Excerpts: His Highness the Aga Khan on a manipulative, superficial media

by NANOWISDOMS ARCHIVE OF IMAMAT SPEECHES, INTERVIEWS AND WRITINGS,

"Too often, those who set the media agenda see it primarily as a business agenda. Too often the measure of media success is simply financial profit. I think this attitude is wrong -- it often makes for manipulative media, distorting and misleading in a narrow pursuit of readers and ratings. It means that journalism is subordinated to entertainment, and that the need to inform must yield to the need to please. Responsible and relevant reporting is not the priority in that business model. Instead, the power of the press is used to turn traditional value systems on their heads; to take what is really quite unimportant and to make it seem very important, to take what is trivial and to make it seem titillating. In that context, what is most truly significant must yield to what is most readily saleable. The damage that can be done by such distorted journalism is especially heavy in Africa, offending African value systems, distracting African energies and mis-serving African development. Manipulative journalism is not merely a nuisance here, it can have destructive power. Yet journalism at its best can be a strong pillar in building Africa's future. [Emphasis original]"

His Highness the Aga Khan's 2005 Address to the International Press Institute, 54th General Assembly (Nairobi, Kenya)

http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/7292/

"Frequently, democratic failures grow out of sheer incompetence. Publics are asked to vote on issues that bewilder them. Candidates obscure their own views and distort their opponents’ positions. Journalists transmit superficial rhetoric and slight underlying realities. People are appointed to jobs they cannot do, but are rarely held accountable. Corruption for some becomes a way of life. Meanwhile, the Media tell audiences what they
want to know rather than what they ought to know. And what too many people want today is not to be informed, but to be entertained."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2006 Address to the Evora University Symposium, 'Cosmopolitan Society, Human Safety and Rights in Plural and Peaceful Societies' (Evora, Portugal)

http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/7653/

"I am convinced that the best way for media, in Africa and elsewhere, to maintain their independence is to prove their indispensability. This is not an easy task. Information flows more quickly, over longer distances at lower cost than ever before. But sometimes more information, in and of itself, can also mean more misinformation, more confusion, more manipulation, more superficial snapshots of events, lacking nuance, lacking context, or hiding agendas."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2010 Address to the Conference Marking Nation Media Group's 50th Anniversary, 'Media and the African Promise' (Nairobi, Kenya)

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"For centuries, the press has cast itself as the champion of understanding and enlightenment. And yet, even as the press has become more international, it has often left a trail of misunderstanding in its wake. Confident that more information is a good thing in and of itself, the press has often focused too much on the quantity of what it can deliver, and too little on the quality of what it presents.

"But if the media have sometimes been part of the problem -- amplifying the threatening aspects of globalisation -- then the media can also be part of the solution. If a careless or superficial press can exacerbate the clash of cultures, then a more sensitive and studious press can accomplish the opposite. The same media which serves to distort or discredit old cultures, can also be used to re-validate them, and to help explain them to others. In some cases, this will mean a greater effort to adapt to the world's ways -- to write or speak in the English language, for example, as we tell old stories to new audiences. If the mysteries of ancient Samarkand or Turfan or Kashgar are relayed predominantly in Uzbek
or in Uygur, then the sharing will be incomplete -- and inconsequential. Global technologies imply the use of a global language -- not to obliterate old traditions, but to rescue and revivify them. There was a time when a variety of authentic cultures could thrive because of their separation from one another. But that day is past. The only answer now is that we come to understand and appreciate one another. And in that endeavour the media must play a central role."

His Highness the Aga Khan's 1996 Commonwealth Press Union Conference Keynote Address, 'The Spirit of Creative Encounter' (Cape Town, South Africa)

http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/5137/

See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on the offensive caricatures (cartoons) of the Holy Prophet (pbuh)

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