Excerpts: His Highness the Aga Khan on the
difference between the type of news that appeals
to Westerners and Easterners

"When I began publishing a newspaper in Kenya in 1960, I suggested that management should conduct a readership survey in which we asked the readers what they like best in the paper. The high proportion of expatriates we still had in those days training the African staff were surprised to discover that foreign news, especially news of other countries in Africa, came near the top of the list. Indeed, the results of the questionnaire showed conclusively that the average reader in Kenya wanted a more serious newspaper than his counterpart in Europe or America. He wanted, in other words, to be informed and educated and not just to be entertained."

His Highness the Aga Khan's 1977 National Press Club Reception address (Dacca, Bangladesh)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/1825/

"Particularly deplorable is the growing journalistic tendency to exploit 'quirks' in the human or societal psyche. This is a major problem in the developing and the developed world alike. By 'quirks' I mean curiosities, idiosyncrasies, anomalies, and dormant resentments or frustrations which can be developed among various segments of society. An irresponsible communicator can create an appetite for such materials by catering to one public's voyeuristic curiosity, through the invasion of privacy for instance, or by pandering to the sectarian prejudice of one group about another. A
market space for such offerings can be teased into existence and then prodded and nourished so that it becomes not only economically viable but commercially irresistible as well. The public, at least in many Third World societies, is not as voyeuristic as some may assume. It is, however, immediately sensitive to sectarian views or news and the converse seems to hold true overall for Western societies."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1996 Commonwealth Press Union Conference Keynote Address (Cape Town, South Africa)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/5137/

"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."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2005 Address to the International Press Institute, 54th General Assembly (Nairobi, Kenya)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/7292/

"Driven by short-term circulation and profit goals, media increasingly tell audiences what they want to hear rather than what they ought to hear. And what too many people want is not to be informed, but to be entertained. One result is the inadequacy of
international news. I am told that world news now represents a
substantially lower percentage of mainstream American news than it
did a generation ago.”

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2006 School of International and Public
Affairs, Columbia University, Commencement Ceremony address (New York,
USA)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/7699/

"Catering to public voyeuristic curiosities, with little concern for the
value of personal privacy, has become a way of life for some
journalists around the world. The question as I see it is simply this --
will our journalists write about what is truly significant for our
societies? Or will they downgrade or trivialise news into
entertainment as they woo the largest possible audience with the
most easily digestible headline?"

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1997 Nation Press and Building Opening
Ceremony address (Nairobi, Kenya)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/5246/

Norm Perry: In the West, I have been reading several of stories
that have been printed about you, almost every story I have seen
about you talks first about your wealth, how wealthy you are and
how your grandfather would be weighed against diamonds and
pearls and things to give him money. Then it talks about your sister
Yasmin’s friendship with Margaret Trudeau and about your father,
Aly Khan’s marriage to Rita Hayworth and later on, you get the
stuff you are spiritual leader and has a lot to do with the Ismailis.
Doesn’t it bother you when you see stories like that, all that basically
gossip stuff that comes on the top in the West?

Aga Khan: I don’t think that living in the West one can ignore the
fact that the West has a tradition of a certain type of press which it’s
accepted, it lives with. I don’t think it attaches much seriousness to
that press and as far as I am concerned, my work is what counts, my people is what counts and I am not prepared to discuss that sort of -- really material with any of that media.

His Highness the Aga Khan's 1978 CTV Canada AM Interview with Norm Perry (Ottawa, Canada)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/1872/

Anthony Mann: You have often resented Press references to your family and personal affairs.

Aga Khan: I have always refused to talk about my private life. Any public man must have the right to have a private life and keep it private. In the West, intrusion into personal and private affairs is widely tolerated; this is not so in the East. Articles such as I have in mind do nothing for a public enlightenment; they are just a way of selling a magazine to a certain type of reader interested in such things.

His Highness the Aga Khan's 1979 Sunday Telegraph Magazine Interview with Anthony Mann (London, United Kingdom)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/1916/

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

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