

Life

How Sudan Muslims Meet Needs with Gifts of Allah

By Bayyinah Sharrieff

It was about 8 p.m. when we, Fatma, her sisters and myself were taken back through the long corridors to the gate. During my whole visit of about four hours at the house in El Housh, I never once saw any men. Fatma's brother, Bashir had been with the men in another part of the large home and we did not even hear their voices.

At the side gate (through which the women enter) Bashir was waiting for us with his car. We gave our "salaams" (greetings of peace) and "shookrons" (thanks) to our hostesses. They invited us to come and stay with them another time for a longer period. As we drove off we saw them standing there watching us for as long as they could be seen.

WHEN WE returned to Abu Gimmery, all was quiet. As was our habit, we went up to the roof and looked at the skys and stars and listened to the radio. We discussed the political situation of the Sudan, which was at that time very uncertain and then retired.

The next morning after prayer and tea, Fatma and I went out to the store house, a one-room house behind the large house. She picked out an oblong dried looking gourd. She took off the outer shell. Inside was an intricate woven looking mass similar to a sponge. She then slit open the side of it with a razor blade, emptied its seeds and washed it out. She cut it in half, and gave me one half and kept the other half for herself. I was to bathe with this. Up until this time I had only used wash cloths. This sponge was hard when it was dry, but after it was wet and soaped it became very soft.

These grow abundantly in the Sudan, and in other parts of Africa. They can also be found in Central America, the West Indies, South America and India. I was surprised to find this same type of "vegetable sponge" in department stores in Paris, France (imported) bounded with cloth on its edges and used for bathing. I have also seen them sold in plastic bags in drug stores here in Chicago.

WHILE I was there in Abu

Gimmery, I needed tooth paste. Fatma asked me if I would mind using what they used. She had some sticks which had been cut from a certain tree. Each stick was about six inches long. After peeling off the bark from the end of the stick, one chews it. That end then resembles a brush, the cleaning agent is a natural one found already in the stick. One then brushes ones teeth with this stick. This is the tooth brush.

While there in Abu Gimmery we also collected some branches from a tree, the wood of which is used in making perfumes. This wood when chipped, and put into the oils and alcohol and mixed with other perfumed oils gives a very attractive and enhancing fragrance. The Sudanese also press flowers with oil and add alcohol to make perfumes. The Sudanese are well known for their beautiful fragrances.

One morning we noticed that Fatma's youngest sister, Robia, had the symptoms of a cold. Fatma went and gathered what seemed to be bean seed pods. They were long and flat, and had a purplish-black color. She then started a fire on one of the tin grill boxes which she used for cooking and placed the pods of seeds on the fire. She fanned the vapor into her sister's face and made her inhale it. I also breathed in the aroma of the seed pods. It was the odor of "vicks" the brand of cough medicine which is commonly used here in America to get colds. This was repeated several times. She was also given an herb tea and was made to rest. After a day she was strong and no longer complained of her cold.

THESE WERE experiences which I will never forget. Being born and raised in America, these experiences came to me as a surprise. I had been accustomed to going to drug stores for diluted medicine. I had never thought of making perfumes, nor of looking to a tree for a tooth brush and paste.

I had lost the realization of the values of vegetation: That what we have all comes from the earth. I had not the knowledge of how to prepare and use these things, which to the Sudanese

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Life in the Sudan

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seemed so common. They knew the value of earth and its natural vegetation. They did not understand why I was not in the knowledge of these things; that natural vegetation is at the disposal of man.

At that time I was not a Muslim and had not read the Holy Qur-an:

31:20 "See you not that Allah has made subservient to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth."

16:11 "He causes to grow for you thereby herbage and olives and the date palms and the grapes and all the fruits."

16:10 "He it is who sends down water from the clouds for you; it gives

drink and by it grows the trees on which you feed."

15:20 "And we have made in it (the earth) means of subsistence for you and for him for whom you provide not."

Nor had I heard the teachings of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad that we must have some of this earth to call our own that we may supply the needs of a Nation of People (the Black Man in America). He is teaching us to go back to our own, and get the knowledge of how to do for ourselves. He is showing us in reality the importance of land and how to work with the land

for the benefit of ourselves with a focal point on supplying the needs of the Nation.

Islam teaches us that whatever man needs is in the earth and that Allah placed it there for our disposal. He is a Merciful God.

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, is bringing us back to the reality of the values of owning land, by showing us through concrete examples, the SALAAM Restaurant, YOUR Supermarket, bakeries, farms; dairy, poultry and vegetable, so that we may produce our own needs with the Help of Allah for the benefit of our Nation, so that we no longer need to depend on the white man for our food and our necessities of life.

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More people than

