

# MISOGYNY

## THE UNDESIRABLE ARAB ETHOS



George H. Hassanzadeh -- Expert in Islamic Matters



On a hot August afternoon in 1956, in the Arab section of my hometown, Ahvaz, Iran, I saw two young Arab girls sitting outside their mud-backed home in a bed of ashes. It was an unusual sight. The girls were naked from the waist down, looking traumatized and petrified as if they were being severely punished. At that time, I worked for a progressive company called Khuzestan Development Service (KDS), which was building a dam in the nearby city of Deful. With me were an American engineer, a Swiss woman, and an American woman. I was the interpreter.

My driver, Saleh, who lived in the same neighborhood, pointed the girls out and, in Parsi, said, "Poor girls." The Swiss woman motioned for the driver to stop the car. While my driver explained the girls' situation, they all looked anxiously at me to translate. It was as uncomfortable for me to translate as it was for the driver to explain. I tried to downplay the scene, but that did not work; the faces of the girls told a different story.

I was reminded a few times that foreigners are only interested in portraying the negative part of our country to the world, and that is why they take pictures of men riding on donkeys and not someone driving a Mercedes Benz. I was caught by surprise, however. It was too late for me to make up a story as I have done on occasions when my national pride was involved. The more I tried to minimize the event, the more curious they became.

The Swiss woman knew something about the subject. She was telling the others that she had read a while back that Arabs circumcise their young girls. She was talking about dulling the nerve system that would give these girls' genitals sexual pleasure.

My driver added, "Either these girls' genitals are already sewn up, or they will soon have a ceremony to sew up their vaginas, leaving a small hole for urination. He also said he knows of one family that lost a ten-year-old to vaginal infection.

The hatred of women is not unique to Islam or Arabia. Many cultures and religions regard women as less than men in every way. However, Arab misogyny is, without any doubt, the severest of them all. Of all the Arab Islamic customs imposed upon the Iranians, some were so brutal that no Iranian wanted to get near them because no amount of rationalization could justify them. One such cruel custom still practiced in the Arab world is the mutilation of female genitalia.

The little Arab girls have stayed with me as an upsetting reminder of what the Arab Iranians do to their females. Even though it was done in my country, I have always shrugged it off as not mine but rather an Arab culture.

George H. Hassanzadeh, born and raised in a Shi'a Muslim family in Iran, is the author of ***Iran: Harsh Arm of Islam*** and ***First Comes the Mosque***. He is a recognized expert in Islam. George H. Hassanzadeh is a U.S. Army Veteran and lives in California.