Excerpt: His Highness the Aga Khan on women (2)

by NANOWISDOMS ARCHIVE

Don Cayo: You mentioned standing up for Canadian values, and I think certainly your own agency stands up for the values that are important to your religion. It strikes me that sometimes these conflict with local cultures and values. Take the position of women — a lot of societies in various parts of the world have historically marginalised women. The development I favour, and you do, does not marginalise women. In fact, it’s the opposite. Is this a conflict with the existing culture?

Aga Khan: It can be, it can be. And it is changing.

It’s changing slowly because, I think, there is an undercurrent in some parts of the world of threat. I don’t necessarily understand it myself, but I think there is a sense of discomfort. There are societies, for example, where the educated woman will not find a husband because she’s educated. So you need to be very, very careful in handling these things, because they can be a real boomerang if you get them wrong.

I think it is a process of change. I think it’s also a social issue. In many countries that I know, women do certain tasks and men do other tasks. That’s a traditional outcome of the economics of society. In rural communities the role of the woman is very, very different from urban communities, obviously. So there are a lot of criteria there and it’s a difficult problem. But it’s one that needs to be handled with immense care.

Don Cayo: Should development agencies draw a line in the sand and say, “For these things we will not bend?” Is there a list of things that shouldn’t bend to the local cultural preferences?
Aga Khan: Yes, I think there are things one would like to see changed. But it's not the issue of whether you want to see them changed, it's a question of how you change them and the time-frame and the methods you use to do that. You can handle it with tact and a sense of respect for traditions. You can allow society the time to make those changes. Or you can try to impose them. But if you do try to impose them, you very, very often, as I said, get a very uncomfortable reaction.

His Highness the Aga Khan's 2008 Vancouver Sun Interview, Don Cayo (Toronto, Canada)

Click here to read more at NanoWisdoms.org ...

Click here for this post in PDF format.

Click here to review our Facebook posts organised by theme.

Click here to subscribe and receive our Facebook posts by e-mail.

[NOTE: For some reason NanoWisdoms' Facebook posts do not always appear in many Facebook newsfeeds due to a problem in Facebook and/or individual newsfeed settings. Please visit our wall to review all our posts if you do not always see our posts. Thank you.]

References


5. ^ Please visit our wall (http://www.facebook.com/NanoWisdoms?sk=wall)