



The Holy Month of Ramadan and the Unholy TV Programs

Ramadan and all its innumerable blessings have been showered upon the Ummah of Mohammad, *sallallahu alaihi wa sallam*, millions of Muslims worldwide vow to make this month to strengthen their bond to Allah and review their deeds seeking forgiveness and mercy. Millions vigorously read their copies of the Quran many hoping to complete the entire recitation before Eid. Meanwhile we find the entertainment industry rigorously preparing for this month as well, debuting their new shows, dramas and movies for the Muslims in MENA, i.e. the Arabic speaking countries, satellite television programs from children series to the other series airing a new episode every night. Starting their promotion trailers early before the start of Ramadan. Building up to the on start of the new shows and new series all scheduled to begin in the holiest month of the Islamic calendar.

It's a big time of the year for Arabic drama series – unveiling their new fresh lineup to ring the wide audience young and old – it has now become a common sight a sort of tradition for the Arab Muslims to gather around the TV especially after iftaar to watch their favorite new or old time muslasal (series). Watching the reactions of the various types of people who almost religiously watch and follow each and every episode and some even watch their favorite shows again on the internet, brings about several emotions or reactions.

For the satellite companies to be able to capitalize on this major sector and heavy audience base means big money for these channels especially as many research groups have shown that these stations make a third of their money during the month of Ramadan. Increase in audience equals increase in advertisement equals more money for the parties involved. But the focus is not on the advertisements or the commercials rather the focus is on the increased attraction of millions of Muslims almost as if is a magnetic attraction to their screens.

The streaming of various concepts is implied whether directly or indirectly. While other foreign concepts are outright bold contradictions to everything Muslims hold sacred or perhaps “untouchable”. These shows allowed the untouchable touchable from outright zina (adultery), alcohol, deception and lowly ties to the land (nationalism) being portrayed as a part of normal daily actions pulling the youth away from their tasks and duties be they in society or to their Lord. Thus making the gap wider and wider between their religion and them attempting to mimic what is on screen – be it deliberate or slowly accepting the *fawahish* (vices) as something normal. Here comes the normalization – the desensitization of the gravest acts formidable to Allah – the lessening of the severity of the haraam.

By one not willing to read the Quran because he is intently focused or mesmerized by the TV and being seduced with cliffhangers that rip away devoted worshippers from taraweeh which come only once a year whereas the TV series are relentlessly repeated on numerous stations.

This ripping causes several domino effects after taraweeh - need time to relax ... watch an hour or so of the latest programs or new movies while garbed in so called

“Islamic garb” but that the cloud of deceit to make the poison easily swallowed... more palatable to the wider audience – young and old, religious and not religious.

Here comes the more important role as Muslims as we need to be aware of the social engineering taking place as mentioned earlier of the normalization of the haraam and the seeping into the minds during the month which the gates of hell are closed and the scales of deeds are rebalanced in the month of mercy.

Are we only fasting of the stomach or do our eyes need fasting first. The main passageway to the senses...

A brief example of such shows is Bab Al-Hara of the portrayal of the young sheikh – a violent heedless husband backwards in thinking, jobless in his day life. This is as if in Islam there is such a thing as a priest – either choose life or religion. This brings the example of Omar bin Khattab when he threw out the “priestly” people from the mosque. Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) one day came into the masjid of the Prophet (saw) and found two young men. They were sitting in the masjid when he asked them, “What do you do?” They said, “We are from those people who worship Allah.” Umar (ra) said to them, “No, where do you work?” They said to him, “We don’t work. We’re just righteous people who just make dhikr (remembrance) of Allah. We’re alhamdulillah (all praise is due to Allah) those people whom Allah chose to be close to Him.” Then Umar said to them, “Wait one minute.” He came back with a stick and he began to hit them and instructed them to go out and work.

This is a warped depiction of such people who cling to Islam – being hard to deal and stubborn completely negligent of their duties as a man.

Or the other dramas of women and promiscuity and illicit affairs or seeking to “learn of their rights” from the foreigners as if there is nothing more for humans other than to follow the carnal desires – trampling over all decency or sense of ethics or accountability.

Here our Ummah in the Middle East and North Africa waits anxiously for their favorite drama series to begin regardless if it is a Syrian, Egyptian or Gulf shows or the shows of pranks and lies some with extreme fear elements. We need to remember the words of the Messenger of Allah (saw),

«ويل للذي يحدث بالحديث ليضحك به القوم فيكذب، ويل له، ويل له»

“Woe be on one who speaks and lies in order to make people laugh, woe be on him, woe be on him.” (Reported by at-Tirmithi)

Seeping poisons, normalization of vices, making the haraam appealing, distortion, overshadowing the major events happening in the world in particular the ravaging of the Islamic Ummah from the east to the west; even closer in proximity to these viewers is Syria - the war filled land of death and fire - making the Ummah shallow minded and lacking of any shred of duty and empathy to those living the real life drama of war and horror.

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

Manal Bader