# Arab Youth and Culture Conflict

**Mr. Mansour Ali Mohammad Almaswari**
Lecturer, Dept. of English,
Amran University-Yemen
PhD Research Scholar& UGC -JRF
Dept. of English, Dr. BAM University,

**Dr. Farhana Khan, Research Guide**
Associate Professor & Head
Department of English,
Maulana Azad College
Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University

## Abstract

It is undeniable that today world is entirely different from the world few decades back, socially, culturally, scientifically and politically. A huge technological and informative blast has totally changed the norms and perceptions, way of life, thinking and communicating among individuals, communities, cultures, states and nations. Undoubtedly, this dramatic change has made lots of profits for man and made far-fetched things closer. Cyber technology and digital humanities have changed many perceptions; and today view towards the outer world is absolutely different from the view few decades ago. There becomes no fixity in anything. Since the world has become like a global village, imperialistic Western countries have exploited this advancement in their favor and started imposing their values upon the other nations, as ever, in the name of globalization and imperialism. Traditional standards of official, social and cultural life are influenced by the standards of contemporary Western societies and cultures

Socially and culturally, media revolution is a double-edged weapon that can help improving our potentialities or destroying our moral values. The Arab Youth is not exception of all what has been happening around them. Youth could access to whatever they want in a glance and perceive the world differently from their elder generations. Arab Younger generation adopts Western culture and values which present a threat to the existing traditional, cultural and religious Arabic values.

This humble research, however, tackles the issue of culture conflict among the contemporary Arab Youth generation and traces the daring consequences of Westernizing the way of life, and of the problem of forming a solid identity. In a nutshell, this paper sheds light on the unconscious denial of the Arab Collective identity and how the Arab Youth have exchanged it with strange and discomfortable values of the west.

**Keywords**: Culture Conflict, Identity, Arab Youth, Mass Media, Globalization

## Introduction

**A culture is made -- or destroyed -- by its articulate voices**.[1]

Ayn Rand

WE usually hear that youth are half the present and all future. That is to say, safe and careful upbringing of the youth in earlier ages helps producing matured, patriot and immunized generations; and assures prosperous future for any leading nation. As long as youth are considered to be the pillar of any successful society, they, then, need to be well directed and looked after.

Thus, one needs to investigate the status of the contemporary Arab Youth and the many challenges they confront consciously and unconsciously. Among the challenges they encounter is the socio-cultural conflict, the lack of realizing a collective identity, sense of belonging, oneness and space of freedom in life. Arab Youth nowadays are astray and lose their way if compared to youth of other advanced nations. They are confronted with the idea of Westernization, believing that surviving is to be modern and for modern flavor. In this manner, imperialistic modernism brings in its wake a fracture

in the concept of identity for the Arab youth and leads them escape reality to live virtual reality.

**The challenge of culture Conflict** is, however, among the major obstacles Arab Youth face. Culture Conflict can best be defined as a term implying that "a particular culture is undergoing some process of change, confusion or crisis whereby certain values may be at variance with one another, or when one generation may hold different values or lifestyles from another."[2]     The above definition has rightly diagnosed the major challenge of the Arab Youth, i.e. the challenge of holding different values and Western lifestyle. Moreover, Arab youth abhor their own culture, feel ashamed to maintain the traditional values and consider it a landmark of illiteracy, closeness, fundamentalism and out of date practices. They are gravitated to the free type of culture which can be more found in the Western culture than in their own culture. In this respect Ngugi Wa Thiongo in his seminal book, *Decolonizing the Mind*, has genuinely noted the problem of this cultural conflict. In a very relevant, though lengthy, words, he asserts:

> The biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against the collective defiance is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their language, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacity and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves, for instance, with other peoples' languages rather than their own. It even plants in them serious doubts about the moral

rightness of struggle. The intended results are despair, despondency and a collective death wish (p,3).[3]

In these precious and touching words, it seems as if Wa Thiongo has been addressing the Arab youth nowadays.

Another relevant definition of culture conflict is "the conflict of behavior patterns and values that result when different cultures are incompletely assimilated; especially*:* the conflict that may find expression in high rates of criminality and delinquency."[4] One can lucidly realize that Arab Youth nowadays are easily accepting foreign cultures and deny their own one. This state of easy acceptance and easy rejection is problematic and forecasts a cultural disease. Besides, Arab Youth have conflicts among themselves. This conflict stems from the lack of knowledge and contact with the traditional Arabic culture and is compounded by the visual and social media pressures and influences. To Erik Erickson, "identity crisis means not only a loss of identity but more correctly a loss of ego identity which emerges as a normative stage in the human life cycle."[5]

In the area of Education, the majority of the Arab youth give priority to the foreign languages to the Arabic language. Speaking English at the expense of the 'mother tongue' is fashionable for it is a sign of being modern and superior. Many Arab societies stimulate their younger generation to pay greater attention to worldly things, novel norms and new trends of education. English language, then, has become a measuring stick of intelligence and modernization while their Arabic mother tongue has become a secondary class language. Beside, a state of doubt and uncertainty is made in the minds of the Arab youth for their own language, education and culture as well. They more trust the Western Published books, literature, culture, educational institutions and elite than trusting their own ones. This gap created a socio-cultural disorder and helped the youth improve a state of discontentment, discouragement and dissatisfaction.

Moreover, the within cultural conflict among Arab Youth has not only been restricted to the language, which categorizes their own cultural identity. Rather, it has extended to threaten their being, influence, evolution, perpetuality and steadiness. In the part of everyday life, one finds that many youth of the Arab countries including Gulf States, African Arab Countries, Arabian Peninsula countries and the Fertile Crescent countries all adopt Western way of life. They prefer the western flavor. In the Gulf States i.e., Saudi Arabia Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain and Qatar for example, many youngsters cannot speak Arabic as they grow up in the nurseries laps, who come from many non-Arabic Asian Countries like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Philippine…, etc. Their families encourage them to join English medium schools and classes. Not only that, these youth have become minority in their countries.

In respect of lifestyle; food, dress and entertainment; most of the urban Arab youth prefer new western norms to the traditional ones. Youth are crazy about what is new and in search of the new.  Despite of all this, they find themselves displeased. They couldn't realize which is good and which is bad. They feel uneasy as modernism has dominated their life and they found themselves in a turning shift in all aspects of life. This shift leads to a social disorder, family breakdown and extended families are no more in many Arab societies as Arab Youth get independence after getting married and start establishing their own families away of their extended families. Young people live their virtual reality instead of living real life.

At the start of the twenty first century, the climate of the Arabic culture is Americanized and Europeanized to meet the ruling classes and elite. There has been a cultural hegemony in different trends of life. This hegemonic culture is manipulated to fit the Western countries' supremacy and interest first; and to meet the interests of the dynasties of the Arab World. Antonio Gramsci, the Great Marxist German critic has rightly pointed out this state of hegemony as follows:

every State is ethical in as much as one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes (144).[6]

In this respect, culture is twisted to serve the ruling class. The elite don't consider whether it poisons the youth or leads them astray as long as it meets the needs of the ruling dynasties. Anyway, It s worth concluding this humble paper with a very fitting saying for Terry Eagleton, the Great contemporary British critic who, in his famous book, *Why Marx was Right* (2011), demonstrates that "It is hard to sustain your faith in change when change seems off the agenda, even if this is when you need to sustain it most of all. After all, if you do not resist the apparently inevitable, you will never know how inevitable the inevitable was (6)."[7]

## Conclusion

Nowadays, most of the Arab youth irresistibly give up their cultural identity and establish new imported norms of identity. These bizarre and poisoned norms have been imported from Western societies no doubt. Arab Young generations imitate blindly; and social media has its own impact on the behaviors of individuals and societies. This cultural challenge threatens the Arab entity and uniqueness. The new styles and tendencies have a formative influence on the way youth think and act; and unless genuine study to confront this problem, a disastrous future will be waiting for them. It is necessarily asserting that, it is neither wise to keep the Arab Youth excluded from what has been happening around the world, nor possible to let them easily accept different cultures which are not compatible or consistent to the Youth privacy and identity as Arabs. Openness, in a nutshell, starts at a mind and ends on the world not the opposite. It

will be very difficult for the Arab Youth to be in an open world while their thinking still lives in the early twentieth century.

## End Notes

1  http://www.finestquotes.com/select_quote-category-Culture-page-1.htm

[2] Culture Conflict and Identity Crisis. P, 54

[3] Wa Thiongo, Ngugi. *Decolonizing the Mind*. Zimbabowe: Zimbabowe Publishing House, 1981. P. 3

[4] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture%20conflict

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[7] Eagleton, Terry. *Why Marx Was Right,* Yale University Press, 2011, p.6. Printed

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