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The Impact of Nature on the Egyptian Personality

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Environment has a great impact on shaping and defining the characteristics of the personality; determining its way of thinking, dealing with different matters, and organizing and managing life affairs.

The personality of a citizen living in a harsh environment is completely different from that of a citizen living in an easy and docile environment.

Likewise, the urban citizen who lives by the sea coast differs from the Bedouin citizen who lives in the heart of the desert and faces dangers and difficulties of life there.

Dr. Mohamed Abdel-Fattah al-Mahdi, an expert in psychiatry, says: "Nature has a great impact on the personality of man, where psychologists and sociologists put distinctive characteristics for the inhabitants of rural areas that distinguish them from the inhabitants of coastal areas and distinguish them all from the inhabitants of mountains and deserts."

The Egyptian environment has been characterized by meekness, calmness, and lack of natural hazards, being free from rugged terrain, barren deserts, and characterized by a good temperate climate, as it is not extremely cold, nor very stifling hot; and it has not been subject to natural disasters such as volcanoes and earthquakes.

Gustave Le Bon, a leading French polymath, says in his book (Ancient Egyptian Civilization): "If the Egyptian feels tired of his bright plains, that is due to his ignorance of the dreadful pains that arise on the shores of the lonely seas, and the red twilights under the fickle, dangerous sky".

The traditional nature, where the Egyptian lived on the banks of the Nile, has left its impact on his personality in the form of a tendency to meekness, tranquility, calmness, patience, humor, fun, optimism, moderation and love of life.

We do not clearly realize these traits unless we compare them with the characteristics of those living in dangerous environments: either amid raging seas and oceans at coastal areas; in wild deserts; in extremely harsh, poor, and droughty mountains; in forests full of predators and accordingly exposed

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to threats at every single moment, or under snowstorms, wearing heavy clothes that limit their movement and spontaneity at the poles¹.

This tolerant and calm Egyptian environment helped Egyptians establish one of the greatest civilizations in history, and provided them with a secure and stable life. Therefore, the Egyptian personality inherited a number of traits such as: kindness, calmness, tolerance, and lack of inclination to violence or being dragged into practicing it.

However, nature has another extremely negative aspect. Just as it bequeathed the Egyptians positive and constructive traits that contributed to the creation, emergence and stability of the State, it bequeathed them some negative traits that had the greatest impact on the emergence and exacerbation of political tyranny in the Egyptian State.

Dr. Al-Mahdi says: "As the simple and generous nature has given Egyptians positive qualities, it also had a negative aspect, as it gave Egyptians an increased feeling of reassurance and tranquility that sometimes developed into laziness, dependence, negativity and submission to the status quo, with a tendency to stability that sometimes turns into a state of stalemate."

The Egyptian personality, like the Egyptian nature, does not easily or quickly change, but it rather tends to stability, meekness, consensus, and stabilization of the status quo whenever possible, befriending and accepting it.

These qualities have served to a large extent all those who ruled Egypt throughout history, as the Egyptian's tendency for meekness, tranquility and stability outweighed his tendency for revolution and change, and perhaps this factor lies behind the chronic state of tyrannical rule throughout Egyptian history. The period and stability of the situation, but little by little he is brutalizing and tightening his grip on the people, because he knows that the Egyptian people are not inclined to revolution, especially in its violent forms.

¹ Egyptian Personality Psychology, Dr. Mohamed Elmahdy, Consultant Psychiatrist, [link](#)

The relative absence of the Egyptian nature from earthquakes, volcanoes, nuclei, and torrential hurricanes is matched by a popular tendency for maintaining stability, which was always exploited by Egyptian tyrants over time.

Dr. Gamal Himdan states five basic traits that are considered the keys to the Egyptian personality that effectively control it. He says: "Perhaps there is almost agreement on some basic characteristics that are considered the pillars or poles of the Egyptian personality, namely:

First: Commitment to religious teachings, (Always)

Second: Conservatism, (Inevitably)

Third: Moderation, (Constantly)

Fourth: Realism, (Often)

Fifth: Negativity (Sometimes).

In this way, the series of characteristics appears as a somewhat descending sequence, gradually grading from positive to negative, or from strength to weakness."²

Despite the numerous forms of religion in Egyptian society and its different patterns, its influence extends to most of the behavior of Egyptians, where it forms a large part of their popular culture.

It is strange that despite the severe attacks on Islam, Egyptians adhere to religious teachings in an amazing way, Dr. Mohamed Al-Mahdi says: "Despite the political and media campaigns against religious commitment, and identifying it as 'terrorism and extremism', people increasingly adhere to religion (despite having many contradictions)³.

Dr. Gamal Himdan says: "As for conservatism, and even extreme conservatism, as Abbas Al-Akkad stresses, it means that the Egyptian is committed to the old, heritage, traditions and legacies, and accordingly does not easily accept the new, which in turn means that he is a traditional imitator, not

² Personality of Egypt (4/527)

³ Egyptian Personality Psychology, Op. Cit.

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a revolutionary, nor regenerator; and even - according to Akkad - when he revolts, it is to preserve the old and the inherited, that is, to be strange and surprising, and in the opposite way, he becomes revolutionary for the sake of maintaining conservatism.”

The Egyptian citizen is characterized by passivity that distances him from participating effectively in society, especially in the political aspect - with the exception of the post-January revolution period - as he had had a feeling that his opinion was valueless as long as the ruling authority was in control and dominating everything, stripping the people of all their rights, which makes them lose any sense of dignity and pride in their country.

Egyptians also feel that law is unfairly enforced, where there are certain privileges for the ruling elites and their circles, which leads the citizen to losing any sense of belonging or duty towards his country.

The reason for this is due to the policy of oppression and injustice that characterized the Egyptian regimes over time, especially after the July 1952 coup, and the transfer of all powers to the hands of an oppressive government.

Dr. Azza Ezzat has outlined prominent characteristics of the Egyptian personality from the analysis of the matrix of popular proverbs, including:

- A lover of stability, where his love for his country and adherence to every old stem.
- Sarcastic, where lack of seriousness and recklessness may derive.
- Committed to Religious teachings, with patience, dependence, belief in and contentment with class differences.
- Good-hearted and spontaneous, where he tends to be irrational, cautious and non-adventurous, and exaggerating.

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- Intelligent, wise, where he is sometimes 'fahlawi' (using his wits to convince others and sometimes deceive them), and tends to preferring his own interest."⁴

Dr. Gamal Himdan says: Most of the negatives and shortcomings of the Egyptian personality are mainly - and in the first place - due to the political oppression that it has horribly and heinously been subjected to throughout history.

The whole world saw in the 25 January Revolution (2011) and the days that followed it the authentic nature of the Egyptian people, where high morals, politeness, love of the homeland, work to develop it, and dedication to public service...etc.

But when the 3 July coup (2013) came, only bastards were highlighted, while the honorable people retreated, and the opportunists, hypocrites and flatterers emerged...etc.

In fact, the Egyptian citizen is no longer clinging to the land or loving to stay in his country that oppresses and represses him. Rather, he seeks to emigrate by any possible means, regardless of being legal or illegal, even by throwing himself into the unknown, only to escape the deteriorating reality in Egypt.

⁴ Munir Sherif and Ahmed Omar: Power's Seduction; Security and an Outlook, introduced by: Dr. Ali Mabrouk, Dar Al-Ain Publishing House, Egypt, 1st; edition, 1435 AH – 2014 G.