

The Saidi

There are ideas and perceptions which we just tend to accept due to daily exposure and conditioning. With some observation, however, we may discover that these things are built upon faulty foundations. I notice that we in the Arab world are surrounded by a group of people who are known for their kindness, honesty, patience, and simplicity in word which comes from their good hearts. For some reason they have become known by the humorous jokes and stories about them and I talk here about the Saidis. (Saidis are the people of Upper Egypt. They commonly bear the brunt of casually racist humor which characterizes them as rural simpletons.) They have great qualities that no pen can describe. They can be found throughout the Arab world, seeking a decent living, and always willing to adapt and learn. Saidis are the source of knowledge and hard work. They are the leaders, writers, and scientists. President Jamal Abdul Nasser was Saidi. "The Dean of Arabic Literature," Taha Hussein was Saidi, as well as the Islamic scholar, Metwali Al Sharaawi. Saidis represent the majority of Egyptian intellectuals and scientists. They are also the workers who built our countries.

Since childhood we listen to jokes about them. If you told an Egyptian "he sold you the tram," he would get upset. On the other hand, if you told a Saidi "you bought the pyramid," no one would be upset as they have ever been the center of humor in the movies and theatre. I still recall the play "The Saidis Arrived," and other plays in Kuwaiti and Gulf theaters, joking about this group of nice people.

Nevertheless, a friend told me one of these jokes over thirty years ago, and I always share it with any blessed man, whether old or young, who wastes away his blessings and starts getting into trouble for no reason other than free time and luxurious