The parents are closer to their children

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and the father is more involved in their education, not letting the woman take care of it practically alone.

c- The role of school

Mothers are no longer the simple link of a chain of docile message transmitters. Their message is not one of womanly exclusion and submission: they encourage their daughters to study, work and evolve. "A revenge on their own lives" they all say. Ideas of freedom stormed the homes and the minds.

Knowledge is no longer reserved for a male elite, but it has become more democratic. On the eve of the 1954 uprising, the Algerian population was 91 per cent illiterate. Only 4.5% of women were literate compared to 13% of men.

When independence was declared, schools opened to accommodate girls as well as boys. Parents were no longer reluctant about the schooling they wanted. They encouraged their offspring (both sexes) to continue their studies as long as needed to obtain valid diplomas, aware that it is through education that their condition would change. In all walks of life, children of both sexes now succeed in school, obtain university diplomas and leave with a good job, or a grant to go abroad to study in a field that does not exist in the country.

The door of knowledge has opened for girls and women. Their discovery of the written word has brought a new social vision a new relationship to the public space, to men and to the family. They yearn for more education and more education for their children. They have taken over field of knowledge. From 36% of primary enrollment in 1962/1963, the rate for girls at the beginning of the 1991/92 school year, grew to 45%! And their staying in the education system" is accompanied by a better academic success" (Mansouri Acherar, L. 1996)

At the universities, the rate of feminization is also increasing. It went from 30% in 1981/82 to 40% in 1991/92. The retention of girls at university beyond the bachelor's degree is also remarkable: in 1993, they constitute 47% of postgraduate enrollments in all fields (Ferroukhi, D.1995).

d- Urbanization

The urban rate is estimated at 4.5% and urbanization brought a lot of changes. In the traditional logic, the woman was financially protected by the men of the family. After independence, the father, brother, husband were involved in the emancipation of her. In many cases, they often became the lever of her emancipation. They allowed her to go out, encouraged her in her schooling, and expressed pride in her results.

New relationships were thus established between women and men. The emergence of active females in society, who performed new social parts, to which they adapted without problem,

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was thus encouraged by the men themselves. In addition to them being mothers and wives, they became full partners in the management of the family budget. They were no longer locked between four walls, they went out to study and work, which required strict organization and rational management of their time. It is really the advent of a new era for the Algerian woman and society.

e- The work of women

By working outside, the woman brings a salary home and helps the husband or her family. She no longer needs a guardian. Able to financially assume herself, she can live alone, with or without children, be a widow or divorced. Fathers, brothers accept this situation. A relationship of trust has been established between family members. Especially in cities, not wanting to confine her in the home, they encourage her to progress in her studies, in her work.

Feminine solidarity is often put to work for the care of the children, for help with the housework and in the kitchen, etc. The mother, the sister, the mother-in-law or the sister-in-law, and sometimes the neighbors, help the woman who works by looking after her young children, preparing the meals, and so on.

As a conclusion:

1 - A sharp turn for the emancipation of women has therefore been taken. The change is perceptible and can be seen in the massive schooling rate of girls and the feminine taking of public space. However, this situation is not without difficulties. Resistance to change is felt in some fundamentalist circles where it is still believed that the emergence of the "new woman" breeds social disorder and weakens the power and virility of men.

Examples of violent reactions against women were in recent years recorded in some Muslim countries. There were efforts to neutralize the progress made in the field of women's education and to stop its development.

The whole campaign is organized in this way in the name of religion. But the movement towards emancipation is, it seems, irreversible. Helped by her family, the woman shows an unwavering commitment to her access to knowledge and to a status of citizen in her own right. It remains to be seen whether the policies will follow to establish definitively her rights, which are for the moment far from being universally respected. An extraordinary leap has been made since the country's independence with respect to women's rights. What others achieved in a century or more, Algeria did in a few years. The schooling of girls as well as boys, and women's access to the workplace are the two most relevant moments in the liberation of women.

Women make up half of the Algerian population. Without their access to knowledge, without their participation in work, without their vision of the world as it is, without their daily

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struggle with men for a better future, the Algerian society would have remained with “one leg” and “one eye.” it cannot move and see normally and it will be going round in circles. Its development will not happen.

With one arm and one hand, a society is incapable of evolving and developing. Despite the obstacles that some ill-intentioned minds put on the path, one can no longer be impressed by the supporters of ignorance. Women have won a major victory, there are other fights to win, other fortresses to storm. She cannot and she does not want to go back.

2 - The question of the Muslim woman is today at the heart of debates passionate as well as contradictory. To treat it objectively is a real challenge for two reasons. The first is the distance of the researcher who belongs to this population of Muslim women from her subject. With the other women, we share an identity, a culture and a certain experience.

We must allow ourselves to be diverted towards the sacrosanct "modernities" and "scientific." multiple and often contradictory arguments because they answer passionate debates falling under the banner of political arguments.

The Muslim woman is a major stake in recovery attempts of all kinds, staged by those who would like to use her, to "modernize" her. Their aim is to squeeze women back into the old moulds. Have nothing to do with what is owed to a simple human being, who does not ask for much but who is worthy of consideration and respect.

A French general had said during the conquest of Algeria: "Let's have the women and the rest will follow". In the eyes of many "well-meaning" people, Muslim women are objects to be exploited to recover, to grab, to take advantage of, to conquer, to colonize, etc. It is clear that the growing interest they arouse here and there is not unselfish and in favor of women.

Among all experiences, there is only one that is "valid for each of us, the one we have felt in our own nerves and in our own bones," explains Germaine Tillon (2009) who adds: "all the mechanics of erudition resemble the written notes of a musical score, and our experience as human beings is the sound range without which the score will remain dead." The author of this quote had to suffer from hunger in the concentration camp where she was deported. She knows what she speaks about when she studies the misery of the population of the Aurès in Algeria under the yoke of colonization. She knows that the "specialists" of human sciences, under the pretext of "objectivity", decide to ignore their own experience.

But wouldn't our experience illuminate our look on them and on the others? Wouldn't it give more weight to what we are studying? In the manner of Edgar Morin, it would be necessary to study the sociology of sociologists. Germaine Tillon says about this kind of scientists so distanced from their object of study: "when they assemble their cards, they look like a deaf child copying the sharps and flats of a sonata." Remember that, in order to elaborate his theory in psychoanalysis, Freud used his own experience and personal history. Marc Bloch

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also recalled what he had lived, particularly during the First World War. The results speak for themselves.

A practice of the clean slate would be difficult if not impossible at our level. This will not, however, exempt us from the effort of any researcher, that of bringing us as close as possible to objectivity, even if we know that the latter, if claimed by one or the other, will never be absolute.

3 - Linked to the very controversial question of the condition of the Muslim woman and all the imaginary theories that have stuck to her skin, so to speak, since the colonial era, the second remark concerns the fear of a certain mental hijacking that research can bring to the issue of women in Islam. An appropriation of ideas for purposes of ideological (or other) exploitation may be its fate.

The objective of this work is a simple attempt to understand a social reality - in this case that of the condition of the Muslim woman starting from her education as a little girl - and not to act as a safety gate for any cause whatsoever, not to bring radicalism on the subject to the "truths" widely disseminated by some mass media and writers. As we have just pointed out, they often come only from prejudices and stereotypes of hate and conflict. To draw legitimation by diverting such research without the knowledge of its author would be an act damaging to all.

We hope that the reader understands that it will of course be necessary to make the difference, to respect an ethic that will preserve the thought of the writing from any distortion and mental recycling.

No matter how, it is undeniable that the emancipation of Algerian women through their education and their access to public space, like men, is an irreversible phenomenon. It is interesting to see that men and women rub shoulders at an early age in school, high schools, business and all workplaces.

Social change is in favor of this mixing that promotes the human and economic development of society and promises a better future for the generations to come

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