

Life in the Sudan

Giving and Sharing Is Way of Life to All Muslims

(The Gezira, continued)
By Bayytnah Sharriell

After our midday meal (2:00) at Abu Gummary in the Gezira, Fatma's sisters cleaned the dishes and put away the food, while Fatma and I retired in the large bedroom. We were both quite tired, for life in the Gezira is not as easy nor as simple as it is in the large cities. We were without electricity, and gas, and running water, yet we were in a comfortable place.

IT IS the general practice for the inspectors to have a house boy (servant). In the average home in the Sudan, there is a house boy; for the women are respected very highly and in order for her to be able to please her husband well, she must be provided for and taken care of very well so that her mind can be on pleasing her husband, and helping him to be content. In this case, however, Bashir (Fatma's brother) had let his house boy go prior to his going to Omdurman, and since he did not know that he would be bringing Fatma and me when he returned to the Gezira, he had not told the boy to return. Fatma's mother had convinced him that Fatma and her two sisters could take care of the work and for him not to worry or bother about finding a house servant for the period that we would be there.

We rested until 4:00 then showered and dressed. We then went out on the front porch to have tea. Tea was served by Fatma's youngest sister, Robia, who was about 8 years old. In the Sudan, the girls learn how to prepare the tea (which is a real specialty in the Sudan, prepared with special spices) and serve it at the age of 7. As we sat drinking our tea in the steady temperate breeze, we saw a line of about 6 camels loaded with bails of cotton trailing one another. Two men walked with these camels, one leading the other on the side. These camels were walking with a slow but steady gait, with a sort of oscillating movement. It was such a beautiful sight. The sun was in the west and its golden orange rays casted an orange haze on the camels, as they passed about 400 ft. in front of us. Gradually only their shadowed forms could be seen. Peace and harmony was this time I had of observance.

AS WE SAT drinking our tea, the wife of the house attendant came up with two small male children. She came to meet Fatma and myself. She wore a simple plain cotton robe (the National dress). She was very tall and very dark. Her features were very keen. She was in her eighth month of pregnancy. She spoke arabic with a strange accent, and I found it very difficult to understand her. She was from the southwestern part of the Sudan. She had tea with us.

In Islam there is no distinction according to wealth with Allah.

The Muslims treat one another as brothers and sisters. This is one reason why all the Muslims east and west dress alike when they go to the Mosques and stand side by side with one another ignoring any wealth of materials or position.

The attendant's wife saw a dish on the table that she liked, and expressed her fondness for the dish. Bashir told her to take it home with her. I was a little surprised at this action. It was the only dish of its kind in the house, and I felt that Bashir needed it to serve fruit on in the event that he had company.

I expressed this thought to Fatma. I could understand his giving away one if he had many, but I could not understand his giving away his last. Fatma at first was a little disturbed by my question, but when she saw my sincerity she explained; that when one gave of his possessions freely and without reserve that Allah would bless him with much more. That we would never be without, for as we give it freely it would come to us easily.

THIS EXPLANATION helped me to understand the characters of the Sudanese Muslim girls with whom I studied at the University. They were always giving and sharing what they had with one another. One could not feel any hesitation in their attitudes when one was on the "receiving end." She went on to explain that Allah gave us the sun shine and the earth, and that from this came all that man has. How then could man who was nothing before Allah, be stingy with that which he did not create himself? She said that had it not been for Allah, Bashir would not have had the dish to give.

Now that I have accepted my natural religion, the religion of righteousness, Islam, and have heard the teachings of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, I realized that Fatma was explaining Islam to me.

The Holy Quran teaches us:

"Whatever good thing you spend it is to your good, and you spend not but to seek Allah's pleasure. And whatever good thing you spend it will be paid back to you in full, and you will not be wronged." (2:272)

"Those who spend their wealth by night and day, privately and publicly, their reward is with their Lord; and they have no fear, nor shall they grieve." (2:274)

"If you manifest charity how excellent it is. And if you hide it and give it to the poor, it is good for you. And it will do away with some of your evil deeds; and Allah is aware of what you do." (2:271)

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