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FEMINISM AND THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY: PERSPECTIVES AND CONTROVERSIES

INTERVIEWS



MOST REV. DENIS ISIZOH
AUXILIARY BISHOP OF ONITSHA
ARCHDIOCESE



DR PAT NDU
GM, SOLID 100.9FM RADIO, ENUGU



DR AISHA BALARABE BAWA
USMANU DAN FODIYO UNIVERSITY,
SOKOTO



PROF. CHINEDUM OFOMATA

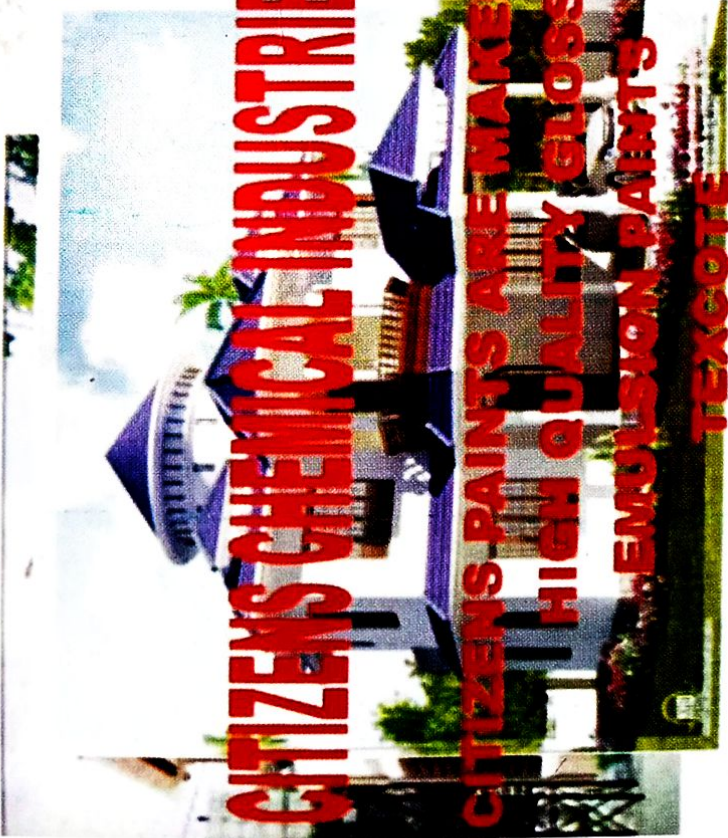
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A HISTORICO-SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO THE
QUEST FOR GENDER EQUALITY

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THE VIRTUOUS MIDDLE

Virtue, they say, lies in the middle. The problem however is that for human beings, the middle is difficult to determine and even more difficult to stick to. This is simply because what is at stake is not a physical middle – that would not be difficult to determine – but a moral middle, an ideal we are sure exists but which often eludes our practical chase. Nevertheless, a middle must be assumed, for it is the only assurance of stability, of equilibrium. Extremes, the pendulum teaches us, are an assurance of restlessness. And so, faced by challenges that call for decision making, human beings – as individuals and as society – know that the goal is to achieve the 'true' middle, or at least, something close to it. To achieve this middle (or something close to it), one must carefully observe and seriously deliberate on varied views, before decision making. A decision taken without such observation and deliberation will very likely be grossly erroneous, and unhealthy for society.

A wide range of issues connected with woman and her life and place in society – all identified with what has been called Feminism – has become a source of serious concern and controversy for many societies. The Nigerian society is not left out: Feminism has found itself a burning issue even on Nigerian soil. Discussions, studies, debates, activism that either defend or reject the way society sees and treats woman have become commonplace. In many and different ways, many and different people(s) have joined in this feminist discussion, formally or informally, aware of 'feminism' or unaware of it. There have been sides, varying from the radical to the subtle, from those calling for total change to those calling for particular adjustments. In the face of all this, we must recall that decisions should not be rushed. We must first observe and deliberate.

This edition of *The Thinker Magazine*, the 27th, wishes to be both part and facilitator of the deliberative process. Hence the theme for this edition is **Feminism and the Nigerian Society: Perspectives and Controversies**. We have tried to achieve three things: to make available relevant information on the topic, to provide various perspectives on it, and (somewhat) to suggest a direction. All three are seen in varying degrees in each article, interview, poem or opinion, found in this piece. We must note however that the piece you now hold does not, because it cannot, exhaust the entirety of feminist themes. We have tried however to touch on pivotal issues. We trust that you, the reader, as the ultimate decision-maker, will be able to weigh things wisely – with the aid of the professional contributions contained herein and with the virtuous middle in view – and then translate your wise conclusions into actions. All for a stable, fair and just human society.

I must immediately thank all those who made contributions to this magazine. In a special way, I mention His Excellency Most Revd. Denis Isizoh, Dr. Aisha Balarabe Bawa, Dr. Pat Ndu, Prof. Chinedum Ofomata, Sr. Dr. MarySylvia Nwachukwu, Very Rev. Fr. Dr. Justin Eke, and the iconic Olaoluwa Abagun (Barr). Your contributions are invaluable. God bless you all.

And you, dear reader, I wish you a nice read! I wish you a happy Easter too! May the peace of justice, which God alone can help us achieve, reign among us. Thank you.

Gabriel O. Mbamelu,
Editor-in-Chief

The Thinker Magazine is published annually by the Philosophy Department of Bigard Memorial Seminary, P.O. Box 327, Enugu. All correspondence to the Editor should be sent through the address named or to our email: bigardthinkerzine@yahoo.com

BIGARD NEWS UPDATE

Compiled by Augustine Nworie,
Editorial Secretary



THE PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT OF BIGARD GETS NEW H.O.D

As the former Head of the Philosophy Department of Bigard, Rev Fr Vitalis Ukwuaba, goes on his Sabbatical leave, a new HOD has been appointed, in the person of Very Rev. Fr. Dr. Humphrey Uchenna Ani.

Fr. Ani is a priest of the Catholic Diocese of Enugu, ordained in 2002. His First Degree studies in Philosophy and Theology were done at Seat of Wisdom Seminary, Owerri. Later, he

was sent for further studies at the Gregorian Jesuit University, Rome, where he obtained a Licentiate and a Doctorate in Philosophy. He joined the Bigard staff in 2018, serving as the Assistant HOD until his appointment as Head of Department. He lectures on Introduction to Philosophy, Epistemology and History of Philosophy.

One of the striking events of the year 2019 was the visit of the 1996 set of Bigard to the seminary on 16 January. Incidentally, this is the set of our beloved Fr Rector who graduated from Bigard in 1996. Coming from various parts of the world for their meeting, they prayed with the seminarians and addressed them briefly. They promised to do something for the seminary, especially as one of their own, Fr Albert Ikpenwa, is the rector of the seminary. It was an inspiring and challenging experience for the seminarians.

BIGARD '96 VISITS



FR. ALOYSIUS OBIWULU CLOCKS 25 IN THE SACERDOTAL OFFICE, 18 IN BIGARD



With a spirit of joy and solidarity, the entire Bigard family rejoices with Very Rev. Fr. Dr. Aloysius Chima Obiwulu, of Nnewi Diocese, as he celebrates his 25 years of untiring service in the Lord's vineyard. Ordained a Catholic priest on 3rd July, 1993, Fr. Obiwulu clocked 25 on 3rd July, 2018. However, the anniversary was celebrated by the Bigard family on Saturday, 16 March, 2019. The event started with a solemn Mass presided over by the Silver Jubilarian, with numerous other priests in attendance. The event was also graced by friends and well-wishers. The homilist, Rev. Fr. Dr. Francis Igboanugo, appraised the jubilarian as a "priest after the mind of God", an ardent disciplinarian, a meticulous scholar, a proven philosopher and an astute theologian. He was also testified to be a blessing to the Church and to the seminary family. Fr. Obiwulu is one of the longest serving priests in Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu, having spent 18 of the 25 years in the seminary.



BIGARD CELEBRATES HER 48TH CONVOCATION CEREMONY

The two-day event took place on 18th and 19th of March 2019. It began with a football match between the seminary team and that of Caritas University, Enugu, in honour of the officiating prelate, Most Rev. Dr. John I. Okoye, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Awgu. The match ended in a goalless draw. The rest of the evening witnessed a Holy Mass

concelebrated by the newly ordained priests and thereafter a warm reception of the graduands at the seminary auditorium.

The main event commenced on Tuesday 19th March, 2019 with the Convocation Mass celebrated by the officiating prelate. The graduands were present in their numbers, with many guests, friends and well-wishers. The rewarding of a c a d e m i c excellence/conferment of degrees took place at the Seminary Auditorium, with the Convocation Lecture given by Rev. Fr. Dr. Humphrey U. Ani, the Head of the Philosophy Department. The climax of the event was the presentation of the results of the graduands of both faculties, Philosophy and Theology. As usual, the results were wonderful; four of the graduates of Philosophy and three of Theology bagged Summa Cum Laude Probatus (First Class Honours)

BIGARD'S NEW AVE MARIA GROTTTO IS OPENED



As part of the events marking the 48th convocation ceremony, Bigard's new Ave Maria Grotto was blessed and commissioned by His Lordship, Most Rev. Dr. John Okoye, the officiating prelate of the convocation ceremony. The building of the grotto was sponsored majorly by Chief Emeka Madonna Okafor of Award Global Company Ltd, with some contribution from the 2017/2018 graduands as part of their parting gifts to the seminary. The Bishop while blessing and commissioning the grotto extolled the generosity of the sponsor and of the entire Bigard family.

BIGARD FAMILY GETS ANOTHER FORMATOR

Rev. Fr. Anthony Okoye of Catholic Diocese of Awka was ordained on the 20th of August, 2016. He did his philosophical and theological studies at Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu. He has gathered some pastoral experience at All Saints Parish and St. Theresa's Parish, Awgbu between 2016 to September 2018; and at St. Mary's Parish, Achina from October 2018 to 14th January 2019. He joined the Bigard Formation team on the 16th of January 2019 as the second Dean of Students' Affairs. The Bigard family heartily welcomes you, Fr, to your home.

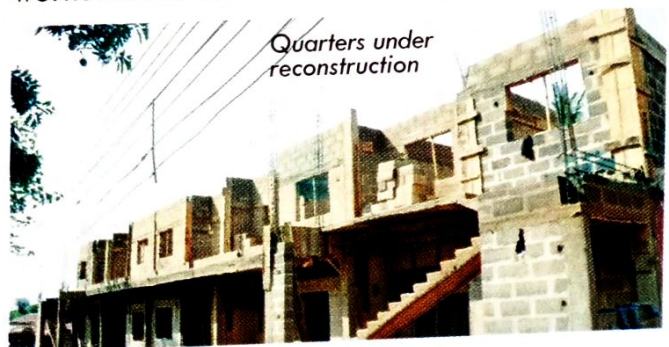


FIRE WRECKS BIGARD DOMESTIC STAFF QUARTERS

Leaving home for Christmas on Friday 14 December 2018, no seminarian imagined that he would come back to meet a house burnt down by fire. But it happened. On Monday 17 December, a fire whose cause is not certain struck one of the blocks of the Domestic Workers' Quarters. The Enugu State Fire Service, which was immediately alerted made to come immediately but could not arrive on time, owing to heavy traffic. The fire razed down every meaningful item in the house, leaving the workers with barely nothing.

As a follow-up to the unfortunate incident, the bishops-proprietors of the seminary and the formators headed by the Rector swung into quick

action to restore and reconstruct the house, this time into a one-storey modern house. Worthy of mention is the contribution of Bigard seminarians. Upon return, they were moved to make freewill donations that amounted to over Three Hundred Thousand Naira (N300,000) meant to aid the workers bear the loss of their property.



THE ORIGIN OF PATRIARCHY AND THE FUTURE OF GENDER BALANCE

Rev. Fr. Dr. Humphrey Uchenna Ani, HOD, Philosophy, & Moderator,
The Thinker Magazine, Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu.



Patriarchy and feminism are two antithetical themes in social anthropology. This reflection intends to provide brief explanations on what they mean and how they originated and developed over time. Our explanations may not be comprehensive of the terms and their implications but they will certainly guide an ordinary reader on the central meanings they represent. In the picture of seeming gender war in human sociology, patriarchy represents the masculine axis, while feminism represents the feminine arc. Central questions in this reflection include: What is the meaning of patriarchy? How did it start as a sociological development? How had it been sustained across the ages of mankind? What is feminism? How did it begin and evolve? Were there principal moments or waves of its emergence and growth? And will there be a gender balance in the future, in the light of the factors that originated the two social phenomena in question?

The word patriarchy originated from the Greek word, *patriarkhes*,¹ which refers to “father or chief of a race,” and the word *patriarkhes* is derived from two Greek terms: *pater*, “father” or *patria*, “fatherly lineage or descent” and *arkhò*, “rule.”² Patriarchy literally means the rule or lineage of the father. Sociologically, it refers to a system in which fathers or men have superior and predominant power in social privileges and benefits. It is the state of “a society, system or country that is ruled or controlled by men.”³ The opposite is matriarchy which is scarcely in

practice. Patriarchy enshrines male rule and privileges, which entails female subordination. This can range from privileges in public leadership, moral authority, social control and economic advantages. A typical example of this can be seen in the patrilineal marriage system in which women leave their homes to live in the domain of men or in the ultra-patriarchal societies in which property and entitlements are reserved for the male offspring only.

There have been different opinions on the origin of patriarchy as a sociological development. Some have argued that it was borne out of biological necessity of the human sexes or some complex developments involving changes in demography, social dialectics, behavioural dynamics, cultural ecology, interactive and historical process in the evolution of man and his society. These could be traced from the Neolithic time to the era of civilization, and up to our time. Out of various thoughts on the origin of the patriarchy, we shall select and streamline our discussions on two main viewpoints.

The first viewpoint is represented by those who use biological explanations to interpret social phenomena like sex identity, struggles and roles. They are often called socio-biologists. They argue that the origin of patriarchy is rooted in the biological nature and necessity of the two human sexes: male and female. According to this school of thought, patriarchy was born as a result of inherent biological nature of the sexes and not from social conditions. Steven Goldberg who belongs to this school of thought argued in his *The*

Inevitability of Patriarchy, that male dominance as a human universal is ingrained in the biological make up of humans based on their sex as male or female.⁴ Male dominance for him derives from the hormone, testosterone and some physiological faculties of the male sex.⁵ The argument goes on to say that patriarchy equally began with the reproductive faculty of the female sex. While the female sex dwelt more in producing offspring, they indirectly assigned the men the more adventurous and higher competitive roles of winning wealth, greater resources and social privileges. Through this men were able to gain much social edges and advantages in the course of human evolution, leaving the female sex weaker, controlled and domesticated. In this way, one can hold that patriarchy as a social factor is a product of gender role that is rooted in, and evolved from differences in sex identity.⁶ For them therefore, the reproductive powers of the women: having the womb that carries pregnancy and subsequently caring for children, are the first causes that keep women dependent and domesticated, leaving men to control and reign in the public or social spaces.

Gerda Lerner favours the socio-biology stance. In his *The Creation of Patriarchy*, he argues that the herder men in the Neolithic era assigned the role of reproducing offspring to the females while they were busy herding their flock.⁷ The offspring produced by females were rich resources for wealth creation. Offspring grew to cultivate and propagate economic

resources. They also provide social security in times of family conflicts and tribal wars. The reproductive powers of the females and their children therefore became both commodity and strong economic assets, which men tried to acquire and keep, for benefits and security. Thus, ownership, appropriation and privatization of property indirectly led to the ownership of women who produce offspring, and whose children serve as economic and social security. The commercialization of the female sex which turned women into exchangeable objects for economic and social benefits can be argued to be the first stage in the reduction of the feminine gender to a sub-class role in which women were turned into domestic servants, licitly termed wives, maids, concubines and chattel prostitutes. Even females who were enthroned in history as queens and princesses got such privileges on the endorsement of the male authorities like kings and warriors who could be their fathers, brothers or husbands.

Patriarchy is reflected in every aspect of human anthropology. In the Bible for instance, Eve, the first female character was assigned the first act of human error or sin in creation, while the Biblical God was shown more often to communicate mainly through the male patriarchs like Noah, Abraham, Moses and the prophets. The Greek god, Zeus was often depicted to be Lord, and as such superior to the goddess, Athena. Female fertility goddesses like Medusa and Pandora were demonized and made inferior in classical legends. Medusa was often depicted as a hair writhing monster, while Pandora was shown to be carrying a box full of evils for the world. In these classical depictions, patriarchy remains ever enshrined in ideology and practice. And this has remained so in every cultural society through centuries of mankind's civilization.

Frederick Engels described patriarchal development as the "historic defeat of the female sex" in the development and exchange

of the art of human subsistence,⁸ while the anthropologist Claude Levi-Straus called it the "exchange of women."⁹ He posited that the exchange took three main forms: negotiated marriages in which women are forced to leave their original homes to live with men in their homes; exchange of women for hospitality as in prostitution; and female forced rape at religious festivals as worship to the fertility goddesses. In the course of time, customs and norms were generated to sustain, perpetuate and legitimize the inferior gender roles for women. They were often groomed from childhood to adhere to them as acceptable behaviour. Male historians, scholars and writers of various generations and civilizations have equally created belief systems and brilliant explanations which were largely

Ownership, appropriation and privatization of property indirectly led to the ownership of women who produce offspring, and whose children serve as economic and social security. This can be argued to be the first stage in the reduction of the feminine gender to a sub-class role in which women were turned into domestic servants, licitly termed wives, maids, concubines and chattel prostitutes

meant to exclude women from being on equal positions with men until recently when the feminists' waves started to blow. For centuries, majority of women all over the world have been subjugated to masculine dominance, starved of social prominence, deprived education and numerous privileges in an unchallenged manner until the emergence of feminism recently.

The second viewpoint on the origin of patriarchy come from those who argue that the origin of patriarchy is purely sociological. There are some social constructionists who hold that gender roles and sex dominance are artificial creations of individuals and societies. Ways of life and sharing of meaning over time generated the domination of women in human social evolution,

and the eventual supreme reign of men, patriarchy. Social sense of meaning manufactured the behavioural norms that set the stage for social hierarchy and assigned specific sex or gender roles and privileges. Richard Wrangham in this line of thought argues that man's dominance over the woman and the collective exercise of patriarchy over the ages were socially necessitated by social order in which women are made to obey men who eventually obey the collective governing body of the men society.

Wrangham argues that humans have a unique way of eating and peculiar ways of regulating fire for cooking. This unique system of food protection and regulation implies service exchange between a man and a woman. The woman provides the man with cooked food and in turn the man gives her protection with the support he gets from being part of the male group. He believes that this has been part of our hominoid past, just like the life of the chimpanzee. And the result is that men are in a greater position to have lots of free time, and they can use that time for manly activities. This provides the basis that enables men to enormously exaggerate the nature of their public dominance over females. Thus, the origin of men's social rule and privileges, the patriarchy.¹⁰ Another reason is the fact that the man has to control the family because he is the one that puts forth investment into the woman. The man needs to protect himself from the woman's free riding or waste of the resources that the man gives her. Related to this line of thought is the Marxist interpretation as H. Hartmann posited in Anne Witz's *Professions and Patriarchy*: "the material base of patriarchy is men's control over women's labour power. That control is maintained by denying women access to necessary economically productive resources and restricting women's sexuality."¹¹

Patriarchy had been an age long practice in many cultures until recently challenged by the feminist

movements. And what is feminism all about? Feminism was born as a social reaction to a protracted tradition of male dominance in various cultures for centuries. Feminism depicts the whole range of political, cultural or economic movements aimed at establishing equal rights and legal protection for women. It equally implies ideological and sociological theories and philosophies based on issues of gender and sex differences, and the advocacy and campaigns for rights and interests of the feminine gender. The main goal of feminism is to disturb the system of relations between the sexes that have deprived women and favoured men for centuries. It hopes to recognize and assert the full equality and humanity of female and male in every society.

Feminism as an anti-thesis to patriarchy took three main waves to establish itself in recent history, and has endured since then. Feminist experts like Rebecca Walker identified three main waves that gave birth to feminism. The first feminist wave was in the nineteenth and early twentieth century periods. The primary aim then was to promote equal contract and property rights for women and to oppose chattel marriage and ownership of married women (and their children) by their husbands. Outstanding feminists at this time include people like Voltairine de Cleyre, Florence Nightingale and Margaret Sanger who were actively campaigning for women's economic, sexual and reproductive rights. The second wave of feminism started in the 1960s down to the 1980s. It focussed mainly on ending gender inequality and to gain political power for women, especially on the rights of women's suffrage. The third wave started in the 1990s to the present period. It is based on correction of the setbacks of the first and second waves of feminism and on continuation or consolidation on them. It dwells more on intellectual feminism. It engages in new interpretations of

elements of feminist creed, gender issues, sexuality and micro-political challenges of women in various geopolitical zones of the world, touching on every aspect of human existentiality.

In the wake of feminist movements, much on patriarchal privileges has been challenged. Women have gained advantages in fighting for gender and property rights, women have gained much political positions and social spaces of advantage and women have risen in several sectors of human existentiality. But despite these gains, patriarchy as a universal phenomenon is yet to be much downgraded or dethroned. There are many sociological privileges that still sustain the patriarchal dominance on the public space today, even in the face of ragging feminist waves. Thus, the main question that ought to

↳ The possibility of gender balance in the future will very much depend on the factors that created the imbalance in the first place ↪

occupy the mind of anthropologists in this development is on the future of gender struggle between patriarchy and feminism. How far can feminist movements go in leveling the gender imbalance among the sexes? Can feminism achieve a gender balance in the future? Or is it possible that it can even create a counter gender dominance, in which case one may expect an assertive matriarchy in the future? Has the female sex identity and gender the capacity to take over such possible gender control in the future? Will there be a gender exchange in which the female folk give up their domestic matriarchy and take command of the public reign while the men will be reduced to the domestic platform?

The possibility of gender balance in the future will very much depend on the factors that created the imbalance in the first place. According to the socio-biologists, the biological or reproductive nature of females is fundamental in

the creation of patriarchy. Altering such fundamental factors will be a major step in altering patriarchy. Are women today prepared to thwart the sex predetermining conditions that apportion their gender roles? Will women trade their wombs for masculine powers? Will they give up pregnancy, child bearing and child rearing in order to be free for the adventures and competitions for the public powers and privileges with men? Doing that will be a big beginning for a serious move towards gender balance, otherwise patriarchy may stay longer on the throne. And where this is difficult to attain, then feminists and advocates of gender balance must do something extra to enervate the social energy that create and consolidate patriarchy. Such will shape how a future gender balance is possible in the contest between patriarchy and feminism.

¹ Cf. Ferguson, Kathy E. "Patriarchy" in *Women's Studies Encyclopedia, Volume 2*.

² Cf. Green, Fiona Joy "Patriarchal Ideology of Motherhood" in *Encyclopedia of Motherhood, Volume 1*.

³ A.S. Hornby, "Patriarchy" in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, New 8th ed.*

⁴ Cf. Steven Goldberg, *The Inevitability of Patriarchy* (New York: William Morrow and co. publishers, 1973), 131.

⁵ Cf. Ibid.

⁶ Sex identity refers to a biological distinction between male and female, while gender role refers to culturally created and assigned roles to each sex as either male or female.

⁷ Cf. Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 45.

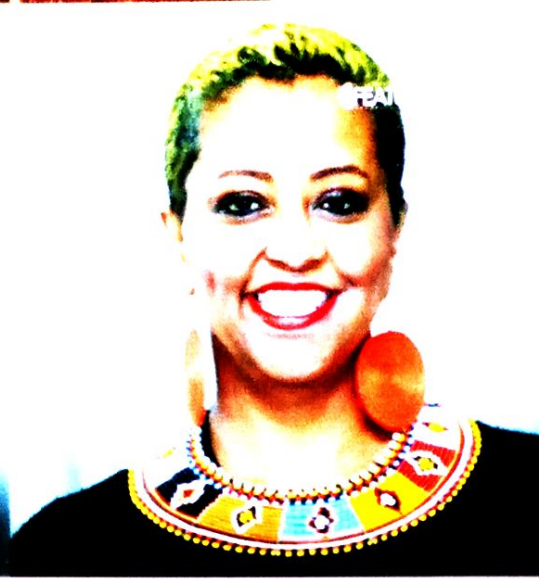
⁸ Cf. Friedrich, Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1972), 10.

⁹ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, 46 & E. Burke Leacock, *Myths of Male Dominance: Collected Articles On Women Cross-Culturally* (New York, Haymarket Books, 1981), 17.

¹⁰ Cf. Richard Wrangham, "Sexual Disparities and the Evolution of Patriarchy," Harvard Law School, October 12, 2011.

¹¹ Anne Witz, *Professions and Patriarchy*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 14.

TOWARDS A TRULY AFRICAN FEMINISM



Ezeani, Sunday Chukwuma is a Philosophy student of Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu

1.0. EXORDIUM

Feminism is usually characterised as a Western phenomenon. However, the central problems it seeks to address are not foreign to African soil, and they also call for attention here as much as in the West. The problem however remains of how to indigenize the struggle for gender equality and justice, taking note of the unique African experience. This leads to questions like, Is Feminism African? Can Feminism be Africanised? These questions inform the intention and orientation of the topic, **Towards a Truly African Feminism**. This essay attempts to delineate paradigmatic suggestions on how to theorise, practise, and realise a true African Feminism.

2.0. DEFINITION OF TERM

Feminism has been defined as the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes; an organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests. For Amina Mama, "Feminism, put simply, refers to the ongoing struggle to free women from centuries of oppression, exploitation and marginalization in all the vast majority of known human societies. It is a call to end patriarchy and to expose, deconstruct and eradicate all the myriad personal, social, economic and political practices, habits and assumptions that sustain gender inequality and injustice around the world."¹ On the other hand, African feminism suggests feminism done in Africa for African women.

3.0. FEMINISM IN THE WESTERN WORLD

Feminism has a relatively long history in the Western world. Scholars identify three waves of the feminist movement, starting from the nineteenth century till now. However, up till recently, feminism had almost been exclusively Western and American and therefore, had not concerned itself with the specific experience of women of other cultures.

4.0. AFRICAN WOMEN AND AFRICAN SOCIETY

Women are generally side-lined in African society; their opinions are usually not taken serious. There are certain ideologies that impinge on the authenticity and quality of their personality and identity. Such ideologies are framed in the form of queries like, Can women do anything good on their own? Of what use is a childless woman? And it is not uncommon in our clime to hear people comment thus of wrong driving on roads -'It must be a woman driving'; or, if the driver is seen to be a man -'He is driving like a woman'. These ideologies put a question mark on the originality, creativity and potentiality of women in Africa. Thus, I wish to argue that these anti-feminine ideologies need to be purged out of African mentality. The question is therefore not whether there is need for

“The question is not whether there is need for feminism in Africa but what model of feminism should be adopted”

feminism in Africa but what model of feminism should be adopted.

5.0. AFRICAN FEMINISM: A PARADIGMATIC PRESCRIPTION

The concept 'feminism' has caused division among African scholars. It has led to two attitudes: positive and negative. The negative attitude altogether rejects feminism, arguing that it is an imperialist incursion and an adulteration of African social system. The positive attitude, on the other hand, recognizes feminism as a Western creation that could be adopted and adapted to African reality. Hence, it affirms the struggle for gender justice and equality in Africa but under different models like *Womanism*, *Stiwanism*, *Motherism*, *Nego-feminism*, et cetera.

Womanism, propounded by Chikwenye Ogunyemi, "advocates unity among men and women, and does not support political struggle at women liberation. It advocates equality with men not against men."² For Ogunyemi this is necessary given that African women's life cannot be separated from husbands, uncles, fathers, and sons: "etymologically, [she] is the wife of man, prefaced by her daughterhood, which prepares her for motherhood, a grand finale"³. Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie proposes *Stiwanism*, a term she derived from the acronym for 'Social Transformation Including Women of Africa' (STIWA). Stiwanism condemns the subordination of African women by African men and calls on women to organize and

confront the problems of gender in their own cultures; It encourages African women to wake up to their responsibilities, particularly financial responsibilities, since that is inevitable for gender equality; Stiwanism is not envious of or oppositional to men, does not 'divide the genders', and is not antagonistic of African culture and heritage.⁴ C.O. Acholonu initiated *Motherism* that focuses on the centrality of motherhood in the African female experience. Obioma Nnaemeka projected nego-feminism which is "feminism of negotiation; no ego feminism" – she argues that since most African cultures reach agreements by negotiation and compromise, for African feminism to succeed it must also go by negotiation between men and women.⁵

Generally, however, Ogun-dipe-Leslie proposes what she sees as the premise (or characteristics) of African feminism: 1) Feminism needs not be in opposition to men; 2) Women need not neglect their biological roles; 3) African women idealise motherhood and claim it to be a strength having a special manifestation in Africa; 4) The total configuration of women's condition should be addressed rather than being obsessed with sexual issues; 5) Certain aspects of women's reproductive rights take priority over others; 6) Women's condition in Africa needs to be addressed in the context of the total production and reproduction of their society involving men and children; and 7) Any women's ideology has to be developed in the context of the race and class struggles which bedevil the contemporary Africa.⁶

These models of African feminism are remarkable attempts to indigenize the struggle for gender justice and equality in Africa. Nevertheless, this paper without claiming any superiority of thought, will attempt a prescriptive guide to true African feminism:

Africa is a continent with variant traditions that are often associated with their belief in supernatural and spiritual realities. Often, these

traditions are held by people without questioning their premises, rationale or consequences; and as has been seen, some of these traditions are prejudicial to women. On this note, I think that a True African Feminism (TAF) should dialogue with the traditions to make sure that the status of women is not undermined. Such dialogue should lead to redefinition, reclamation, reevaluation and regeneration of the identity and personality of African women.

Thus, in an epigrammatic manner, I suggest that for Feminism to be truly African it should be **contextually dialogical, communal, proactive and authentic**.

The adverb, "contextually" qualifies all the adjectives in the above statement about TAF. TAF must avoid the temptation of having Western views as its perfect model. It must be holistically local-based and thus, concentrate on the problems of women in Africa. It should avoid the importation of certain cultures that are un-African like Transgender issues, LGBT saga, and anti-family and prochoice ideologies.

For Feminism to be truly African it should be contextually dialogical, communal, proactive and authentic

TAF should be contextually *dialogical*. This means that it should dialogue with African traditions and cultures to identify and rectify social institutions, structures and culture that neglect or downplay the personality and identity of African women. For instance, it is observed that in some societies women are not given the right to inherit their parents' properties, widows suffer a lot of maltreatment from their clansmen, et cetera.

TAF should be contextually *communal*. This entails that it should recognize the communal nature of African socio-cultural system. It should avoid individualism, relativism and secularism that defy the moral and cultural foundation of African reality.

TAF should be contextually *proactive*. For effective emancipation of African women, the whole society should be conscious to eliminate any ideology, custom or tradition that neglects or plays down the identity of African women. It is of paramount importance that individuals and community at large create enabling environment where women can live their full potential, personality and identity without fear or threat.

TAF should be contextually *authentic*. For the project of African feminism to thrive, it should try as much as possible to avoid western prejudice. It must be feminism of Africans, for Africans, by Africans, in Africa. It should not be a do or die affair or follow Machiavellian principle in its methodology or ideology.

6.0. CONCLUSION

The status of women in African societies call for Feminism. Nevertheless, a truly African Feminism should curiously, creatively, conscientiously and consciously dialogue with African traditions. This dialogue entails radical creative and constructive questioning. In our contemporary world filled with cacophony of voices orchestrated by the symphony of globalization, one needs to identify and establish his or her voice lest one gets lost in the echoes of variant voices. This could be the fate of feminism in Africa if it fails to be truly African.

¹ Amina Mama, *The Challenges of Feminism: Gender, Ethics and Responsible Academic Freedom in African Universities*

² Asiegbu, Perp' St. Remy, *Towards the Decolonization of Feminism: An Overview in Research of English Language and Literature* (RJELAL), Vol 5, Issue 2, 2017 (April-June), p. 62.

³ Ogunyemi, Chikwenye Okonjo, *African Wo/Man Palava: The Nigeria Novel by Women*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. p. 106

⁴ Ogun-dipe-Leslie, Molar, *Re-Creating Ourselves: African Women & Critical Transformation*. African World Press, 1986. pp. 208-222.

⁵ Asiegbu, Perp' St. Remy, *Ibid*. p. 64

⁶ Ogun-dipe-Leslie cited by Fatima Adamu, PhD. in *Women's Struggle and the Politics of Difference in Nigeria*.



Interview with Bishop Isizoh

Good Morning My Lord. Thank you for the opportunity you have granted us, the editorial crew of *The Thinker Magazine*, to speak with you on the Church and Feminism.

You are welcome!

My Lord, we could say that the feminist battle is a fight for gender equality: How does the Church understand the equality of man and woman?

The Church understands the equality of man and woman as found in the Bible. What do we find in the Bible? God created man and woman. He created them in his own image and likeness. God endowed them with intelligence. God created them free. God gave them the same set of rules in the garden. All these confirm one thing: equality of man and woman. But when we go to Genesis 1:27, there is a phrase: *Male and female he made them*. That phrase introduces something different – male and female – that is, yes they are made in God's image and likeness; and they are equal. But they are different. This difference does not say anything about who is superior or who is inferior. The answer to your question, simply put: the Church holds that God created man and woman equal, but they have different functions to perform in the world. In carrying out these functions, man and woman complement one another.

Thank you my Lord. Do you think as some feminists argue that the Church as an institution oppresses or suppresses women?

I do not think that way. The Church does not suppress, the Church does not oppress. Recently I blessed the marriage of a couple. I was particularly touched by one paragraph of the Nuptial blessing said over the woman. I have the words here: *May the grace of love and peace abide in your daughter – referring to the woman – and let her always follow the example of those holy women whose praises are sung in the Scriptures. May her husband entrust his heart to her so that, acknowledging her as his equal and his joint heir to the life of grace, he may show her due honour and cherish her always with the love that Christ has for his Church*. Does this sound like oppression of woman? It doesn't! And that is the Church to which I belong!

They are made in God's image and likeness; and they are equal. But they are different.

My Lord, we know that women are gifted in their own peculiar ways. How does the Church, especially the Nigerian Church, tap from the wealth of knowledge and experience peculiar to women in administration, mission, and other areas?

Many women are gifted. I have just had a meeting with a woman who holds PhD in Mathematics, First Class. The other day Air Peace flew a commercial airplane with all-women crew. The woman pilot flew the airplane and landed it very gently. There are thousands of women in all fields of life, with fantastic records of achievement. Does the Church ignore these women with great talents? NO. The Church engages them; the Church makes use of their talents. The Church takes every human being on board. In His image and likeness, God created us all. The Church does not leave any person behind, human frailties notwithstanding.

I studied at All Hallows Seminary, Onitsha. As early as 1971, our archbishop then brought women to teach in the seminary, yes to teach boys in the seminary. Today, many more women are teaching seminarians both in the minor and in the major seminaries. First of all, their presence in the seminary helps the seminarians understand and appreciate that in the real world, we don't have only boys, you don't have only men, but there are also women. So, they learn already in the seminary how to interact with these two genders. There are many qualities that we generally associate with women: women are gentle, they are kind-hearted, they are tender, they show genuine love, they are patient, etc. A good seminarian, a good priest, a good leader, should have these qualities. When we have women on the staff of the seminaries, seminarians learn from them these qualities.

If we consider the chain of authority in the Church, we find many women very active in the corridors of power. I will never forget the experience I had in one of the dioceses in the United States of America, where I was visiting a friend. We went together to pay a courtesy visit to the diocesan bishop, and you know what? The bishop didn't even know my friend was working in his diocese. Who hired him to work in the diocese? Can you believe it? A lady who is in-charge of the Personnel office. She employed my

friend and sent him to work in a parish!

But doesn't the fact that women are not ordained to the priesthood keep them away from key decision-making in the Church?

The Church does not keep women away from participating in decision-making because they are not priests. At the universal level, at the Vatican, there are women who are top executives and they take decisions that affect the life of the Church in different dioceses. And I have told you already about that woman who was in-charge of the diocesan Personnel office. So, they are not ignored! Priests constitute just a minute number, a small percentage of the members of the Church – someone said one percent. Women are there in the other 99 percent. Back home, which Parish Priest does not know the power of Catholic Women Organisation.

The point is that more women could be involved in decision-making in parishes and dioceses. Priesthood, unless when abused, is not and should never be used as instrument to gain power. Priesthood is for service — service to God and His people. Yes, it is a gift for service. It is a mystery to ponder every day.

Some feminists go to the extent of questioning the understanding of God as Father instead of Mother, as Son instead of daughter; and some even try to use gender neutral terms like Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, just to avoid using the male terms. What do you say about this, and what doctrinal implications could such questions have?

The first thing I want to say is: God has no gender. Is he *she* or *it* or *he*? These are human words. God is neither male nor female. God is not even neuter. It is beyond human reasoning to talk about a living being without gender. In our limited instrument to comprehend objects we perceive, God is beyond the contents of our “categories of thought”.

So applying to God a gender word “he” or “she” is understandable,

given our limitations. It does not really matter which gender any person applies to God, once the person knows that he or she is limited in vocabulary. Conventionally we apply generic terms: “man” to stand for all human beings; and “he” to refer to God. We know that it does not say much about God.

But when we talk about the person of Jesus Christ who took flesh and came as a man, the gender is obviously male. If anyone refuses to apply male gender to Jesus Christ, the person denies the whole thing about the Incarnation; the Dual nature of Jesus Christ, his Passion and Death, etc.

Now do you think leadership roles of husband and wife in the family could be revised to reflect the equality of man and woman in the manner it is sometimes spoken about these days...

If it is revised how will it be?

Well some women protest against the man being called the head of the family. Some would call the women the 'neck', and yet others reject even this, arguing that neither the husband nor wife should be exclusively called the leader of the family.

Let us reason together. Let us consider our society in this part of the world. For proper marriage, it is the man who proposes marriage to a woman. The young woman simply waits in her father's house for the future husband to come and “knock at the door”. The family of the man makes every inquiry to establish “nulla osta”, no obstacle or impediment. It is the man that carries wine to woman's house to request for her hand in marriage. The man pays the dowry, he plans and goes through all the preparations and the ceremonies. He pays all the bills for the wedding. After all these, the man takes the woman to his own family home. If you ask, “Who is the head of this family?” A child of two will be able supply the answer. Obviously, the man.

Does being head mean domineering? No. In the Church,

there is less emphasis on the boss of the family. There is emphasis on love and the roles which each partner should play. St Paul's teaching in his letter to the Church at Ephesus, chapter 5, is in that regard. Equality, yes. Different but complementary roles, yes. Love at the centre.

Some customs here in Nigeria have really been oppressive to women. How has the Church been involved in freeing women from such customs?

Unfortunately, it is true that some customs, including ours, oppress women. Some widows are not well treated. Girls are sometimes denied formal education. There are places where a girl 12 years old is already married out, and at the age of 13 she is having her first child! Some girls are used as house-help.

Now part of the role of the Church is to create awareness that the welfare of women must be given priority. I know that in Onitsha Archdiocese the Catholic Women Organisation have a Section that takes care of widows. Through this Section, the CWO speak for them and they see to their welfare. The Church encourages education of women. We are building a boarding school now at Oroma Etiti Anam. And this will be replicated in other areas where education of women is not given priority or is completely ignored. Yes, the Church in Nigeria is interested in the welfare of women.

Thank you for your insightful answers. What are your parting words?

My parting words would be to salute our women – I salute them, not because of the feminist agenda, but because of the fact that they play important roles in our societies. They hold families together. They educate the young. When they are properly empowered, they take charge of their lives and activities. They help to mould and shape the future of our society.

Thank you once more, My Lord, for granting us this opportunity. We are grateful.

Thank You! God bless you and your readers.

LEVEL THE CLASSROOM: RETHINKING FORMAL EDUCATION FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN NIGERIA



Olaoluwa Abagun

As a nine-year-old in Primary Five, my self-confidence took significant leaps when our radical teacher Mr. Monday, appointed me “Class Captain”. My Assistant was Faith, a brilliant and firm female student who later went on to top the class in the highly competitive National Common Entrance Examination. I remember Mr. Monday saying that he had observed us for some time and believed that we possessed the leadership skills required to lead the class – it did not matter that we were both girls. This was a major departure from the usual tokenistic one boy, one girl appointment (with the girl usually being the Assistant Captain). It was my first lesson in meritocracy.

Almost two decades later, things have not changed much. “You are a girl” remains a spoken and implied excuse for limiting the potentials of girls and young women within formal education spaces. Notably, data put forward by the World Bank indicates that girls’ enrolment in primary school increased from 79% in 2008 to 92.3% in 2013. While this is commendable, it is only a starting point. Beyond improving access and getting more girls in school, how can we ensure that formal education in Nigeria leads to *equality of outcome* for young people, regardless of their gender? Again, what might we do differently to ensure that our classrooms are not sites of disempowerment where gender prejudices are recycled?

First, there is a need to examine our current curricula, learning

Some textbooks and learning aids still make sweeping assumptions about “masculine” or “feminine” careers, limiting the possibilities for both girls and boys early in life. Even when such insensitive learning materials cannot be immediately replaced, teachers need to encourage young people to challenge such narratives

materials and teaching practices in order to assess their gender sensitivity at all levels. For instance, nursery rhymes like “mummy cares for me, daddy provides for me” and “Mr. macaroni...if you want to marry me” tend to reinforce lopsided and rigid perspectives of the roles or aspirations of men/women in the society. Such rhymes contribute to a problematic socialization process, which teaches girls to aspire towards marriage/child bearing as the highest form of achievement on one hand, and burdens boys with the exclusive responsibility of wealth creation on the other hand. In the same vein, some textbooks and learning aids still make sweeping assumptions about “masculine” or “feminine” careers, limiting the possibilities for both girls and boys early in life. Even when such insensitive learning materials cannot be immediately replaced, teachers need to encourage young people to challenge such narratives. Our education system can only contribute to creating equal rights and opportunities for all where it allows young people to become critical of gender stereotypes, especially during their formative years.

Furthermore, the gender

dynamics on the playground, in the use of sports facilities and other informal spaces within the school environment is worth looking into. In 2018, I visited a public secondary school in Lagos as part of a “Books for Girls Drive” that my organisation implemented. As I waited close to the school’s large playing field during break time, it did not take long before I observed that it was only male students who took up the middle of the field – playing football and running around excitedly. Interestingly, the girls simply huddled together in groups around the margins of the field, chatting in hushed tones. This seemingly inconsequential “division” of the playing field reveals a lot about how unquestioned social expectations of boys/girls are co-opted within formal education systems. It is important to ensure that girls and boys have equal access to all kinds of extra-curricular activities at school, including sports. Beyond the physical and psychosocial benefits of sporting activities for both boys and girls, entrenching equality on the playing field goes a long way to normalise gender equality in the wider society.

In addition, we need to recognise the critical role of comprehensive sex education (CSE) in ensuring that formal education leads to equal outcomes for boys/girls and leaves no one behind. Considering the appalling rate of teenage pregnancy across Nigeria, interventions geared towards keeping adolescent girls in school should be more holistic. Resource-focused interventions like scholarships and the provision of free education materials are important but need to be accompanied with age-appropriate CSE for both boys and girls. We cannot afford to separate the bodies and minds of young people by investing in

cognitive learning but failing to have open and healthy conversations about their bodies/sexuality.

Conclusively, achieving gender equality through formal education in Nigeria goes beyond making a sound case for having more girls in school and learning. We have long recognised the importance of equal access to quality education as a means of bridging the widening gender gap. As highlighted above, using gender sensitive learning materials, equality in the use of informal spaces at school and inclusion of age-appropriate CSE at all levels of formal education are other ways to ensure that formal education promotes equal

“We have long recognised the importance of equal access to quality education as a means of bridging the widening gender gap”

rights for all. The task ahead of us involves challenging the status quo in order to co-create education systems that are fit for purpose. From teachers, to ministries of education and parents/guardians, everyone has a role to play.

Olaoluwa Abagun is a lawyer and passionate girls' rights advocate. She is the Founder of Girl Pride Circle Initiative, an NGO based in Nigeria, which advocates for girls' rights and equips adolescent girls with leadership and advocacy skills through community workshops and after-school education clubs. She is currently studying for an MA in Gender and Development at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) University of Sussex, under the Commonwealth Shared Scholarship.



NOT SAME BLOOD

She was there when I was chosen
She came prior to me, but I got the top
In her heights she stooped low
In her wisdom, speeches don't flow

She saw the table clearly
But I felt it warmly
She has her speeches to revolt
But her actions must flow

They flow from the writings on the table
The table speeches pitch her moves
But the speech knows no speaker
Can speech pitch speaker?

Though we grew up together
But I will live forever
Though she makes some kin
Not for her; for me


On that union day
She kept low her bare
While I stood to pick the gain
The price lot of my pay

She has no name
Nor has she any gain
She has no place
Neither has she any scrambling space

But my name lies on her kin
Her speech is what I speak
And I stand for the gain
While she stands for the pain

But I have kept to wander
Have we not same blood in same

By **EZEORA IFEANYI**,
A Philosophy student of
Bigard Memorial Seminary, Edo State



Premium on Male Children: The Cultural and Psychological Cruelty

Edozie Christopher Chinweike,
a Philosophy Student of
Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu.

Introduction

One of the topical issues of contemporary African inter-disciplinary studies is the preference for male issues over their female counterparts. On this issue a lot of gender-based studies, arguments and researches have been conducted, and for the most part, these studies and researches have been a critique of the socio-cultural status of the traditional African society. To be sure, these critiques are never *in vacuo*: In most parts of Africa, male children are preferred to female children. Such preference is the product of popular and mostly erroneous belief of the African people, a belief accompanied and supported by some gender discriminatory practices. Hence the preference for male children has been described as “a symptom of pervasive social, cultural, political and economic injustices against women.”¹ The aim of this article is to critically expose and evaluate the premium on male children, taking note of its damaging effects.

Empirical Data

As already noted, several researches have been conducted on this issue. Of interest here are the researches, conducted by Abdullateef Raji et al [2016]², and Ohagwu C.C. et al [2014]³. From a sample of 207 respondents (104

men, 103 women), Abdullateef et al discovered that 145 (70%) preferred male children; and to the question, *Suppose you could only have a child, which sex would you prefer?* 145 (70%) chose *boy*, none (0%) chose *girl*, 62 (30%) chose *anyone* [i.e. either boy or girl]. The research of Ohagwu et al, based on a sample of 790 pregnant Igbo women, showed similar results: 463 (58.6%) desired that their babies be male, 159 (20.1%) desired a female baby, and, 168 (21.3%) did not care if the baby was male or female.

Origin and Factors

Certain socio-cultural factors are recognised today as the cause of the preference for male children. According to United Nations Population Fund, “The tradition of *inheritance* from father to son in many societies coupled with a reliance on boys to provide *economic support*, to ensure *security in old age* and to *perform death rites* are part of a set of social norms that place greater value on sons than daughters.” In addition, we see other factors like: the desire to “*continue the family name*”, the *desire of women to cement their place in their husband's heart*, male children as *widowhood insurance*, and so on. These factors rest on some anthropological and religious interpretations that tend to defend the position that the society is fundamentally patriarchal and

that women – contrary to what it should be – are subjugated.

Consequences of the Premium on Male Children

The seriousness of the premium on male children is seen most in the case of male childlessness.

The effect of male childlessness on the African family is excessive and most times inhuman. The consequences are very telling on the couple, ranging from the father who is perceived as not being man enough by his friends, to the woman-wife, the actual victim of the whole scenario. The pressures from different angles, the pieces of advice from folks, family and foes, beckoning her to visit places after places in search of solution, often against her will and belief, are nothing anybody would wish for. These 'advisers' fail to understand that in the affairs of life events do not turn out in a mathematically precise way, that much is given to fate than logic. At the same time, the temptation and persuasions on the man-husband to remarry mounts. The many agonies of the wife, the midnight sorrows, the psychological trauma and the many difficulties which the family is made to undergo, the tension and agony: all these characterize the psychological disposition of women in this dilemma.

This unmerited physical and emotional pressure often lead to

other negative consequences: Very large families in the hope of getting a male issue, a prodigious increase in population, health risks to the woman, polygamy, marital infidelity, divorce, feeling of less importance and low self-esteem among girl children in the family, over pampering of a boy when eventually one is born, in some cases animosity and conflict produced by the perceived partiality, Anxiety at pregnancy and Obstetric Ultrasound, sex-specific abortions, more education for boys and little or none for girls, and above all, perpetuation of gender inequality.

Muonwe's Critique

It is against this backdrop that Michael Muonwe, in his book *New Dawn for African Women: Igbo Perspective*, attempts to present a profound critique of the situation and proffer a way out from the apparent devaluation of the girl child and undue premium on the male child. The book aims at liberating the African woman from the shackles of male-dominated patriarchal world using the Igbo as an example. For Muonwe, both Christianity and Igbo cultures are guilty to a reasonable extent of not having done enough to curb the acts of injustice perpetrated against women in the family and in the wider society. In essence, Muonwe argues that the present predicament of women in the society and the high value placed on men have been shaped by a combination of the forces of culture, Christianity, colonialism, neo-colonialism and conscious oppression by men. Thus the solution must begin with "stimulating discussions on, as well as challenging, the traditional Christian (and Igbo) thinking on women, the Igbo conception of women, and what women think about themselves...as a way of opposing the discrimination on the basis of gender."

Evaluation, Submissions, and

Conclusion

There is need for a re-evaluation of the greater value placed on the male child. Women contribute as much as men to the good of the society; and in the family, they often do more for their aging parents than their male counterparts. There is therefore no justification for valuing the girl-child less.

To rectify the injustice then, far reaching changes and reorientation have to take place. The first step towards a remedy is creation of awareness. The aim is to teach our people that a girl-child can make as much impact in the society as her male counterpart, that the girl too can add value to humanity. Of this fact there are examples of wives,

Women contribute as much as men to the good of the society; and in the family, they often do more for their aging parents than their male counterparts. There is therefore no justification for valuing the girl-child less

mothers and daughters who have written their names in the sands of history through their deeds. The likes of Mary Slessor who stopped the killing of twins, Queen Amina of Zaria who led men to war to rescue her own people, Dora Akunyili who fought the menace of fake drugs in Nigeria, Okonjo-Iweala who is doing tremendously at the World Bank, Dr Stella Ameyo Adadevoh who fought Ebola epidemic with her own life, and so many others. Such awareness will not only influence the mentality of African people regarding the girl-child but will also encourage the child herself to work hard knowing that she is born not just for marriage and bearing of children but also to contribute her own quota towards global progress and development.

Another issue to be addressed is the desire to preserve the family name which the girl child is seen

as incapable of doing. Abdullateef et al recommend names should not be changed at marriage. This may begin the much needed reorientation of our people on family name perpetuation. But even more importantly, our people should learn that the importance we place on 'continuing' the family name is artificial; it is our own creation. As seen above, one's name is immortalised even more by what one is able to achieve for the growth of the society, and this can be done by the female child as by the male child.

In addition to the foregoing, there is need to reorganise inheritance customs and laws to grant widows and girl-children their natural right to inherit their husband's or father's property. This will reduce the anxiety surrounding what would happen to one's property in the absence of male children. In the same vein, the rights of widows should be protected; this will help reduce the search for a male child who would serve as a sort of widowhood insurance against possible assaults in the case of future eventualities. Again, girls should be given as much education as their male counterparts so that they can eventually be as much support to their families as the boys.

In conclusion, doing away with the preference for male children is one thing we must do if we must have a fair society.

¹ A Joint Press Release by OHCHR, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and WHO. "Son Preference" perpetuates discrimination and violations of women's rights – it must end. Geneva, 14 June 2011.

² Abdullateef Raji et al, *Socio-Cultural Factors and Male-Child Preference among Couples in Ilorin-Western Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria*.

³ Ohagwu CC, Eze CU, Eze MC, Abu PO, Ohagwu CI. *Preference of Male Gender Preference among Pregnant Igbo Women*. *Health Sci Res* 2014; 4:173-8.

WOMEN AND IWA OJI IN IGBO CULTURE



Thaddeus Atuegwu, A Theology Student of Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu

INTRODUCTION

To a large extent, the Igbo traditional society is patriarchal. As a consequence, there have been growing concerns about the place and state of women in it. Understandably, the popular concession has been that women are subordinated, victimized, made inferior and even absent in the cultural constructions of meaning in Igboland. To make true this claim, certain structures have been projected as cultural concerted efforts to perpetuate the subordination of women in Igboland. Such is the view in relation to *Iwa Oji*. But, the extent to which this is true is worthy of consideration since, in the right context as this work will show, external absence does not always translate to subordinated presence or total absence.

KOLANUT AND ITS RITUAL -IWA OJI

The Kolanut – *Oji* – occupies a pride a place in Igbo religious cum socio-cultural setting. It graces the hands of every 'Igbo man' in majority of the practical activities of his personal-divine and inter-human relations. It is seen as a sacred fruit, whose cotyledons (number of lobes) are densely symbolic. When it is one or two-lobed, it is regarded as a bad omen, and cast away. *Oji Ikenga* is a three-lobed kola. It symbolizes power and achievement. A four cotyledonous kola nut depicts the four market days; a sign of peace and blessings. Five and six-lobed Kola nut – *Oji Muo na Mmadu* – symbolizes good favours in procreation and protection. The seven-lobed Kola is very rare but when seen is appreciated as a

symbol of perfection/fulfilment which is the ultimate desire of every Igbo person. In addition to these, *Oji* serves as a symbol, of life – *Onye wetalu Oji wetalu ndu*, unity, peace, friendship.¹

The Kolanut ritual – *Iwa Oji* – is a ritual action of tripartite rites: presentation, blessing and breaking, and then sharing of the Kola nut. The circumstance of its ritual determines who presides over it. A man at home, in the ritual prayers of consecrating the day, performs the rite for himself. In the company of others – in meetings, celebrations – the eldest man in the group presides over the ritual. Whatever be the circumstance of the ritual, it always stands at the fore; the ritual always is performed before any other activity can meaningfully take place. In the religious context, it serves as the binding force between the supernatural beings, the living and the dead. In the socio-cultural context, it clears the air of any uneasiness while setting the ground for a meaningful encounter between persons; hence, it serves as a symbol of hospitality. In this light, persons or communities at enmity with each other cannot break Kola together until peace is restored between them.

Women do not perform the kolanut ritual by themselves either in public or in private. If a need arises for it among the women folk, a man would be invited to preside over the ritual. They are only to partake of it when it is shared and that is after every male present (regardless of age) has taken his share

In the actual ritual action, when the kolanut is presented, it is passed among those (males) present from left to right in the order of seniority. The essence of this presentation is for everybody present to see the kolanut, have a sense of personal recognition, have a sense of collective identity and become integrated in the meeting. When this is done, the elder who is to break the kola, sitting down, first offers little explanatory prologue mostly drenched in proverbs, about the kola and the purpose of the gathering. Then, in his prayers before the kola is split and distributed to all, he presents to God, the ancestors and the Earth goddess, the people's desire for peace, good health, a long life, the gift of children and prosperity. The prayer takes care of varied interests.³ And after the prayers, those present partake in eating the kola as a sign of love, unity and affirmation and claiming of the blessing therein.⁴

WOMEN AND IWA OJI IN IGBOLAND: THE PROBLEMATIQUE

Within its rich symbolism of hospitality, life, unity, peace and love on communal relationships, the kolanut is associated with a number of taboos particularly in relation to women. Among the Igbo people, it is a taboo for a woman to climb the kolanut tree. Women do not perform the kolanut ritual by themselves either in public or in private. If a need arises for it among the womenfolk, a man would be invited to preside over the ritual. More so, if some women were to be present in the rituals performed by men, during the

presentation of kolanut, it is not presented to them. They are only to partake of it when it is shared and that is after every male present (regardless of age) has taken his share.

This sure leaves a sore taste in the mouth of many. Some thinkers have seen in it nothing less than a total subjugation of women. R. Acholonu was undiplomatic; she saw it as dehumanizing the women, and a denial of their fundamental human right to enjoy equal opportunity with the menfolk.⁵ With the current trends in the contemporary society, I bet the thought of many others resonates in hers. And sometimes, to say what these are not saying puts one in an awkward position.

BEHIND THE VEIL

Understandably, the above concerns are thorough and sincere. At face value, it may quite seem the case that women are excluded and subordinated in the kolanut ritual. However, the truth rests on what lies behind the veil.

Fundamentally and away from the individualism of the West, the Igbo society is structured along the line of communalism. The kernel of this is embodied in the classical phrase; "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am."⁶ Thus, to exist means more than just 'being-there': it means standing in a particular relationship with all that there is,⁷ which makes for harmony and the good of all. It is along this line that the Igbo society, being a natural society, arrived at the division of labour along gender lines, each with its accruing benefits and responsibilities. Together, they contribute to the beauty of the whole. Seen as such, the place of the kolanut ritual is here. It does not posit any discriminatory stance nor serve to diminish the relevance of women. It is simply a cultural reservation for men just as there are other cultural reservations for women.

Even at that and given the

ontological relational character of the Igbo society,⁸ the feminine character is not lacking in the kolanut ritual. As already stated above, it is the eldest male in a gathered group that presides over the ritual. In the performance of this ritual, there is a deconstruction and de-emphasis of the individual for the collectivity. The seemingly male presence in the kolanut rituals represents the voice of one who has de-emphasised the self for the collective identity. It is the voice of the elder, a symbol in itself, a form where sex identity is suppressed or unavailable. Hence, the elder, here, is male-female embodied.⁹ This is further supported by the fact that in Igbo grammatical constructions, there is no distinction between the male and female genders. 'O biara' can comfortably be translated as either 'she came or he came.' In addition,

[The kolanut ritual] is simply a cultural reservation for men just as there are other cultural reservations for women

while blessing the Kola, the elder must of necessity acknowledge the Earth goddess – *Ani*. This not only reflects the presence of the female voice in the kolanut ritual but also their presence.

CONCLUSION

In traditional and even contemporary Igbo society, we are not foreigners to chauvinistic structures which bespeak the unfortunate subordination of women. The trial by ordeal which many widows witness in some parts of Igboland is one among many. But, though it may be easily and inappropriately judged as one of these structures, the kolanut ritual bears no affinity to them. The kolanut ritual does not tend to obliterate the place of women in the cultural constructions of meaning. Truly in Igboland, it is a cultural reservation for men. But, the female presence resonates within it.

¹ M. Muonwe, *NEW DAWN FOR AFRICAN WOMEN: IGBO PERSPECTIVE* (Bloomington: Xlibris, 2016) p. 64
² C. Ukpokolo: "GENDER, SYMBOLS AND TRADITIONAL PEACEMAKING AMONG THE NANKA-IGBO OF SOUTH-EASTERN NIGERIA" in *Human Affairs*, Vol 21 (2011) 170
³ C. Ukpokolo, p.171
⁴ G. E. Adibe, *IGBO MYSTICISM: Power of Igbo Traditional Religion and Society* (Onitsha: Mid-Field Publishers, 2009) p. 131
⁵ R. Acholonu: "Women and the Kolanut" in *Women and the Kolanut*, (2006), p.6 IN M. Muonwe, *NEW DAWN FOR AFRICAN WOMEN: IGBO PERSPECTIVE* (Bloomington: Xlibris, 2016) p. 67
⁶ J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1990) p. 106
⁷ E. A. Ruch, *African Philosophy: An Introduction to the Main Philosophical Trends in Contemporary Africa*, (Rome, 1984) p. 124
⁸ O. J. Nwachukwu, *COMMUNALISM in African Traditional Worldview* (Lagos: Change Publications Limited, 2017) p. 67
⁹ O. J. Nwachukwu, *COMMUNALISM in African Traditional Worldview* (Lagos: Change Publications Limited, 2017) p. 61-62
¹⁰ C. Ukpokolo, p. 170

Bank of Mystery
 By Emmanuel Obichere
 BMS, Enugu.

Piles of depth
 Here all secrets safe are kept
 On the surface is pretty mesh
 Don't be deceived to make a perch

History is Mystery
 Here is mystery of history
 Here is life's trickiest lottery
 It defies any mastery

Do you know the tale of father Adam
 Even the little David, God's lamb
 What of Solomon with sages' ham
 Oh! I remember Samson with great

They were trapped in the depth
 Wallowing in the mysterious dam
 None expected the great jam
 That made them knelt and wept

Thou art the sadness of joy
 Ye, also, joy in sadness
 Happiness of the elect
 Happiness for the defect

Who can get the best?
 In the lottery that downed the best
 Amidst all that fight with great
 Who will find a good nest

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH DR. PAT NDU ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY IN NIGERIA

Many of our readers will be familiar with you especially through your Sunday programme, Soul Sistaz, as Soul Mama, on Solid 100.9 FM. And your contributions, along with those of all the others, make you simply a legend. Could you, in the interest of these readers, tell us a little about yourself?

I am the third child and first daughter of my parents Late Chief Francis Ezenwa (Ikenga I of Achina) and Ezinne Benedette Ezenwa. I am my father's daughter (Adaikenga) and take pride in the heritage and values he handed down. Obiageli Pat Ndu has a degree in Veterinary Medicine and Surgery (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine; DVM) from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; a Masters in Veterinary Public Health from the University of Ibadan and a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) degree in Environmental Management and Control from Shell Centre of Environmental Management and Control (CEMAC) of the University of Nigeria Enugu Campus. She is a high energy and self-motivated person with a lot of experience in Program Development and Administration. I am detail oriented, have good time and resource management skills plus good literary and communication skills which found expression in current position as General Manager Solid FM Radio Enugu. Pat is accustomed to being in positions of responsibility and authority; is a member, Board of Directors Anambra Broadcasting Service (Radio and TV) and currently President, Catholic Women Organization, Blessed Iwene Tansi Parish, Trans Ekulu Enugu. In her passion for young girls and nation building she anchors a programme Soul Sistaz every Sunday 2-4pm on Solid FM where she is Maama. Pat is married to Mr Gabriel Ndu and together they have four children and a grandchild; Krystle, Gabriella, Blossom, Michael and Liam.

From your assessment of the state of affairs in Nigeria – socially, culturally, and politically – do you think women are really



discriminated against? If you do, to what extent is this discrimination?

Discrimination is a very strong word if you ask me. The school systems offer a level playing ground for all from Pre-School to Tertiary institutions. Sadly the women begin to go under when husband and children happen. Women are naturally built to multi-task and not crack. All of a sudden they want to be treated differently, a situation that gives those in authority over them a chance not to take them seriously. Their male colleagues put in the effort and soar like the eagle. I would not call that discrimination. Life is about choices. You are given a level playing field but from ineptitude you go down on your own.

I don't like talking about gender equality. The current paradigm is gender equity which preaches fairness.

Some of those that call for gender equality call for the elimination of specific gender roles. Do you think that for equality, roles in the family should be made neutral, roles such as cooking, nursing the baby, sweeping the house etc.?

I don't like talking about gender equality. The current paradigm is

gender equity which preaches fairness. And I think we should not altogether scrap our values and cultural leanings. However adjustments can be made around rôles as needed. Our forebears assigned the role of shelter, school fees and provision of food to the man as head of household. The woman took care of the home front, raised the children, cooked, cleaned and occasionally had a trade or skill that added to the family till. Women of today are able to deliver much more. However, these rôles should not be cast in stone. Let equity reign, Period.

It is usually accepted that, like in other associations of persons, there is need for leadership in the family. Do you accept this view, and what model of leadership would you propose if you do?

As Christians; leadership in the family is a role assigned to the man. The expectation is that the man takes care of the family. In fact the caveat is that a man that cannot take care of his family is worse than an infidel. In the Catholic Church we call men the 'Pillars' of the home without which things can fall apart. The man provides both structure and identity in the patrilineal society. However in Ecclesiastes 9:11 it was captured that 'the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong neither yet bread to the wise nor riches to men of understanding nor favour to men of skill but time and chance happen to them all'. Therefore in the event of time and chance happening there can be a subtle paradigm shift. A primary challenge to men's role as providers is that many are unable and sometimes unwilling to provide for their families due to lack of economic opportunities and an insecure environment. As a result, women are increasingly seeking both paid and self-employment to supplement family income. Again this development get the men worried that women may be absent from their primary duties in

the home including child care, cooking, cleaning or that the women may end up usurping their bread winning role and headship of the household. The hard truth is that many now realize that given current economic realities in the country, women's economic contributions to the household are essential.

Is it right, especially in view of family life, for the female spouse to independently own large property, such as landed property?

Again go through Proverbs 31:10-31 on the wife of noble character. She considers a field and buys it out of her earnings and she plants a vineyard. If a woman has the resources to buy property; why not? However, couples should be open about their investments. I own a few landed properties but my spouse and children are aware. In fact my husband has the role of keeping those kinds of papers and it's called 'TRUST'. There is a property I know that is owned by a woman now late and her family was not aware of the investment. The property has been taken over by a squatter and as we speak has erected make shift structures on the land that he has rented and is regularly reaping from. The house was almost fully completed just paint job and finishing. Only God knows if the property would ever go back to the family. That is the danger in trying to micro-manage the woman.

On the larger scene, it is sometimes argued that women do not usually appear on leadership posts, not because they are kept out of such posts but because they lack leadership qualities or because they do not contest well. How true is this view?

I am not sure that is true. Politics in our clime has not provided a level playing field for all. It is not that the woman lacks leadership skills. You would recall that the school curriculum does not have a separate scheme for the different genders. The face of 'POVERTY' should not be the woman. Women continue to evolve across the generations from women seen and not heard to the place of woman being in the kitchen. Women have remained in that stereotype for

centuries. They have started of late to crash glass ceilings and break glass cages. The glass ceiling and cage is not new. But in every generation there are women who crashed those invisible barriers; Funmilayo Kuti, Margaret Ekpo, Queen Amina, Dora Akunyili, Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, Oby Ezekwesili, Stella Oduah to mention but a few. Margaret Thatcher was quoted as saying that women wrestling with self-doubt and tiptoe around issues are limiting their self-worth and running in circles with the chicken mentality. The eagle mentality adaptation moves the woman out of the glass cage and ceiling. Many women even at the grass roots have learnt to push themselves beyond what was originally their comfort zone to chart new courses and opportunities. Today there is no mountain too high or valley too deep that women would not touch to do exploits and contribute to the development agenda. They have been called all kinds of names in the process. Female Politicians have been branded ladies of easy virtues and more. Women are known the world over as agents of development and they do quite well in various board rooms. The snag is that men are intimidated by the presence of a strong woman and would do about anything to break her.

Do you believe then that women should be given certain privileges over and above men, like being given a predetermined number of political slots? Is this healthy for women's efforts and for the fight for equality?

I do not believe that women should be given predetermined number of political positions. That is both condescending and patronizing. Power is usually taken not given. The late twentieth century and millennium woman has mastered the act of breaking out of the glass cage and smashing the glass ceiling without cuts, bruises and bleeding. In the last 10 years, the rate of women's representation in national parliaments globally has grown from 13.1 per cent at the end of 1999 to 18.6 per cent at the end of 2009. Some regions have seen particularly dramatic increases, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, where the number of women in parliaments has risen from 10.9 to 17.6 per cent. As women's contributions toward a strong and

vibrant society are increasingly documented, there is also growing understanding of why women's meaningful participation is essential to building and sustaining democracy. Let the better candidates win. The problem is that we hoist on last eleven to the fore front rather than the first eleven who are also prefects of their class. I believe in excellence. Give it to me if I have earned it.

Do you think men have anything to contribute to the fight for 'gender equity'? Can they, and should they, be actively involved in the fight?

Yes the men can lend a hand in the gender equity drive. They can start by treating the women in their lives very well and as treasures; mother, sister, wife and daughters. They should affirm the daughters and encourage them to be the best they can be. Give them solid education and push them same way the sons are pushed to achieve. Why should a girl be sent to school and made to think that next level means marriage, children and nothing more? They spend 6-3-3-4 years in school and all they do is sit in some man's kitchen making *onigbun* and *ora* soups. Haba, there is God! They acquire all those skills and bury them to become homemaker a job they can conveniently combine with a secular job. I hear men say all the time that they don't want working class wives!! And WHY? It is so not fair.

What are your parting words?

My parting words; Women are currently Nigeria's hidden resource and any development plan that does not include them would fail. Investing in women and girls has increased productivity across generations and promoted sustainable development. In spite of the constraints on the Nigerian women, there is overwhelming evidence that they are a formidable productive force and a storehouse of untapped potentials required for development. They can dictate the pace and direction of the economy across the different strata of the society. Their sheer numerical strength and contribution cannot be discounted in house hold and community economies. The role of women in development is considerable.

MADE FROM A RIB:

A REVIEW OF SR. DR. MARYSYLVIA NWACHUKWU'S INTERPRETATION OF GEN 2:18-24

Review by Collins Nwodo, BMS, Enugu

Going through an analysis of the Hebrew words 'ezer and kenegdo, the author shows

rib defines her as "of the same substance with the man" and "also refers to her preeminent support for the man and the family."

The author immediately moves on to show that, rather than being derogatory or indicating inferiority, the words 'helper' and 'rib' also describe the invaluable support the woman is to family, through the "characteristic resourcefulness that is unique to her gender" and "through her economic activities and foresighted enterprises [by] which she provides for her husband and household in season and out of season."

Sr. Nwachukwu goes ahead to show that woman "... represents creation's fullness and fulfilment, indispensable for man's self-realization and for creation's completeness". Creation was completed as soon as she was created. With woman, man discovers that life means more than merely taking care of the garden; it extends to communion with a fellow.

Finally the author also points to Gen 3:20 as important for understanding the meaning and place of woman, where described as mother of the living. This points to the fact that woman, married or not, "extends", "nurtures" and "preserves" life, "even at the cost of their own lives".

Sr. Dr. MarySylvia Nwachukwu

is a Lecturer at Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu and Director of Academic Planning, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu Nigeria
(For main essay, watch out for Bigard Theological Studies June 2019)

Background

As a biblical justification for a lower status of women, some people often point to Gen 2:18-24, particularly verses 21 and 22 which record that woman was made from a man's rib. This derogatory understanding of the biblical passage dates back even to Early Church Fathers and Scholastics. Sr. Dr. MarySylvia professionally challenges this understanding, while giving lucid, convincing exegesis of the metaphor of being made from a man's rib.

Author's View

Sr. Nwachukwu MarySylvia sees Gen. 2:18 as an important turning point in the creation narrative. Against the background of God's assessment of his creation elsewhere, in which he sees everything he made to be very good (cf 1:31), v 18 of chapter 2 records instead that God judges something to be not good – and that was man's being alone. This, for the author, is a departure from God's original plan for man and is key to understanding the metaphor.

Although it comes as an afterthought, God's reaction to man's loneliness was in line with his original intention to have man happy, an intention which seems to be defeated by his loneliness.

however, that the sort of companion God wanted for the man was not merely a helper/assistance nor a protection for him. Rather, as the latter word actually translates "as before him" which means "someone or something that matches him or is equivalent to him", the creation was intended to be man's equal, a "fitting companion".

To achieve his aim to create a fitting companion for man, God first of all experiments on animals, to see if they would fit his plans for the man, but they proved to be not his match. With the animals, the man was only able to establish a relationship of dominion. This fact is demonstrated by his giving names to them. Seeing his seeming failure, Sr. Nwachukwu says, "God... resolved to create woman in a different way," in a way different from the way he had made the animals, and that was from man's rib.

The puzzle then is why God chose the rib; "What might possibly be God's reason for using the rib and not any other material or any other human organ to create the woman?" asks the author. From an analysis of the vital function of the ribs, she concludes that "the text Gen 2:18-24 has simply said that the woman is to the man what the rib is to the human body." The



EQUAL BUT DIFFERENT: A Balanced Understanding Of Equality

Ezugwu Lawrence Chidera is a Theology student of Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu

Modern culture has placed a litmus test upon people and the way in which they relate to one another. This test is basically secularist; the secularist thought places functionality as a criterion of evaluating people and their equality. According to the function-based definition of equality, "to truly gain equality we must all be able to do the same things". But, this denies a basic fact – we are all different though made equal! Function-based equality is a refusal to accept the individuality we each have and it becomes a rejection of God's gift which we are to the world. We must therefore confront this secularist notion of functionality as the standard of equality and work to let a true notion of equality take its rightful place.

ARE WE EQUAL?

Being made in God's image and likeness (Gen. 1:27) teaches us even more:

- We are not God
- We all share in a magnificent gift of God—our creation.
- We each have an equal dignity (worth) given by God.
- Our equality with one another is based on this dignity.
- Being different from one another does not affect our equality or dignity.

- Our individual uniqueness has meaning and goodness.
- Our uniqueness tells us something about God.
- Our differences should complement one another.
- Our differences are gifts from God and are part of God's plan for creation.

However, we should also remember this: God is three Persons in one Divine nature – a Trinity of persons. Thus, he is a family and community of persons. The three persons do not differ in action or nature, but by relationship with one another. Therefore, when we were created, we were made with a share in God's image and likeness in two ways: first, each individual human reflects God's image and likeness – just as God has a divine intellect (knows things) and a divine will (freedom to make choices) so each individual human has a human intellect and will. Second, we are also made in the image and likeness of God as a community of persons. Just as there is a Divine Father and Son and the love between them, so we are called to image God by being in communion with others.

Moreover, The Catechism of Catholic Church teaches us in no. 1704 that "The human person

participates in the light and power of the divine Spirit. By his reason, he is capable of understanding the order of things established by the Creator. By free will, he is capable of directing himself toward his true good. He finds his perfection "in seeking and loving what is true and good." A little before this in no. 1702 the Catechism states, "The divine image is present in every man. It shines forth in the communion of persons, in the likeness of the unity of the divine persons among themselves. In the communion of persons we live out the image of God not only through our own individual gift of humanity, but also through the communion with others."

Thus, we are called to see how God is reflected in our own selves as well as in others, even though they are different. Each of us reveals, in a mysterious way, a truth about the nature of God, which was given to us at creation. Part of our purpose in life is to find God's presence within. Our humanity is connected to our individual giftedness and in the differences; each of us lives out the image and likeness of the Trinity in a different way.

Secularist thought places functionality as a criterion of evaluating people and their equality...But, this denies a basic fact – we are all different though made equal!

What we need to avoid is the idea that "equality" equates to "sameness". This is wrong. We can never be truly equal if this is true, because there is no way to achieve "sameness", due to our innate differences. We must ask how our differences complement each other, and how we are tied to one another and to God. True equality acknowledges our differences and then finds that which transcends them and is shared by all – our human dignity. Thus, we are "equal but different," made in God's image and likeness.

MALE AND FEMALE: EQUAL BUT DIFFERENT

The Letter of the Congregation for

the Doctrine of the Faith to the World Episcopate on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World underlines the equality in human dignity and yet the fundamental difference between the sexes. Man and woman are equal in human dignity and personhood, yet different in a much more profound sense than merely the biological; "their equal dignity as persons is realized as a physical, psychological and ontological complementarity" (n. 8). Their equality is therefore fundamental as persons, but their difference is also fundamental. It is not only physical, but also ontological.

In order to understand the essential nature of man and woman, we must do away with human subjectivity and look through God's eyes which is considering human dignity. Every human being, man and woman, was created for the same purpose, namely, to make themselves and their world a better and holier place. In their service of God, there is absolutely no difference between a man and a woman; the only difference is in the way that service manifests itself.

Nevertheless, Man and woman represent two forms of divine energy; they are the male and female elements of a single soul. God is neither masculine nor feminine, but has two forms of emanation: the masculine form, which is more aggressive, and the feminine form, which is more subtle. For a human being to lead a total life, he or she must have both forms of energy: the power of strength and the power of subtlety; the power of giving and the power of receiving. Ideally, these energies are merged seamlessly. Men are physically stronger. By nature, they are usually more aggressive and externally oriented. In contrast, a woman usually embodies the ideal of inner dignity. Some people confuse such subtlety with weakness; in truth, it is stronger than the most aggressive physical force imaginable. True

Man and woman represent two forms of divine energy...the masculine form...and the feminine form... For a human being to lead a total life, he or she must have both forms of energy: the power of strength and the power of subtlety; the power of giving and the power of receiving

human dignity does not shout; it is a strong, steady voice that speaks from within. *The nature of a woman, while subtle, is not weak. And the nature of a man, while aggressive, is not brutish. For man and woman to be complete, they must each possess both energies.*

The answer is therefore not for men and women to try to be alike. All men and women must be *themselves*, realizing that God has given each of us unique abilities with which to pursue our goals, and that our primary responsibility is to take full advantage of those abilities.

THE TRUE LIBERATION BETWEEN THE TWO SEXES

Though feminism rightfully calls for the end of male domination and abuse, and for equal rights for women, it is vital to get to the root of the distortion; our focus in life, as man or woman, must not be simply to satisfy our own ego or needs, but to serve God. True women's liberation does not mean merely seeking equality within a masculine world, but liberating the divine feminine aspects of a woman's personality and using them for the benefit of humankind. After so many years of male dominance, we are standing at the threshold of a true feminine era. It is time now for the woman to rise to her true prominence, when the subtle power of the feminine energy is truly allowed to nourish the overt power of the masculine energy which means nurturing the Godliness within.

CONCLUSION:

Men and women must realize their respective equal roles and strive to

complement each other in their shared struggle to improve life. In order to correct the abuse of male dominance, men must concentrate on using their dominant qualities for the good. They must use their strength to protect and preserve the feminine character, helping women realize their true potentials in revealing Godliness, which the world so desperately needs today. Both genders must learn about what it means to be a man or a woman, about masculine and feminine energy. They should learn to live up to their potentials, to balance these energies to lead a productive and meaningful life (a Godly life). And finally, all should learn to appreciate and respect a fellow male or female counterpart.

MOTHERHOOD, LOVE AND MERCY

Gerald Okoye, BMS.

*Breast feeding is an act of love.
Love that springs into life,
Desiring to see offspring live
Growth which brings out love.*

*How does it feel when love hurts,
If the suckling lad bites the breast
With smiles he gazes at the mother,
'Mum does it hurt?'*

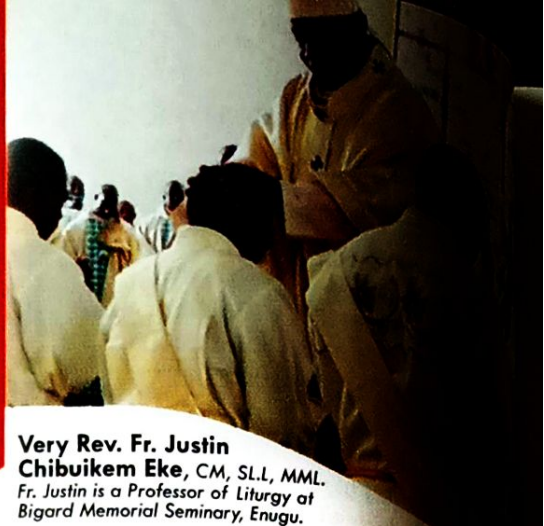
*The mother smiles back,
'You don't know that love hurts'
But looking at you it stack,
For the pain is sweet as it hurts.*

*I can't stop loving.
Feeling soothing lips on my breast,
Filled with hope saying,
'Love brings life to be vest'.*

*Love that my breast spurs,
Covering my nipple,
Feels me with joys
For a new life dapple.*

*'Mercy and love bring forth life
As you endure the pain for life
Your heart yields the unknown,
Sorrows my life shown.*

THE CHURCH AND THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN



Very Rev. Fr. Justin Chibuikem Eke, CM, S.L.L., M.M.L.
Fr. Justin is a Professor of Liturgy at Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu.

The term ordination is “the liturgical act of conferring Holy Orders upon a candidate, thus bestowing upon him an ecclesiastical office in order to minister to the Church”. Those called to this service are called clerics. The term clergy is borrowed from the Greek *κλῆρος* (*kleros*) and translated as *Clerus* in Latin. The word originally meant a “lot” – an object used in casting lot, the chosen from a drawn lot, that which is obtained by a lot (an allotted portion, like the portion of the ministry assigned to the Apostles), persons entrusted with the pastoral ministry of elders (Presbyters) in the Church.

In ancient traditions and religions certain individuals within these societies functioned as priests or equivalent special roles. With the further civilization of the ancient societies (Ancient Near East), specific experts were assigned with the task of rendering spiritual events with the gods and spirits. The need for appeasing these spirits for guidance and blessing became a necessity. Thence, a priest became a necessity to render ritual remedies when the need arose. This practice became widespread.

In the known ancient civilization however, the priestly role and person has developed to a more restricted position. Even in this limited capacity, “they still

functioned as mediators, either by representing their people to the gods in prayer or by representing the gods to the people in blessing, teaching, and moral judgment”.

Any of the above could make sense in reference to *kleros*, but the last became common in the early Church from the later part of the second century as an assigned responsibility for ordained ministers. This borrowed usage could have been derived from the allocation of priestly duties by lot in the Old Testament, thus, “They divided them impartially by casting lots, for there were officials of the sanctuary and officials of God among the descendants of both Eleazar and Ithamar” (1 Chronicles 24:5).

As time evolved, the Jewish priesthood was employed into the sacrificial duties of the Christian priesthood. This task was partly usurped by the father of each household in offering prayer and sacrifice to the gods before the advent of the Roman Emperors (27BC) around ancient Rome and Israel, and this was why Jesus was found comfortably leading the sacrifice the night before his passion for the Apostolic household (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23-29). He was the leader of the group. A leadership enwrapped with humility and service. He then bequeathed these same leadership qualities to his Apostles and engaged them to

announce the coming of God's kingdom, and to proclaim Jesus as the messiah, heal the sick, and baptize converts to the revelation of Jesus (cf. Mt. 28:19). The twelve would form a larger group of believers who were engaged in some sort of activity in continuation to the command of Jesus – to spread the good news to the ends of the world (cf. Mk. 16:15, Acts. 1:8). Jesus entrusts these sacred duties to his closest associates and set them aside for this unique mission and commissioned them to carry on his work.

This renewed step would lead to further structural reorganization in the administration of the new group. This would lead to more and newer roles (for better administration of the Church that has continued to grow in great numbers. The offices of *apostoloi* (apostles) denoting emissaries (for others existed outside the twelve), *diakonia* (deacons) meaning service or ministry were the first established offices - The former, as the twelve (for the apostles would create other

Beyond the sustenance of the office of the Apostles (the twelve) displayed in the election of Matthias, the selection and ordination of Stephen and the other six deacons confirmed the fact that from the worshipping community men, only Men, were chosen for these ministries that required imposition of hands

Apostles to assist them), by Christ Jesus himself and the later by the Apostles with the approval of the worshipping community. Other auxiliary offices would also spring up; *episcopoi* (Bishop) meaning Elders and extensively supervisors or overseers, *prophetes* (prophets) meaning spokespersons.

However, beyond the sustenance of the office of the Apostles (the twelve) displayed in the election of Matthias (cf. Mt. 1:12-26), the selection and ordination of Stephen and the other six deacons (cf. Acts 6:1-6) confirmed the fact that from the worshipping community men, only **Men** were chosen for these ministries that required imposition of hands (*ordinatio* – ordination). The former case of Matthias was so unique that even the women who had fulfilled the requirement for apostolic college (the twelve) and Mary the mother of Jesus (that is, journeying with Jesus from the time of his baptism till his resurrection), the community still chose two men for that elective office. There is certainly a reason for this choice.

When the clamouring of a few grew stronger about three years ago on the Pope allowing women to at least attend to the Status of Ordained Deacons in the Church, theologians simple resorted to the Code of Canon Law on the stipulation concerning the Holy Orders. The Canon Law is clear in stating that “*Only a baptised man can validly receive sacred ordination*”. Why would this be the case? Why “*only a baptised man*?”

Reflecting on this, the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that:

The Lord Jesus chose men (*viri*) to form the college of the twelve apostles, and the apostles did the same when they chose collaborators to succeed them in

their ministry. The college of bishops, with whom the priests are united in the priesthood, makes the college of the twelve an ever-present and ever-active reality until Christ's return. The Church recognizes herself to be bound by this choice made by the Lord himself. For this reason the ordination of women is not possible.

It becomes thence, that the choice and doctrine of the Church is not a feeling of responsibility or sentimental refusal to the choice of a woman as a leader in the Church but the total obedience to the will of Christ in carrying out His sacraments. Holy Orders is a sacrament instituted by Christ himself and not a mere discipline of the Church.

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While women occupy many important administrative offices and roles in the Church, they are not entrusted to carry out the ministerial office of a clergy, just as the Lord Jesus desired from the very beginning. Many other ministries existed within the first four centuries of the church that women carried out – widows, teachers, prophets but they were not ordained ministries.

Few interpretations refer to the particular case of Phoebe, a deaconess (cf. Rom. 16:1), but we know that a common interpretation for a servant was also *Diaconia* for which she was here referred to and common to all ministries of service. It does

could not be done by men to avoid scandals in the words of St. Clement of Alexandria.

Pointing to the real role of women deacons in the early Church the *Disdascalia* would opine thus, “And when she who is being baptized has come up from the water, let the deaconess receive her, and teach and educate her in order that the unbreakable seal of baptism shall be (kept) in chastity and holiness. On this account, we say that the ministry of a woman deacon is especially required and urgent”. It is clear that the deaconesses performed an important role in the liturgy but there is no pointer to the fact that they performed the ministerial role of ordained deacons as ordained deaconesses. In fact, the first Ecumenical Council, the Council of Nicaea insisted that the Paulianists deaconesses were not ordained ministers but laywoman.

In 1995, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith explained that when the Church holds her teaching on the ordination of women, as taught by Pope John Paul II, in his apostolic letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* of 1994, she does so because her position is founded on the written Word of God, and from the beginning constantly preserved and applied in the tradition of the Church, and the Church's magisterium have sustained this teaching of Christ as infallible as it is. Hence, women cannot be admitted to the clerical state in the Catholic Church because it is the divine will of Christ Jesus whom the universal Church rightful follows as her shepherd and guide.



AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH
DR AISHA BALARABE BAWA

On The Status And Role of Women IN NIGERIAN ISLAMIC SOCIETY

Dr. Aisha Balarabe Bawa is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of History, Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto. Her area of Specialization lies in the area of Gender Studies with focus on Northern Nigeria. She has published a number of articles in national and international Journals and contributed chapters in books. Some of her published works include: *Gender Identity and Change: The Case of Muslim Women in Northern Nigeria* (2016), *“Muslim Women and Sharia Implementation in Northern Nigeria: An Overview of FOMWAN”*. (2017), *Silent Voices in Hausa land: Placing Hausa Women in History*, (2018). She is the Convener of a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), *Women Networking and Empowerment Initiative*, in Sokoto. Dr. Aisha is an activist. She is currently the Vice Chairman of the Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU) Usmanu Danfodiyo University, chapter. She is happily married.

The average non-Muslim often thinks of the Muslim woman as overly restricted and controlled. How true is this view? Does the Muslim woman see herself in same light?

To start with, let me clearly state that, it is a misconception to perceive Muslim women as objects of pity. This misconception can only be extirpated by understanding what constitute Islamic teachings as a religion and way of life, and what are local customs and traditions which are often conceived as part of Islam. As a matter of fact, women are recognized by Islam as full and equal partners of men. Women enjoy the same basic rights and freedom men have. However, it is the lengthy existence under the realm of tradition that greatly influenced and determines the extent of women's visibility and mobility. The Muslim woman has

not considered her situation as being restricted. Her dignity is more safeguarded in Islam. Amongst the clearest examples of Islam's honoring women is the right to inheritance. A woman has the right to her late husband's inheritance even without having a child for him. Islam commands kindness, respect and obedience to parents and specifically emphasizes and gives preference to the mother.

The Qur'an forms the basis for Shari'ah. Do you think male chauvinism is supported by the Qur'an?

The Qur'an and the Hadith – the two primary sources of Islamic law actually do not consider women inferior or unequal to men. Where they differ with men is not on the basis of discrimination but on the basis of their psychological differences, which defined the

peculiar roles they should play. The Qur'an, in one of the verses, lays the ground for the concept of equality between men and women: The believers, men and women, are allies (*awliya*) of one another. They enjoin the good (*al ma'ruf*) and forbid the bad (*al-munkari*), they observe prayer (*salat*), give charity alms (*Zakat*) and obey God and his prophet (Qur'an:9:71).

The expansion of Shari'ah in some states to cover criminal law has since met with mixed reactions from Muslim women. How does Shari'ah affect them and why has it drawn such reactions?

I also perceive a misconception by many non-Muslims on what the Shari'ah is. Shari'ah is a religious law that forms part of the Islamic tradition. By implication, Islam expects a Muslim (not a non-Muslim) to follow its law in every aspect of life: personal and familial, religious and social, moral and political, economic and business, etc. Muslim women, particularly the elite group, greeted the Shari'ah because they believe the social ills bedeviling the society will be played down. Women and the lower class in the society believe in the implementation of Shari'ah which will guarantee the enjoyment of equal rights, particularly educational opportunity.

What is the place and role of a Muslim woman in marriage?

Islam is a strong advocate of marriage. A great deal of emphasis has been given to marriage in Islam as evident in Qur'an and the Prophet traditions. A woman plays the role of mother, and wife. She is responsible for the upbringing, training and education of the children. As a wife she should be a source of comfort for her husband as he is to her. She must be faithful, trustworthy and honest.

Are there restrictions on the woman as regards praying in the mosque? If there are, how do they affect the sensibilities of the educated Muslim woman?

Although I'm not an authority to speak on this, however, Islam is not against women praying in the Mosque. Women, particularly elderly women of menopause age, attend Mosque. The fact that is not clear to non-Muslims is that Muslim women are not obliged to pray in the Mosque; they are honoured to remain in their houses with equal rewarding with the men that will walk for long distances to attend Mosque.

Is feminism acceptable in Islam – in other words, can one be feminist and at the same time be a true Muslim? What is the hijab and why is it often a source of controversy?

Considering the privileges women enjoy in Islam such as the right to enter into contracts and legal agreements; the right to earn an income and dispose her property as she wishes, the right to education, I don't think Islam frowns at women liberation in that context, if using the Islamic law to make ground to improve Muslim women's status is wrong. The prophet has prepared the ground for women to take part in their own liberation. On hijab I think the controversy, in my own opinion, comes from people who are against modesty. Hijab is an Islamic code of modesty that

requires head covering. I believe even in Christianity women cover their head while praying.

Statistics suggest that in the North, a higher percentage of girls still receive little or no formal education. Is this phenomenon attributable to Islam, or to any other factor?

The pathetic situation is not peculiar to Northern Nigeria. In most societies, girls relative to boys are disadvantaged educationally. Education in Islam is not only a right but a responsibility on every Muslim, male or female. The great jihadist Sheikh Usman Danfodio was committed to female education. He was against parents and husbands who left their families ignorant. The attributing factors

It is a misconception to perceive Muslim women as objects of pity. This misconception can only be extirpated by understanding what constitute Islamic teachings as a religion and way of life, and what are local customs and traditions which are often conceived as part of Islam

are patriarchy, early marriage, poverty, and male preference.

Prof 'Abdur Rahman Doi, is of the opinion that because of the strict code of modesty and conduct required by Islam, Muslim women should not head a state. What is your view on this?

Islam does not prohibit women from taking part in public offices; many women served during the early Islamic period. Islam preaches modesty in terms of a woman's decent dressing and the way she conducts herself in relation to other men. Once a woman can adhere to Islamic laws she is equal to the task.

Mention is often made of Nana Asma'u Bint Usman Danfodio in relation to Feminism. Who is this woman, and what is her contribution to the fight for women's right?

Nana Asma'u Bint Usman Danfodio was a renowned scholar in the 19th century under the Sokoto caliphate. She was also a prolific author, teacher, and daughter of Sheikh Usman Danfodiyo. Nana Asma'u. She wrote poems in Arabic, Hausa, Fulfulde and Tamackek. The greatest contribution of Asma'u was the formation of women Network, the first of its kind in the whole of West Africa. The women Network known as *Yan Taru* were trained teachers with the purpose of educating women and children in Islamic religious and literary education. Asma'u, and later her sister Maryam after the death of Asma'u, conducted classes for the women. This legacy has survived till today in Sokoto.

On a general note, do you think Nigerian women are merely kept out of the centre stage especially in areas like politics, or is it the case that they have not contested better than men for that centre stage?

Exactly, women are marginalized in Nigerian politics. More often than not, they are besieged with challenges which discrimination is rife. Very unfortunate that a country such as Rwanda is having 68% of women in Parliament while 'the giant of Africa' is having less than 14%. Records have shown that a number of women contested for different political offices but male chauvinism have continued to put them down.

What are your parting words?

To see Nigerian women enjoying equal opportunities with their male counterparts in social, economic and political spheres.

BEHOLD OUR PHILOSOPHY GRADUANDS



MBILITEM CLINTON
ABA



ODINUKWE KINGSLEY
ABA



OZOEMENA JOACHIN
ABA



AGWU PAUL
ABAKALIKI



ABAA SAMUEL
ABAKALIKI



ALITA ANSELIA
ABAKALIKI



ANUMNU ANTHONY
ABAKALIKI



EGUDU JONATHAN I.
ABAKALIKI



EZEOKÉ LUCIUS
ABAKALIKI



EZUMA MATTHIAS
ABAKALIKI



NJOKU PHILIP
ABAKALIKI



NSODIKWA JUDE
ABAKALIKI



ANUGWO SAMUEL A.
AWGU



EKOH CHUKWUEBUKA
AWGU



IGBO JAMES C.
AWGU



ILECHUKWU ELLJAH
AWGU



KENECHUKWU VINTUS
AWGU



NKEMAKONAM CHARLES
AWGU



NNAEMEKA EMMANUEL
AWGU



NWACHUKWU VITALIS
AWGU



ORJIAKO FRANCIS
AWGU



UCHEGBU CORNELIUS
AWGU



UDEH EMMANUEL
AWGU



UZOGBADO AUGUSTINE
AWGU



AKWUBA LAWRENCE
AWKA



CHIBUEZE DAMIAN
AWKA



NWANKWO VALENTINE
AWKA



OBIEJESI KINGSLEY
AWKA



OBIKWELU ELIAS
AWKA



OGBONNAYA BARTHOLOMEW
AWKA



OKOYEATU ANTHONY C.
AWKA



OKPARAORAKWE HENRY
AWKA



MENDIE JAMES J.
CALABAR



EMMANUEL T.
CSIC AKURE



ONAH MATTHEW E.
CSIC



OZOR VICTOR O.
CSIC

True equality means holding everyone accountable in the same way, regardless of race, gender, faith, ethnicity – or political ideology. – Monica Crowley

BEHOLD OUR PHILOSOPHY GRADUANDS



BEHOLD OUR PHILOSOPHY GRADUANDS



One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. – Simone de Beauvoir

ABORTION: An Abuse Of Women's Autonomy

ATTAMAH VICTOR NNAMDI, A Philosophy Student of Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the fight for gender equality and emancipation of the female gender, abortion has come to be seen by some as an expression of a woman's autonomy. She should be allowed to decide whether and when she should abort her unborn baby. Such positions call for critical attention. In this attempt I will take a look at what abortion is in relation to women's liberty.

WHAT IS ABORTION?

Abortion is the removal or expulsion of an embryo or foetus from the uterus, resulting in, or caused by its death. Medically, it is defined as an induced termination of pregnancy before twenty weeks of gestation period. So it refers to the direct and deliberate expulsion or removal from the womb of a woman of fertilized egg, or an embryo or a foetus before this new developing life entity is capable of sustaining life outside the womb. The word 'deliberate' is used to differentiate it from 'spontaneous abortion' which is normally called 'miscarriage'. Direct and deliberate abortion, properly called abortion, is my concern here.

THE ABORTION DEBATE

The so-called abortion debate is the ongoing controversy surrounding the moral, legal, and religious status of induced abortion. The sides involved in the debate are the self-described "pro-choice" and "pro-life" movements. "Pro-choice"

emphasizes the right of women to decide whether to terminate a pregnancy. "Pro-life" emphasizes the right of the embryo or foetus to gestate to term and be born. Both terms are considered loaded in mainstream media, where terms such as "abortion rights" or "anti-abortion" are generally preferred. Each movement has, with varying results, sought to influence public opinion and to attain legal support for its position. Our focus



It would be wrong to view pregnancy as a disability, and to talk of 'freeing' women from pregnancy is precisely to see pregnancy as a disability.

however, is the pro-choice side which advocates for abortion rights, based primarily on claims of the woman's liberty.

Here are some of the arguments offered in favour of abortion¹:

- Women have a moral right to decide what to do with their bodies.
- The right to abortion is vital for gender equality.
- The right to abortion is vital for individual women to achieve their full potential.
- Banning abortion puts women at risk by forcing them to use illegal abortionists.
- The right to abortion should be part of a portfolio of pregnancy rights that enables women to make a truly free choice whether to end a

pregnancy.

These arguments revolve on liberty, women's liberty. And to that we now turn our attention.

ABORTION AND THE AUTONOMY OF WOMEN

Margaret Sanger, one of the leading figures of the feminist movement in America argued that "No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her body. No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously whether she will or will not be a mother."² For Sanger, the true test of a woman's freedom is not her ability to earn her living but her ability to control pregnancy and birth.³ She offers contraception and abortion as means to attain this end. Not surprisingly, she has since had many followers.

Now the question is: How did woman's autonomy come into the abortion debate? The answer is the assumption that pregnancy and all it takes puts the woman at a disadvantage in the public space: "pregnancy and childbirth...serve to restrict women's ability to participate in society on equal footing with men."⁴ The proponents of this view therefore argue that the woman must take to abortion if she feels she does not want the unborn child. This way, they assume, the woman will take off the burden of pregnancy. This for them is both a guarantee and exercise of the woman's freedom.

Our conclusions here should be based on the veracity of this claim as well as on the disasters

associated with abortion.

DOES PREGNANCY REDUCE THE VALUE OF WOMAN?

Indeed, pregnancy comes with a lot of physiological changes which are the cause of no little difficulties for women. However, as Paul Stark pointed out, it would be wrong to view pregnancy as a disability⁵, and to talk of 'freeing' women from pregnancy is precisely to see pregnancy as a disability. Besides this, while the argument for liberty is attractive, it actually denigrates the woman and her body's natural function, and hides within it a disturbing assumption that pregnancy makes woman less valuable than man, and therefore that for woman to become equal to man, she should be turned into "wombless man"! On the contrary, the woman does not become inferior to the man because she is pregnant. For the feminist writer, Erika Bachiochi, "Authentic equality and reproductive justice would demand something far more revolutionary: that men and society at large respect and support women in their myriad capacities and talents which include, for most women at some time in their lives, childbearing."⁶

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS OF ABORTION

Abortion comes with a lot of risks for the mother. According to the World Health Organisation (2016), "there is high proliferation of maternal deaths due to complications arising from illegally and legally induced abortions." Outside death, women who abort their babies have increased likelihood of facing various health challenges such as: *Cervical, Ovarian and Liver Cancer* (perhaps because of the abortifacient chemicals used such as Mifepristone and Misoprostol), *Uterine Perforation, Placenta Previa* (Abnormal development of the placenta due to uterine damage), *Ectopic Pregnancy* (development of the foetus in the fallopian tube of a woman instead in the uterus), and infections.

Abortion also increases the risk of having handicapped babies in later pregnancies. Psychological problems are also not ruled out; the woman experiences grief, guilt, and the stigma of having procured an abortion.

THE BABY'S RIGHT TO LIFE

Most importantly, we must consider the right of the unborn to live. While the developing child lives within and is nourished by the body of the mother, he/she is indeed a human being. As much as the mother has her own right to life, the unborn has his/her own right to life. We must also remember that the mother is not the source of the child's life; she is only a custodian, a privileged custodian, of a life given by God. As such, we must see abortion for what it truly is – murder, the deliberate and unlawful withdrawal of another's life. Consequently, abortion does not make a woman un-pregnant rather it makes her the mother of a dead child (*Abortivum mulierem matrem pueri mortui facit*) – a child murdered by her own hands!



Abortion does not make a woman un-pregnant rather it makes her the mother of a dead child – a child murdered by her own hands!

CONCLUSIONS

Tertullian, in his "Apologeticum" asserts that "To prevent birth is anticipated murder; it makes little difference whether one destroys a life already born or does away with it in its nascent stage." The right to life and to personal liberty are inalienable rights recognised world over, for both men and women. However, our freedom and autonomy ends where another's starts. The claim that abortion is part of the woman's right to autonomy and personal liberty is deliberately uninformed since it infringes on the right of another – the unborn – to live. Abortion is a wrong use – abuse – of a woman's freedom.

¹ *Arguments In Favour of Abortion*, www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/abortion/her/for_1.shtl. Assessed on 18 February 2019.
² Margaret Sanger, *Woman and the New Birth*, New York, 1920, 1-Read Version. p140-141
³ *Ibid*, p. 141
⁴ Katha Pollitt, *Pro-Reclaiming Abortion Rights*. 2014.
⁵ Paul Stark, *The Gender Equality Argument For Abortion* in <https://www.mcd.org>
⁶ Erika Bachiochi, *40 Years Later: Let's Get Honest About Abortion, Roe, and Women's Equality in Mobilizing Ideas: Activists and Scholars Debate Social Movements and Social Change*.
<https://mobilizingideas.wordpress.com>, accessed 18 February 2019.

THE GREAT NEED

COLLINS N. EBERE, BMS, Enugu

Here comes a need
a great one indeed
that requires a seed
Able to serve the need

The need reigns in a society
where nature has given all an opportunity
for a show of masculinity
as well as femininity

What defines whom you are?
Not actually your wear
but how you appear
from the perspective of others

Are you feminine?
Even if you are Masculine
only know and take your place
then you shall have a place

Struggle not another's need
your creator has given you
for you to blaze
accept the place and need

Explore your feminine
explore your masculine
the world will be filled
then you would know the need

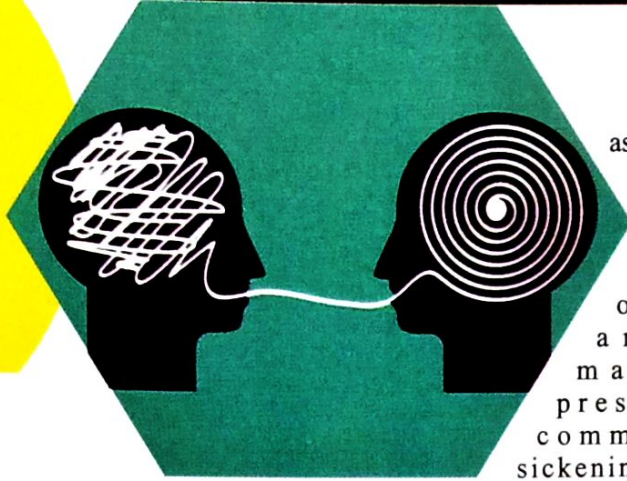
If only you can know
there comes the seed
that will resolve the need
and serve the need

GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN LANGUAGE: DECONSTRUCTING THE TYRANNY OF GENDER STEREOTYPES

ASOGWA HUMPHREY; Humphrey is a Theology Student of Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Language is the vehicle of human thoughts and ideas, which in turn form the worldview and way of life of a people. There is indeed a causal link between language, thought, worldview and culture. Communication amongst people is made possible through the use of language and this affects the social constructs of people. In traditional Igbo philosophy of Language, the emphasis on spoken words and the art of conversation is made manifest in the Igbo Proverb which says: "*ilu bu mmanu e ji eri okwu* (proverbs are palm oil with which words are eaten)". Proverbs are highly impressionable as forms of figurative communications. Language injects into the atmosphere and encodes into the minds of people a particular way of behaviour and social construct, either positive or negative. As regards gender, language, in forms of proverbs and names, has been used as a tool to inject and encode negative appellations and stereotypes on gender to the disadvantage of womanhood. A large number of Igbo proverbs and names show that male chauvinism employed language to spell out and reflect women's downgraded social status, outright subjugation and derogation. This form of expression has gained a wide acceptance and smooth transition from generation to generation and its effect has formed a tyranny of gender stereotypes. I intend to expose some of these proverbs, names and expressions that paint womanhood as nowhere equal to its male counterpart. My recommendations will hinge on exhorting women of this new dispensation and humanity to arise unanimously and change the face of womanhood and rid themselves of negative and threatening gender stereotypes



highly propagated in language.

WHAT IS GENDER STEREOTYPE?

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, stereotype is the unfair and untrue belief that all people or things with a particular characteristic are the same. Thus stereotype pertains to something conforming to a fixed or general pattern especially a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group. Stereotype is often oversimplified, uncritical and a prejudiced attitude.

The term Gender was first imported from Linguistics by John Money in the 1950's to describe those characteristics we associate with each sex that are products of culture rather than biology (sex). Classically, Judith Butler the godmother of contemporary gender theory defines Gender as an unconscious and socially-compelled performance, a series of acts and behaviours that create the illusion of an essential identity of man and woman.

Obviously, with these working definitions, the term Gender stereotype is understood.

GENDER STEREOTYPES: TYRANNY OF PATRIARCHAL WORLDVIEWS

The Igbo traditional society and Africa in general is saturated with patriarchy and masculinity, subjugation, oppression, superiority and discriminatory tendencies over the female folks. This is very visible in virtually every aspect of their world viz: culturally, linguistically, materially, socially, psychologically, ideologically etc. We see in these

aspects of the Igbo expression, a gross intimidation of womanhood and firm masculine presence and command that sickeningly negate gender equality and woman empowerment. Unfortunately, language has become a tool for the encoding of these gender categories in the environment and psyche of the people. The use of idioms, proverbs, names and literary expressions have formed an unbalanced gender categorization and stereotyped connotations that show the tyranny of patriarchal worldviews and has limited matriarchal potentials, freedom and achievements. Suffice it to say that as will be exposed in some idioms, proverbs and names, the content of gender stereotypes appears in dichotomies and pairs of opposites which pitifully seem to have been accepted as unquestionable conventions of behaviour and conducts.

Gender Stereotypes in The Family Circle have not only become the air breathed by most people but have equally become the thorn on the flesh of a good number. Permit me to employ the models or metaphors used by Chinwe Ezeifeka¹ to express the polarized gender stereotypes present in some idioms which spell positive for men and negative for women. **The Head-Shoulder metaphor** is expressed with the proverb "*nwoke bu isi ezi na ulo* (man is the head of the family)" and "*E si n'isi bupu, ubu eburu* (if the load leaves the head, the shoulder takes it)". These proverbs suggest clearly that the man is the head of the family. **The Breadwinner/provider/financer versus consumer/enjoyer/preserver metaphor** is a gender stereotype that sees the husband as provider, breadwinner and financer as exemplified in these proverbs: "*Ezi na ulo*" family literary means "home and outside". Hence the

husband is seen as operating outside to fend for the family. This is evident in *Things Fall Apart (TFA)* where Achebe speaks volume on the successes and achievements of Okonkwo as being a successful man having large barns of Yam, without mentioning the successes of his many wives. On the other hand, names abound that express the consumer and enjoyer personality of women thus: *oriaku* (consumer of wealth), *odoziaku* (preserver of wealth) and *iri n'aka di* (eating from the husband's hands).

Gender Stereotypes in Socio-Economic Spheres of Life: In Igbo cultural milieu, so many names have demarcated and polarized gender into the power-powerless metaphor where the males are regarded as the powerful sex possessing extraordinary strength while the female counterpart are seen as weak, lazy and powerless. Such names like: *Dike* (a man with exceptional strength), *Dimkpa* (a strongly built man), *Diogu* (a warrior) buttress men's superiority over women in terms of power and strength. This is obvious in *TFA* where Okonkwo's father Unoka is called *Agbala* (woman) because he was lazy and weak. This in turn explains why Achebe in *TFA* refers to the cultivation of coco yams, beans and cassava as women's crops while yam is the king of crops and man's crop. Our society is such that because of this erroneous conception of gender, women are not given opportunity to occupy certain positions in the society and to perform certain occupations. Women equally are regarded as foolish, unintelligent and incapable of thinking for themselves and that informs the gender stereotype where governance is seen as a man thing. It is commonplace to hear proverbs like "*Uche umu nwanyi bu kpololo* (Women's reasoning is a one-directional road)" and "*Uche nwaanyi bu uche umuaka* (A woman's reasoning is a child's)".

GENDER STEREOTYPES IN MARRIAGE AND CONJUGAL RIGHTS: The society today has stiffened the girl child's mental construct as regards marriage and

conjugal rights, through the instrument of language. Suffice it to say that some proverbs have shown that women are commodities to be bought by the men. This is made evident in the bride price system where the man pays a certain amount of money as the value of the woman. Proverbs like "*Akiriki nwanyi bu udu ya* (a woman's worth is her bride price)", "*Nwa nwanyi bu aku a ga-eri ehe o bu* (a girl child is wealth kept on reserve)". These ideologies give the man a sense of ownership of the woman who becomes his property bought, and thus he is called "*Onye nwe ulo* (the owner of the house)," and the wife is called "*Onye be m* (the person of my abode)" or even "*Onye ulo m* (the person of my house)". This is a debased understanding of marriage.

LANGUAGE REVOLUTION AND PARADIGM SHIFT: DECONSTRUCTION OF DEROGATORY GENDER STEREOTYPES AND REMOULding HUMANITY

Right reason through the discovery of the principles of natural laws; has shown that institutionalized or personalized subjugation, intimidation, oppression of women as a result of patriarchy of any sort is not accepted by any standard. The rights of both sexes are highly preserved by the law thanks to civilization and globalization schemes which have shown through the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for instance, that relegation and devaluation of women is not acceptable, by enthroning "Gender Equality and Women Empowerment" as the third item in its eight-point agenda. This is very fundamental and thus calls for a language revolution and paradigm shift in focus as regards the perception of gender among cultures.

Education and empowerment of the girl child are very timely and urgent in this part of the globe; Igbo cultural milieu specifically. Ignorance has remained a clog in the wheel of this deconstruction scheme and as such has fuelled and fanned into flames the embers of

patriarchy subjugation. Education is the basic way to free the mind from the contamination of gender stereotypes. Thus, education is fostered through the inculcation of values and meaning into the psyche of people to challenge and critically rethink some of these debased, derogatory and demeaning proverbs, idioms, names and language conceptualizations that bring about the gender stereotypes. There are New African Women, literary and historical authors who have the wherewithal of rewriting the female self-image through literatures and histories. This is a core instrument for discarding these many derogatory gender stereotypes that are hackneyed but still assuming air of importance in the society. The girl child needs to be educated with expressions, names and proverbs that portray her equal in dignity, respect, worth, potentials and social status with her male counterparts and not see herself as inferior, made for the negative, owned through marriage, objectified, lazy, immoral, unintelligent, powerless, weak, etc. in polarity with their male counterparts.

Finally, the environment is charged up with social dissatisfaction and disconcertment of the gendering of absolute male chauvinism that spits out negative expressions and derogatory connotations on womanhood. The chips are down and humanity is no longer at ease with the status-quo of womanhood in the society and there has come a clarion call for redress and the moulding of a new humanity where a gender-fair language will permeate and take root in human communications and thus give rise to equality and freedom. This is a leeway to enthrone into the environment and minds of all, a gender-inclusive language and gender-balanced mental representations of social roles. This transition maybe fraught with difficulties, but we shall be there.

¹ Ezeifeka, Chinwe, "Her Market Has Closed: Critical Rethinking of Gender Stereotypes in Selected Igbo Idioms" *Mgbakoigba, Journal of African Studies*. Vol. 5 No. 2, June 2016

LADIES

AN INTRODUCTION

A man holds open the door of his car for a lady to step out. She is all smiles. To her, it feels good to be courteously treated. To her, her man's chivalry is vintage. Somewhere nearby, the door of an elevator beeps open; and a middle-aged man who is nearer to the automatic doors steps back, and gestures to the younger woman behind to step out first. The younger woman has a stethoscope around her neck. She is a spectacled beauty. As she walks past the man, he commends her thus: "Wow! being a doctor and being so beautiful? You would make a good wife." The woman's visage holds a now fading smile as her footsteps recede beyond hearing range.

FIRST: ANOTHER FORM OF DISCRIMINATION?

Chidiebere Udeokechukwu.

Chidiebere is a Law Student (500 Level) of University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus (UNEC). He is currently a High Court judge in the Students' Union Govt., 2018/19 session.

Perhaps it is true that nothing is wrong with the aforementioned scenarios. *Of course there is nothing wrong in a woman being noticed for her looks or treated like an egg for mannerisms' sake. That is perfectly positive.* However, not everyone would comfortably accept complimentary comments or treatments that focus more on gender and appearance than on competence in a chosen profession. The verbal and gestural demeanours seem perfectly okay, but the current wave of feminism considers them as sexist.

Do not be quick to throw a scowl over your face if what you have read so far sounds and seems gibberish. For the sake of clarity, it should be known that what has been exposed, is a form of sexism known as BENEVOLENT SEXISM, as against HOSTILE SEXISM.

Sexism is a discriminatory or abusive behaviour towards members of the opposite sex. It has also been construed as belief that people of one sex or gender are inherently superior to people of the other sex or gender. It involves prejudice or discrimination based on sex or gender, especially against women and girls.¹ In 1996 Peter Glick² and Susan Fiske³ wrote a paper on the concept of

(ambivalent) sexism. They posited that there exist two sorts of sexist attitudes and behaviours, namely, Hostile and Benevolent, as seen above. According to them, Hostile Sexism is a conglomeration of clearly negative evaluations and stereotypes about a gender. A classic instance of Hostile Sexism is the idea that *women are weaker than, more incompetent than, and inferior to men.* On the other hand, *"Benevolent Sexism is a subjectively positive orientation of protection, idealization, and affection directed toward women that, like hostile sexism, serves to justify women's subordinate status to men."* A good example of Benevolent Sexism is the notion that women need to be protected by men. The words to follow will dwell largely on Benevolent Sexism towards women.

BENEVOLENT SEXISM: ITS NATURE AND (PERCEIVED) NAUGHTINESS

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Benevolently sexist comments are really problematic because they create a damaging stereotype most especially in situations where the woman in focus finds herself in a male dominated realm.

Benevolent Sexism (as has been contended) has the distinctive flavour of subjective positivity.⁵ This means that the person who utters the sexist statement or acts in this way thinks his statement or action is in fact good and kind. Nevertheless, Benevolent Sexism has been noted to be of a condescending nature that asserts that women are incomplete without men or are inferior to men.⁶ In most instances, it only reinforces nice looking but negative stereotypes about women in a subtle manner.⁷ An instance: The assertion that *"Women are more compassionate"* is considered sexist though, on face value, it seems to be a really nice commendation. As feminist writer Sarah Wolstoncroft emphasised, *"People often equate compassion and emotional expression with weakness. And that's why it becomes a female trait."* She goes on to posit that *"Caring about others shouldn't be a male or female thing. It should be a human thing."* Another instance (which already has been noted) is the *"Ladies First"* situation. Some Feminists are quick to see this as an insidious form of gender discrimination because women in such scenarios are considered first – not on the basis of merit but based on the notion that they are fragile and dainty-natured and thus should be protected. This may now beg the question of

whether gender-based courtesy, chivalry or good mannerism has overstayed its relevance?

IS BENEVOLENT SEXISM ("LADIES FIRST") REALLY SEXIST AND DAMAGING?

According to Melanie Tannenbaum, benevolently sexist comments are really problematic because they create a damaging stereotype most especially in situations where the woman in focus finds herself in a male dominated realm. She buttresses her points by quoting the words of psychologists Fiske and Glick:

"We do not consider benevolent sexism a good thing, for despite the positive feelings it may indicate for the perceiver, its underpinnings lie in traditional stereotyping and masculine dominance (e.g., the man as the provider and woman as his dependent), and its consequences are often damaging. Benevolent sexism is not necessarily experienced as benevolent by the recipient. For example, a man's comment to a female co-worker on how 'cute' she looks, however well-intentioned, may undermine her feelings of being taken seriously as a professional."

Again, through a paper published by **Julia Becker** and **Stephen Wright**, Melanie tries to expose even more of the supposed insidious ways that benevolent sexism might be harmful for both women and the cause for gender equity. In a series of experiments by Becker and Wright, women were exposed to statements that either illustrated hostile sexism (e.g. "Women are too easily offended") or benevolent sexism (e.g. "Women have a way of caring that men are not capable of in the same way.") The results were (according to the paper) quite discouraging: When the women read statements illustrating benevolent sexism, they would become less enthusiastic about engaging in anti-sexist collective actions like participating in a rally, or generally acting against sexism. This effect was somewhat facilitated by the fact that women who were exposed to benevolent

“*Ladies first*” may essentially be just another way of saying that men should take care of and protect women.

sexism were more likely to think that there are many advantages to being a 'woman'. Conversely, women who were exposed to hostile sexism actually displayed the opposite effect – they were more disposed to engage in collective action, and even more enthusiastic in wanting to fight against sexism.

ACOUNTER VIEW

It has been contended that "Ladies First" is not sexist but simply an act of kindness and chivalry reborn. It is instructive to note that the "Ladies First" rule is an age old rule and thus part and parcel of the society.⁸ To many, it shows the signs of a true gentleman whose intentions are pure politeness and not aimed at showing the superiority of one sex over another. Hence, there is absolutely no reason for a male to be crucified for displaying good old traditional manners.

Perhaps, it is understandable that people may view chivalry as being biased towards the female gender, but that bias is there for a reason. Women, as a general rule, are physically weaker than men. Men who use their strength to their advantage and against women are generally considered rude, immoral, and generally impolite. Those who use theirs in kind and gentlemanly ways should not be taken to task.

AN EPILOGUE

"Ladies first" may essentially be just another way of saying that men should take care of and protect women. Females are the ones who continue the generation and keep the species alive, for although males are required for reproduction as well, women bear a far greater portion of the reproductive process. Therefore it is their (men's) responsibility to protect the females to ensure the stability of future generations. Any man who ever

wants to get into a relationship to consider these factors.

Further, more often than not, men that go for women while women who pick men. Hence, although it can sometimes be seen as self-serving, a man must submit to a woman's will to be able to gain her friendship, trust, and ultimately love. Interestingly, a study published in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* by Pelin Guven, Iowa State University and Tom Kupfer of the University of Kansas revealed that women are likely to choose men with benevolent sexism attitudes over men without the same views.⁹

We must also remember the fact that once was a time when the rights of women were so much relegated, it balanced out a bit to open doors, pull out chairs and buy gifts for women. These age old acts of chivalry work out to pamper the female gender, and many women even think they are entitled to the treatments. It appears, however, that in an age where women desperately want to see themselves as 'equals' these same acts of chivalry are being vilified as another form of discrimination. Would it not be reasonable then to ask what women actually want, what *benefits* them or what is 'equal'?

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/sexism>

² Peter Glick, Ph.D., is the Henry Merrill Wriston Professor of the Social Sciences at Lawrence University in Wisconsin. His scholarship focuses on biases and stereotyping.

³ Susan Tufts Fiske is a social psychologist known for her work on social cognition, stereotypes, and prejudice. She with Glick coined the term 'Benevolent Sexism'.

⁴ Tannenbaum M., quoting Glick in, *The Problem When Sexism Just Sounds So Damn Friendly...*

⁵ <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/psy-social/y/benevolent-sexism/>

⁶ Rogers, R., *Women are Kind and Men are Strong: How Benevolent Sexism Hurts Us All...* <https://www.themuse.com/advice/women-are-kind-and-men-are-strong-how-benevolent-sexism-hurts-us-all>

⁷ Wolstoncroft, S., *Benevolent Sexism: It Sounds Like a Compliment, but It Isn't So Nice...* <https://www.entitymag.com/benevolent-sexism/>

⁸ <http://www.debate.org/opinions/is-ladies-first-sexist/>

⁹ Ritschel, C., *Women Are Attracted To Men With Benevolent Sexism*

Attitudes... <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/women/sexist-men-sex-women-attracted-relationship-benevolent-sexism-a8429061.html>

AN INTERVIEW WITH PROF. CHINEDUM OFOMATA

We are editors of the Thinker Magazine of Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu. We are grateful, Sir, for this opportunity to speak with you on Igbo understanding of womanhood and with emphasis on Ikuchi-nwanyi as an Igbo cultural practice. Before we begin, however, we would like you to tell us a little about yourself.



Chinedum Ofomata is from Orumba South L.G.A. of Anambra State. I am an author and a publisher, I earn my living through writing. I have been into writing and publishing for almost thirty years. Most of my works are in Igbo Language, and throughout my life I have been a promoter and proponent of Igbo language and culture, and presently I am the National Chairman, Association for the Survival of Igbo Language and Culture (ASILAC). I have written not less than one hundred books in Igbo language. I am also a part-time lecturer in two higher institutions.

Coming to the topic, could you please give us a general overview of how womanhood is understood in Igboland?

Our ancestors understood who and what a woman is. That is why we had lesser divorce cases in those days than we have now.

Today the trend is changing, and see where we are – a lot of problems everywhere. The Igbo man knows that a woman is a woman and that a man is a man. As a man, there are certain things you should do, as a woman, there are certain things you should do; as a man there are certain things you should not do, as a woman there are certain things you should not do. The Igbo man understands that a woman is so great and is so much loved by God. Our people know the capacities and capabilities of women – what they can do and what they cannot do – and as such there are certain things they would not want to involve

The Igbo man knows that a woman is a woman and that a man is a man. As a man, there are certain things you should do, as a woman, there are certain things you should do, as a man there are certain things you should not do, as a woman there are certain things you should not do.

women in. The Igbo man knows that a woman is physically weak but emotionally strong; men are stronger than them physically but they are emotionally stronger than men. From the traditional point of view women are very important especially in the home. Women are helpers and they contribute a lot in raising children. It is true that the father

provides but the woman makes it available to the children. In those days, women stayed at home to raise the children because it was a shame to have an irresponsible child. And women were all very hardworking. In those days, a woman had her cocoyam farm, cassava farm, pepper, etc. while the man is involved in manly work like planting yam.

Some Feminists claim that many cultures see women as second-class citizens. Do you think this is true of Igbo culture?

Yes and No, but mostly No. Women are never relegated to the background. In Igbo land, we believe that our women should be given certain rights. But we must ask what we mean by that. [Today I hear people talk of women liberation; we should also be talking of men liberation with the way things are moving.] Our people of the olden days had a culture to discipline both man and woman. Women remain submissive to the ethics and

norms of life. They should not underrate their husbands and society. But today, our culture is being despised and see what is happening: In some homes women no longer cook for their husbands, some even see their husbands as house-helps. The feminists will tell you that women are being subjected to this or that; some will point out traditions like giving the gizzard of a fowl to the man while the waist is given to the woman, and they complain about it. But such are symbolic and they do not even know it. For instance, the gizzard, because it contains little stones, signifies the hardships the man must face in life to care for his family. On the other hand, the waist signifies the function of bringing new life into the world.

There cannot be outright freedom for women. If women were to be given outright freedom, then we cannot live in this society. That is not to say they are below men. Christ, for instance, came into the world and lived with every humility; that does not mean that he is below us. The truth is that if women make proper use of their qualities, they will rule the world. But they want to take over from men by force. They do not know that what God gave them is far greater than what is in men. With humility, we can conquer the world. In a home, we have a head, in the school, there is a head, the head is there to direct, and there cannot be two captains in a ship. Women want equal rights but they have even more rights than men do and they do not even know this. That is the greatest problem they have. Do you know that most of the great men in the world fail because of women? Women are very strong. Today feminists tell us that men have taken over everything. But this world belongs to the woman because as a man, your house is not your own, the children are not your own. Hence when children

begin to earn their living the first person they remember is their mother. And yet the man must do the needful – take care of his home.

There were places where men maltreated women but that was out of ignorance. That's where we should give kudos to Christianity for championing the abolishment of some of these practices.

Nevertheless, there were places where men maltreated women but that was out of ignorance. Igbo culture appreciates women so much and this is exemplified in the way they are appreciated after childbirth in omugwo – they are looked after with every good thing. Funny enough even as the feminists claim that women are maltreated they still enjoy omugwo. Another thing I think was not good in our culture is the nature and duration of mourning for the man and for the woman. If a man dies, the woman is expected to mourn for a longer period. In some communities in Igbo culture the widow is expected to be crying early every morning at least for one native month – 28 days. In some communities for one Igbo native week the widow will not wash her hand after eating. Sometimes the woman will be sleeping on a tattered mat in the name of mourning. It was done for the woman to know that the husband has died, but it was extreme. That's where we should give kudos to Christianity for championing the abolishment of some of these practices.

Ikuchi Nwanyi is one of the Igbo cultural practices that is perceived as degrading to womanhood. What can you say about it?

In Igbo culture, we have ikuchi nwanyi, ihachi nwanyi and iluchi nwanyi. Ikuchi nwanyi means marrying a woman whose husband has died in the same family, not necessarily by an immediate brother of the deceased husband but by a member of the family. Some people see it as forcing the woman to remarry but it is not so, and there were reasons for it. The reason for marriage in Igbo land is procreation. If after marriage the husband dies, leaving little children, it pains the woman because so many things come in; like who will take care of her and the children? Ikuchi nwanyi is aimed at restoring the help and support that the dead husband was providing. A woman needs a man to lean on as far as Igbo culture is concerned. Hence there is a proverb that goes thus; "Nwanyi si na ana-ebe akwa na di ya nwuru, si chobakwa onye ga-ekuchi ya" [a widowed woman says that while her dead husband is being mourned plans should be made for some other person to take her up]. Ikuchi nwanyi is more important to the woman, but the family can only think of it if the woman is a good woman. For bad women, immediately the husband dies, she would be sent packing. The implication of ikuchi nwanyi is that the man who is remarrying her will take care of her as a wife.

Does this cut across the whole of Igboland?
Yes, everywhere.

Sir, if a widow is not willing to be remarried, but has only female children or no children at all, what happens to the property of the man?

That is the reason why the Igbo man values male children more than any other thing. The reason is this; First, he wants a person to

succeed him so that the lineage does not go into extinction. In those days when one said his son was going to the seminary, people would go to his compound to cry – indicating that a great misfortune has befallen the man. That was because of the importance they attach to male children. But female children were also important. In Igbo culture, whatever is owned by a man belongs to the male children; not only the male children but also the female children with asterisks. A father while he is still alive – white men did not teach us about wills, *Ndi Igbo na-eke ekpe* [Igbos make wills] – an Igbo man will divide his property among his children: *If I die tomorrow, that tree belongs to Elizabeth*, and so it happens... But where he doesn't do it before his death, then the male children take over everything. And when he does not have male children, that is, he has only female children, his brothers take over his property. This is because of the importance we attach to our obi. The Igbo man thinks about two things – his birth and his death, especially his death – how he is going to be buried. Thus there is this saying that *ugboro abuo ka ekwe na-akpo dike, o kpoo ya na ndu, o kpoo ya n'onwu* [the traditional wooden gong calls a man twice: at birth and at death]. It is the son that would bury him. Because of our culture, there are certain things the female cannot do. And if the children are female, a lot of intimidation comes up; this does not happen when there is a male child. Again the Igbo man knows that one day his daughter will marry; then everything that belongs to her husband will also belong to her. Will she inherit her husband's property and also share in her father's? So the woman in such a situation cannot lay claim to the property of the man.

In Igbo culture, there are lots of taboos against women like prohibition of breaking kolanut, masquerading, climbing a palm tree etc. From a feminist point of view, these taboos are to ensure that women are caged. So what do you think about it?

Many of them that say they are feminists are ignorant of our culture. They say they are fighting for women without knowing what woman is all about.

**O u r
culture protects our
women, makes women to be
women, and brings sanity to the
society through handling our
women in a proper way.**

Do they know why women are excluded from breaking kolanut? The Igbo man uses kolanut to pray. A woman may buy kolanut and eat if she so desires. But the one that is blessed is special, it is holy. The man blesses it and then woman may eat but she may not bless it, because she might be menstruating at the time. Because man does not menstruate, he is seen to be clean. This explains why when men are gathered, it is the oldest that blesses the kola since he is closest to the ancestors and is seen as the holiest. Again in some places, when the oldest man has blessed the kola it is given to the youngest to break and distribute because he is seen as still innocent – without evil. We may even compare this with the Church practice where women do not consecrate the bread and wine.

For masquerading, women should stay away from it. It is very serious culture. A lot of things are involved in masquerading, and sometimes it

even tells on the men involved. That is not what a woman would want to involve herself in. I do not even advise them to take part. Meanwhile there are also things that women do to which men are not admitted. It is technically called *mmanwu nwanyi*, and men are excluded. We have *ofonwoke* and we have *ofonwanyi*. Men should not interfere in women's affairs and vice versa.

Again, talking about climbing the palm tree. First, the Igbo man is concerned about protecting the body. Hence there are different sitting positions for the man and for the woman. In connection, there is this saying that *afu ike diochi ihe o tetara na nkwu adi atozi uto* [when a wine tapper's buttocks are seen his products lose their taste]. Now, if a woman wearing *jigida* is to climb the palm tree what would happen? Besides, climbing a palm tree is difficult art such that not even all men can do it. Men fall from palm trees and die or get paralyzed. Therefore, stopping a woman from climbing a palm tree is even for her own safety.

Our culture protects our women, makes women to be women, and brings sanity to the society through handling our women in a proper way. Our forefathers understood this world better than we do. We should go and learn why they lived longer than us. We do not live that long because we have destroyed our culture.

As we come to the end of this session, we wish to thank you once more, Doc., for accepting to speak with us and for giving a professional touch to the questions.

Thank you gentlemen!

OSODIYAEME: THE DIALECTICS OF SIMILARITY AND DIFFERENCE IN THE GENDER TALK



Constantine Echichechi Okoli is a Theology Student of Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu.

Introduction

To make meaning out of the role of women in the world of today, there is need to recognize, appreciate and aim at balancing the tension between the SIMILARITY AND DIFFERENCE that associate and at the same time disassociate femininity from masculinity. With the recent GENDER TALK there is, the writer fears, the danger of throwing away both the baby and the bowl in an attempt to 'castrate, liberate and exorcise' humanity of its obvious patriarchal hegemony. To achieve the first proposition and avoid the latter, this write-up sets out to promote the unity of humanity by

holding in the tension the oneness of humanity and the legitimate differences between a man and a woman. The first move is to identify who a woman is through sociological interpretation of the Igbo word 'Oriaku'. The second is to explain the social identity in gender equality by highlighting its different strides. Finally, and this is the culmination of it all, this work invites women in all walks of life to have the courage to be women by realizing how limited humanity is and how humanity yearns to transcend itself. This calls for total self-giving of ourselves in our daily task as we seek to better humanity which is our common patrimony.

The Dialectics of Similarity and Difference

The interpretation of the common Igbo word, *Oriaku* will not only widen our horizon on how women are seen and known in our society, it will also reveal how language can be carriers and manipulators of reality. Indeed, "it is in words and language that things first come into being and are."² The Igbo word, *Oriaku* (One who enjoys her husband's wealth) is usually the name most men call their wife, or women liked to be addressed with. The reality this word conveys is the cultural undertone which it communicates. In *Oriaku*, it is assumed that it is the man who does the work of providing the needed resources for the running of the house. The wife is dependent on the dutiful generosity of her husband; she depends on him. In such word as this, one figures out the way women are assessed and treated in Igbo society, and indeed in most

other societies. The structures of the various human institutions like the church, the school and the family see in them weak creatures who are too fragile to fend for themselves. Thus, this word, *Oriaku* has given the society the lens through which women are seen and identified.

However, in words like *Osodieme* (One who works alongside the husband) and *Ka nwanyi jekene* (Let's allow a woman to go for us) it is evident that the wind of feminism is also blowing in the shores of Africa. For me, these two words

With the recent gender talk there is, the writer fears, the danger of throwing away both the baby and the bowl in an attempt to 'castrate, liberate and exorcise' humanity of its obvious patriarchal hegemony,

bear the tinges of integral complementarity between a man and a woman. In *Osodieme*, there is the awareness, however dim, that while the man does his own part, the woman has capacity also to do hers; both labour for the full arrival and survival of humanity. *Ka nwanyi jekene* seems to create some socio-political atmosphere where men have done their best to work for the maintenance of law and order in the society but have not functioned as expected (not just by women but also by some men). Because humanity is involved, there was need then to try 'another form' of humanity, a woman. *Ka nwanyi jekene* is an invitation to the fact that there is equality and difference in male and female, and that through communion between the two sexes, much can be achieved.

Integral Complementarity versus Gender Equality

Without overlooking the historical and sociological factors that necessitated feminism as a movement that seeks to define, establish and achieve political, economic, personal and social equality of sexes, different strides of feminism seem to equate equality to sameness. More still, these versions of feminism seem to place women above men, or to abolish (forcibly, if necessary) any difference between sexes. Sr. Mary Prudence Allen identified and summarized these strides of gender-equality into four major forms, namely; integral complementarity, sex polarity, unisex model and fractional complementarity. Her voice echoes that, "when one of the two fundamental principles of gender

Womanhood holds the civilization of this world with her much-needed tools of love and unity. Every structure that does not allow women to see their integral complementarity with men not only distorts but fights for the destruction of humanity;

relation – equal dignity and significant difference – is missing from the respective identities of man and woman, the balance of a complementarity disappears into either a polarity or unisex theory.³ Thus, while sex-polarity model places one sex above the other, unisex model relationships unwittingly advocates for the disappearance of sexual differences. Also, fractional complementarity sees man and woman as incomplete parts that must be necessary for a complete whole. However, the beauty of integral complementarity is the balance it strikes between male and female, and the relational matrix it enthrones in the formation and transformation of the individual, male or female. Gender equality in the light of integral complementarity should be encouraged since it insists, rightly too, that both man and woman are in himself or herself, but relational.

The Courage to Be a Woman: Concluding Reflections

Human beings are not isolated individuals. Neither self-dependent nor unyielding to community life and sociality. The human being is created for solidarity because 'the other' is always the mirror through which he/she sees, understands and interprets himself/herself and even assesses the truth. This shows in no mean measure how the individual's identity is wrapped in social identity which undergoes changes. It is this change that the voices searching for the recognition of the female gender in the patriarchal world is representing. This write up, as difficult as it may seem to

observe, offers us the opportunity to see that being a woman in the world of today is challenging. It is challenging because of the inhuman structures that has and continues to narrow down the viable options for women to be seen as part (and indeed, an indispensable part) of humanity. It takes much courage to affirm being woman in spite of those elements of a woman's existence which conflict with her essential self-affirmation.

Humanity may be complete but definitively ineffective without the warmth of a woman. Womanhood holds the civilization of this world with her much-needed tools of love and unity. Every structure that does not allow women to see their integral complementarity with men not only distorts but fights for the destruction of humanity. When feminism as a movement allows the dialectics of similarity and difference to guide its course, there is hope of perfecting humanity – after all, '[humanity] fully alive is the glory of God.' To such a cause, which promotes humanity by revealing the glories of womanhood, all hands must be on deck to fight. In fact, we all should be feminists (in the form we have talked about here) in order to rescue, annex and shield humanity from extinction. Be a feminist because, a woman is the image of God from the rib of man. Remember, 'Any [woman]'s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee.' Now is the time! Those who are women must have the courage to be women and those who are not must encourage humanity, clayed in womanhood, by destroying structures that destroy unity and love.

³ in the language of Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father*

² Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, New York: Anchor Books, 1961, p.11

¹ Prudence Allen, RSM, "Man-Woman Complementarity: The Catholic Inspiration" in *Logos* 9:3, Summer 2006, p. 87.

MY CHILDHOOD

Can you remember my childhood?
Cause of my umpteen gotten beatitudes
Shaper of my fate
Escape of unforeseen rues

Rupturing my home, you blast
'I gravely wish you Eves are Adams!'
In repairing my ruptured home, Mum cries,
'God may my little Eves be Adams!'

Oh evergreen wailing childhood!
Shed no more, trembling twilight tears.
On the boil, fascinating
Are his wants and yours.

Can you hear my childhood?
It now sings joyful tunes, it had you.
Daughter's mocker; Misogynist
Oh why did we not play loo!

Lionhearted, that dejected Eve lives now a
Caesar.
Kings and Queens, she pays.
Rejoice, many Adams now your name bear.
I have paid the groom's price.

So, whence vital are Adams over Eves
That you denied my childhood glee?
How unequal are Eves over Adams?
Dad, depart sepulchre to answer me!

Oduopara Chinaemerimeoma,
a Theology Student of Bigard Memorial
Seminary Enugu.

One is not born a Woman rather becomes a Woman:

A Review of Simone de Beauvoir's Feminist Claims

By Kenechukwu Ozoana, A Student of Blessed Iwene Tansi Major Seminary, Onitsha

Introduction

Only a week ago a man had contradicted him at a kindred meeting which they held to discuss the next ancestral feast. Without looking at the man Okonkwo had said: 'this meeting is for men.' The man who had contradicted him had no titles. That was why he called him a woman.

The above excerpt from Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* leads us to reflect on what makes one a woman; is it biology or some other factor? The question becomes more serious and pressing when one hears that *One is not born a woman rather (one) becomes a woman*. These words open the first chapter of the second volume of Simone de Beauvoir's 1949 text entitled *Le Deuxieme Sexe (The Second Sex)*. The central concern of the work is what makes one a woman. To understand the statement and make an evaluation of Beauvoir's feminist position, however, one needs to enter the world of her philosophy.

Background to Beauvoir: Phenomenology and Existentialism

Beauvoir's feminist position was influenced by the philosophical traditions, *Phenomenology* and *Existentialism*. To understand her feminist philosophy, the two schools of thought need to be understood.

Phenomenology is a discipline founded by Edmund Husserl. Its literal meaning is 'the study of phenomena'. Beyond the literal meaning, Phenomenology is described as the science of the conscious experience of an I-

Subject. The person that experiences reality does so within the situation of his subjective consciousness. However, this does not in any way imply individualism. Phenomenology, a science of consciousness, is actualized within a lived situation which includes the body, the other, and the feeling of empathy. The I-Subject which experiences consciousness is conscious of others who are themselves subjective 'I's. They live each within the ambience of another. And through daily experience, the I-Subject discovers that there is inter-subjectivity between him and others. This is actualized through the means of the body.

The phenomenon "body" is very vital in Phenomenology. And by "body", reference is not made to a body that lacks rational consciousness but to a body that is conscious of its situation and as such serves as a means of experiencing reality. More so, a phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, held the view that the living body which is conscious has two negative characteristics: (1) It is not an object like a mass of stone; (2) it is not a determinate element that is in-itself a fixed reality. It therefore follows that Phenomenology is the science of the 'I' which has a personal experience of the world

through the means of a living body that is not fixed. Thus, Merleau-Ponty described the body as a vehicle which serves as a means. The 'I' is not determined by the body; on the contrary, the conscious 'I' determines how the body should be. Because of the emphasis Phenomenology as a discipline in philosophy places on subjective consciousness, it gave birth to Existentialism.

Existentialism has Sartre and our Beauvoir among its chief proponents. It is a 19th-20th century philosophical movement that is centred on the freedom of human existence and the subjective creation of values through which the person realizes himself through the process of becoming. The values created are open for anybody to attain by virtue of one's choice.

Existentialism emerged as a criticism of the idealistic thought which tries to subsume all human beings within one essence hence, the denial of each individual. Existentialism therefore came with its mantra of freedom and subjective existence of each person. Moreover, just like phenomenologists hold that the living body is an indeterminate reality, so also existentialists hold that man is not determined by any essence. Thus, Existentialism is wary of determinism and essence; its idea of the freedom that a person has is not compatible with any type of determinism. Hence, anyone *can become what he wants to become* and also be responsible for such choice made out of freedom.

It was from these philosophical schools of thought that Simone de Beauvoir emerged. The next task before us is to examine her feminist philosophy through her dictum: *One is not born a woman rather one becomes a woman*.

One is not born a woman rather one becomes a woman:

Again, What is woman? Simone de Beauvoir in her feminist text gave a dual meaning of the term "woman." One of the meanings of woman is *an adult female human being who has the biological features of a female evident in her body*. The other meaning is *the idea of femininity*.

Based on the first understanding of 'woman', Beauvoir notes that every human being that is woman has as her characteristics womb, breasts, ovary, fallopian tube and all other physiological qualities that are particular to the female human being. But never has one been born "an adult female human" as the dictionary defines "woman," rather a girl-child *becomes* "an adult female human." That is to say that even in this sense, one is not born a woman but 'becomes' a woman. This however does not represent all of Beauvoir's idea of womanhood.

Conscious of the experience women have through their female body, Beauvoir observes and concludes that woman is more than an adult female human. Rather, 'woman' as a concept denotes negativity. This, for her, is captured in the Shakespearean dictum in *Hamlet*: "Frailty, thy name is woman." Hence, woman is no longer just a product of biological determinism but is in-itself, passivity, a negativity that should be detested, a state of eternal childhood, weakness. For this reason the idea of woman is repulsive to society; hence, to say of a man that he behaves like a woman is not a compliment. Man is assumed to be of positive essence and adult males should participate in the positive values of manhood. On the other hand, an adult female is not expected to express those positive values attributed to the concept 'man'; else she would be accused of not

living the real life of an adult female which is being a 'woman'.

Nevertheless, following the existentialist tradition that has freedom of the human person as its central thought, Beauvoir argues that the adult female human is not *determined* to become a woman not even by her biological make-up, for the body is not like a mass of stone. As Phenomenology contends, the lived body of human beings is but a means to an end. The adult female human could therefore decide to become a woman, that is, to live out the negative values of human existence; or to become a man, that is, to live out the positive values of human existence. So also the adult male: he can decide to become woman or to become a man.



Beauvoir's feminist position places men and women on the same platform and allows their efforts to be judged, not by their gender but by their efforts as human persons.

Evaluation and Conclusion

Beauvoir's feminist ideals cannot avoid having two sides like a coin. Her categorisation of the word "woman" into "an adult female human being" and "a concept laden with idea of negativity, passivity, frailty and eternal childhood" has beclouded the word in ambiguity. Her purpose, it could be said, is to free the adult female from the idea of woman as a negative value of existence which she is expected to be. However, what could be the relevance of her feminist claims to the modern humanity?

Beauvoir attempts to present gender as an accident of existence, which cannot determine the human person. No

human being is man because he is male; likewise no human being is woman because she is female. The body does not fashion existence for the human person. However, far from proposing a situation of gender anarchy, her feminist claims create a situation whereby male and female human beings exist equally and also have a personal experience of each other. The assumption that being a woman means also having the negative values of existence imposes on the woman a priori the difficulty of striving to attain a height of meaning and achievement. On the contrary, male human beings are by virtue of their male-ness assumed to be "man", and therefore granted a priori the privilege of possessing the positive values of existence; this puts them in the advantageous position of not attempting to strive to attain a height of achievement.

This leads to another importance of Beauvoir's feminist idea. It is granted that some men do not measure up to the standards of society (in terms of civility, academic, economic, etc) while some women do. But because they are male such men assume that by being male, they have attained great heights. Beauvoir's feminist position places men and women on the same platform and allows their efforts to be judged, not by their gender but by their efforts as human persons.

A criticism that could be levelled against Beauvoir's feminist positions is her apparent presentation of women in negative light. But this is only reflective of the concept of woman created by the society, a concept which views 'woman' as intrinsically problematic. Thus in Achebe's work, Okonkwo uses the term woman to refer to a man who did not attain the standard by which men are known in Umuofia, that is, he had no title.



FEMALE PROSTITUTION: CAUSES, EFFECTS AND SOLUTIONS

Emmanuel Onyishi, A Theology Student of Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu

PREAMBLE

“Human sexuality in the strict sense of the term embraces wholly the different ways in which a man or a woman expresses himself or herself as sexual being, according to his or her particular gender.”¹ Another way of understanding the term “sexuality” is the expression of sexual urge through the use of genitals. In fact, most people in this age see sex only from the coitus perspective. Unfortunately, some people abuse human sexuality by using it to make money. The goal of this article is to look at female prostitution, its causes, effects and ways of eradicating the culture from our society.

FEMALE PROSTITUTION

Prostitution is as old as human history. Prostitution was commonplace in ancient Israel. There are a number of references to prostitution in the Hebrew Bible. The Biblical story of Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38:1-26) provides a depiction of prostitution practised in those days. Some other biblical passages condemning prostitution as an evil activity include: Lev.19:29; Prov.5:3-5, 9:13-18, 23:27-28; Mt. 21:31-32; Lk. 7:36-50; Rom.6:13; 1 Cor.6:13; 2 Cor.5:17. In Islam, prostitution is considered a sin, and Abu Mas'ud Al-Ansari is attributed with saying, “Allah's Apostle forbade taking the price of a dog, money earned by prostitution and the earnings of a soothsayer.”²

According to Simple English Wikipedia, “A prostitute is a person, most of the time a woman, who has sex with people for money.” Prostitution is the business or practice of engaging in sexual activity in exchange for payment. It is sometimes described as sexual services, commercial sex, or colloquially, hooking. A female prostitute is sometimes called a *hooker*, *whore* or *ho*. An average Nigerian calls a prostitute ASHAWO. A male prostitute is sometimes called a *gigolo*. They can both be called *street walker*, *sex worker* or *escort*. Customers or clients are sometimes called sugar mamas, *stellas*, *janes* if female or *johns* if male. Some prostitutes walk the streets looking for customers. Those called *streetwalkers* and are the most noticeable type of prostitutes. Others work in bars and nightclubs. Others may work at brothels. Other prostitutes may work from their homes or from an apartment rented for the purpose, and have their clients contact them by phone or internet. Some prostitutes have a boss (a person they work for and to whom they give part of the money they make), who may be called “Madame” for a woman, or “pimp” for a man. The legal status of prostitution varies from one country to another. In Nigeria, it is illegal.

CAUSES OF PROSTITUTION

There are very many reasons why women engage in commercial sex. Some of them include; poverty, lack of parental care, unemployment, peer pressure,

laziness, sexual addiction, heartbreak, rape, trafficking, loneliness, etc. I wish to explain some of them.

POVERTY: Poverty is the major reason for which most ladies go into prostitution, and not because they enjoy the business. Some of them come from poverty-stricken backgrounds, and since their parents are incapable of taking care of them and their siblings, they go into prostitution to make ends meet.

LACK OF PARENTAL CARE: Some parents have no time for their children. And some teach their children every other value in life except sex-education. A girl who is not properly groomed in the value of human sexuality can easily be led astray by bad friends.

UNEMPLOYMENT: Some of the prostitutes in Nigeria today are graduates. But due to high rate of unemployment, some ladies go into the business to make money in order to take care of their needs.

RAPE AND TRAFFICKING: Some of the commercial sex workers in Nigeria today are victims of sex slavery, rape, child labour and trafficking. Most of the ladies who were sexually abused when they were young see nothing great, divine or special about sex. Their sexual orientation has been distorted due to their childhood experiences. Victims of rape tend to either hate men or develop sexual disorder which sometimes leads to prostitution.

EFFECTS OF PROSTITUTION

Prostitution is a very risky job, and has very many negative effects. As experts argue, prostitution is rarely, if ever, a matter of choice. Some of the observable effects include; habitual sin, sexual violence and physical assault, anti-life activity, unwanted pregnancy, untimely death, distortion of sexual orientation, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, objectification of women, risk of alcohol/drug addiction, social stigma, proliferation of indecent dressings, and many others. Let us examine some of them.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND PHYSICAL ASSAULT: These are the norm for women in all types of prostitution. Some men inflict pains on these ladies while using them. There are cases of men who gang-rape prostitutes and dump them without payment.

ANTI-LIFE BUSINESS: The trade is entirely against human life and belittles the dignity of human life. Some of these girls are murdered in the process; some are used for ritual purposes in which their sensitive organs are 'harvested'. Experiences have also shown that prostitutes resort to abortion each time pregnancy comes from the trade. Some have even removed their wombs in order not to conceive at all. Some of the sex workers also perform heinous acts, and sometimes kill their clients just to steal their money.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS: Sex workers are at a very high risk of contracting one disease or the other through sex. Most often, the health status of their clients is not ascertained, and they are therefore exposed to viral illness, vaginal infections, Chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis, trichomoniasis, herpes simplex virus (HSV), human papilloma virus (HPV), HIV/AIDS, etc.

Health workers posit that if any of these infections is not properly treated, it leads to other health problems.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO PROSTITUTION

Considering how long this trade has lasted, and how sex-saturated our world is, and the high level of moral decadence among our youths, one may conclude that prostitution has come to stay. But I think it is a redeemable situation. Let us consider the following;

SEX-EDUCATION: Fr. Greg. Udo Njoku admonishes that "sex-education should begin at an early age, as in all other aspects of a child's life trainings."³ Sex-education of children is very important especially in this age that harbours a lot of sexual perversions. Parents and guardians

There are very many reasons why women engage in commercial sex. Some of them include; poverty, lack of parental care, unemployment, peer pressure, laziness, sexual addiction, heartbreak, rape, trafficking, loneliness, etc.

should be committed to this duty. The schools should equally help. Teachers should impact on their students the sacredness and values of human sexuality. Any child that has formidable foundation on sexuality cannot take prostitution as an option for survival.

THE ROLE OF RELIGION: In his work, *The Pocket Book of Wisdom*, Rajendra Pillai opines that "to educate a man without religion is to make him a clever devil." Religion is an important aspect of man's life; it shapes man's conscience. Parents should therefore begin on time to teach their children the commandments of God, and the dangers of disobeying them. Prov.22:6 says, "train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray." Pastors of souls should not relent in preaching against sexual

immorality and particularly against prostitution; for this St Paul provides a model passage in his first letter to the Corinthians (6:15-18). The Church should keep forming young people's conscience, such that their actions and choices will be guided by God's will.

G O V E R N M E N T INTERVENTION: It is not just enough that prostitution be made illegal. The government can devise other means of eradicating this ugly business. The Nigerian government can adopt Sweden's model of curbing prostitution. In Sweden "the fight starts with going after the pimps, rather than the girls who are the victims, and to prosecute the men who purchase sex, while treating the women who sell it as victims who merit social services."⁴ For me, once the customers are stopped from patronizing them, the trade will die off. The government can also fight prostitution by providing jobs for the teeming unemployed youths. She can equally make laws that abolish brothels in the country. Again, every state governor can fight indecent dressings until it goes into extinction.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, one can arrive at a conclusion that prostitution is a very dirty and dehumanizing adventure. It reduces the dignity of womanhood. All hands must be on deck to fight this evil practice in our society. I wish to recommend that parents, guardians, teachers, civil and religious leaders, should incessantly instil in the consciousness of those placed under them that sex is sacred and it is meant for validly married couples.

¹ Fr. Greg. Udo Njoku, *Children's Sex-Education, in the New "African Rites of Passage" Program Today*, page 8.

² Sahih al-Bukhari 3:34:439

³ Ibid, p 9.

⁴ Nicholas Kristof, in *New York Times*. July 15, 2010.

PERSIST IN THE FIGHT AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



Jane Frances Gilbert, A graduate of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike Abia State (Business Administration)

There is chaos in our world, no doubt, but the chaos created by domestic violence is like living with and being condemned to one's sorrows. Domestic violence can be referred to as violent or aggressive behaviour within the home, typically involving the violent abuse of a spouse or partner, who is usually the female partner. It is an act of human battering which occurs within a marriage institution towards a spouse or partner that results in the physical and emotional destabilization of the victim. This act can also lead to the death of the abused. Violence against women is one of the most widespread abuse of human rights worldwide affecting one third of all women in their lifetime.¹ It leads to death and disability of women of all ages and has many other health consequences. Violence against women is a fundamental barrier to eradicating poverty and building peace. Besides, it costs society a lot: even the most conservative estimates measure national costs of violence against women in billions of dollars.²

And what is more. According to the World Health Organisation, as much as 38 per cent of murdered women are killed in domestic violence.³ The 2012 annual report of the Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (D VDRC), released to mark the 10th anniversary of the committee, summarized 164 domestic homicide cases reviewed by the committee since its inception, including the 20 cases reviewed in 2012. In Nigeria, domestic

violence against women, though still largely unreported due to fear of social stigma, is still prevalent and continue to result in severe injuries – physical and psychological, and even death. Domestic violence placed on the scale of a world that is always speaking of 'the rights of the human person' leaves much work to be done.



Women's disempowerment and dependence on men make them both vulnerable to domestic violence and less able to challenge or leave situations of violence.

Nevertheless, there have always been ways out. The solutions to the problem of domestic violence fall within the ambiance of increase in awareness and knowledge. Women's social empowerment has long forward been a cornerstone of the violence prevention movement. Based on this understanding VAWG (Violence against Women and Girls) is fundamentally about gender and women's subordination. There is strong qualitative evidence that women's disempowerment and dependence on men make them both vulnerable to domestic violence and less able to challenge or leave situations of violence. Women's empowerment, conceptualized in many ways, is commonly recognized as being a process rather than a "state of being". This focuses on educational intervention through schools, that may either seek to increase girls'

enrolment in schools or use schools as a vehicle for delivering complementary gender, transformative intervention messaging to girls, gender sensation and transformative programming which seek to enable women and girls to imagine their world differently, to realize that vision by changing the relation of power that have kept them in poverty, restricted their voice and deprived them of their autonomy.

From every sector of human life – schools, churches, families and workplaces, all hands must be on deck to eliminate this monster which acts as clog in the wheel of women development. Much has been learned in recent years about the transmission and control of violence against women yet information about evidence-based approaches in the primary care setting for preventing intimate partners' violence is seriously lacking. The evaluation of the interventions to improve the health and well-being of abused women remains a key research priority and also women should be alerted not die in silence. Meanwhile, efforts should be made to reach out to many out there who find themselves in this menace. They should learn to speak out so that help can be rendered to them before it claims their lives.

¹ WHO, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, South African Medical Research Council, *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women*, 2013, p.2.

² UN Women, *The Economic Costs of Violence Against Women*, 2016.

³ WHO, *ibid*, p.26.

A Historico-Scientific Approach to the Quest for Gender Equality

Gabriel Mbamelu, A Theology Student of Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu

Preamble

It has become fashionable to talk of gender equality. By the same token, it has become appropriate to accept that women for ages have been dominated, objectified, humiliated, and relegated to the background. Accordingly, to pose as anti-feminist is often to be comfortable with injustice, to be backward and reactionary. However, seen through the historico-scientific prism of paradigm shift, it would appear that neither those who fight for 'gender equality' nor those who oppose it are entirely wrong. From this perspective, the feminist propaganda is seen as nothing more than an attempt, now largely successful, to blackmail the whole of humanity into a new paradigm. This may sound negative, but it is not; it is simply the natural path of human history. To demonstrate this forms the *locus cogitandi* of this brief write-up.

Dealing with Central Terms

Equality

To be equal means to be "the same in all respects." Obviously then, the adjective 'equal' and its substantive, 'equality', are relational terms; it is a term that compares an object with another. Hence, we say of one thing that it is equal to another and mean by that it is 'the same in all respects' with the other. What remains however, is to establish the possibility of equality of all.

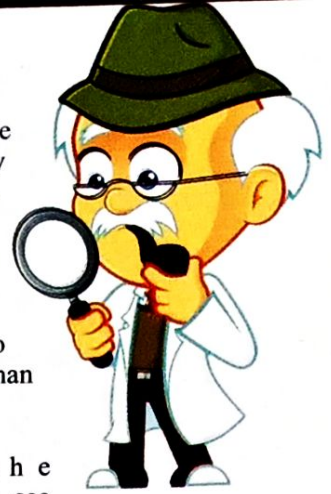
Can/are human beings (be) equal?

No. For two reasons. One: Equality in nature can only be achieved when man has reworked pre-existing matter, deliberately and carefully measuring out quantities to ensure sameness. Humanity has not been able to so manipulate or rework

human beings. On this basis, equality of human beings is yet impossible. Two, it is doubtful that even if humanity is able to rework the material component of man that they can also rework the intellectual part. Besides, the intellectual aspect of man is a cryptic and multifaceted area that can neither be measured nor compared with exactitude one to another. Hence, human beings' composite nature (matter and spirit) is itself a hindrance to a real equality between humans.

We must accept then that equality cannot be affirmed of any two human beings. The most that can be granted is equality in this or that aggregate attribute. Hence we may say of Mr A and Mr B that they are equally tall, or have equal number of teeth, or such. But then, equality in this or that aggregate attribute, even in those attributes we consider essential, does not make Mr A and Mr B equal. We may say that Mr A and Mr B are equally human (human in sense of being human beings not in the sense of being cultured), but this does not make them equal. Why? Because humanness is itself no more than an attribute which does not exhaust the being, Mr A or Mr B. Mr A is human, but his humanness is not all about him. If humanness were all that made all human beings, then all would be all, and everyone would be everyone; then, we would be correct to say that all are equal, but it would also be correct to say that there would then be no Mr A or Mr B. In simple terms therefore, if equality means 'same in all respects' then equality of all would be the result of equality in each and all aggregate attributes of two human beings, and this is simply impossible. The term 'equality of

all' is therefore an empty concept that has no equivalent in reality, unless qualified and limited to aspects of human existence.



From the foregoing we see that unqualified equality of all is both impossible and undesirable. Informed by this reality, the most informed promoters of gender equality do not refer to persons when they talk of gender equality. For them, gender equality refers rather to equality of 'rights' and 'opportunities' both of which *may* be given to all in equal measures. Hence, UNICEF says that gender equality "means that women and men, and girls and boys, enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections. It does not require that girls and boys, or women and men, be the same, or that they be treated exactly alike."

The Fight For Gender Equality

The fight for gender equality understood in the terms already expounded implies that in the past women and men had not been given equal rights and opportunities, and female-folk is by common opinion the disadvantaged group. In fighting for the cause of women therefore, they brand pre-existing systems unjust, repressive, pro-male and anti-female. Is it right however to qualify the past in these terms? To answer that question I would like to approach the feminist movement as a historical phenomenon, taking into cognisance what may be called a socio-cultural paradigm shift.

What is Paradigm Shift?

The idea of paradigm shift was introduced by the historian of science Thomas Kuhn in his 1962 book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. For him, a scientific paradigm is a set of practices that are considered standard in a

scientific discipline at any particular period of time. It refers to "universally recognised scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions for a community of practitioners."² Kuhn argues that science does not remain the same: fundamental shifts in paradigm happen from time to time. The shift follows a generally regular pattern: newer discoveries prove inconsistent with an existing paradigm, adjustments are made to the paradigm to contain the emerging discoveries, more incongruous discoveries are made and the paradigm can no longer contain them yet attempts to change it are met with much resistance. A revolution nevertheless takes place, the old paradigm is eventually rejected, then comes a period of anarchy as the emerging paradigm is being worked on. Ultimately the new paradigm is fully established.

While Kuhn says this of the history of science, it is also true of the wider human history. Human history bears witness to different socio-cultural paradigms at different times. These paradigms provide the framework within which the entirety of human life within a society is lived. They provide the worldview, norms, beliefs, and customs of a people. Paradigms also protect themselves by auto-endorsement and condemnation of deviations from itself. Nevertheless, many factors like exposure to other cultures, deeper critical reflection, and other personal and social experiences bring up issues which challenge the standing paradigm. Adjustments are made to contain such new issues within the framework of the existing paradigm. More issues arise, until the existing paradigm can no longer contain the dissenting voices. People who sincerely find the old order to be best refuse to see reason with any change and they attack attempts to change with disdain, criticism and rue. Eventually however there is a revolution, followed by a period of confusion before the new paradigm is given its definite shape. The

Enlightenment and the French Revolution exemplify the stages of a socio-cultural paradigmatic change.



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Let me say a few things about a socio-cultural paradigm shift. *First*, it need not be so dramatic; it may affect only one aspect of human society like dressing or eating or religion, etc. *Second*, a new paradigm inevitably retains some elements of the old paradigm in so far as such elements do not contradict the basic principles of the new paradigm. *Third*, from the perspective of the new paradigm, its standards are true and right and best, and for this reason, it feels justified to find faults with the past and to resist future changes. In fact, socio-cultural paradigm shifts are always aimed at achieving something better. But this noble desire is defeated by the fact that humans cannot get to grasp the whole truth of a reality at any given time.³ So, depending on what half-truth they possess at any period of history, they dangle from one imperfect paradigm to another. *Fourth*, in time, majority forget the old paradigm and in fact cannot think of any other. *Fifth*, in time too, the new paradigm begins to be challenged – its end is drawing close. *Sixth* and finally, it is possible that a new paradigm be a refinement of some ancient paradigm, at a time rejected and ousted, but now returning in glory! Could this be what Nietzsche meant when he spoke of the eternal recurrence of all things?

Conclusions

My conclusions will be pithy. *First*, Feminism could be seen as source and symptom of an ongoing paradigm shift. Indeed, the shift has

taken very long, but gradually a new paradigm is emerging and that partly explains why it is no longer fashionable or 'intelligent' or 'human' to identify with the old paradigm. *Second*, much as Feminism would like us to believe that men of former times were deliberately repressive and unjust, it would itself be unjust to accuse them, our forebears – most of whom sincerely saw nothing wrong with their paradigm, of injustice. We must remember that male and female in the outgoing order wielded their powers in various ways (as Chinweike adequately demonstrated in his *Anatomy of Female Power*); we could also have had 'Masculinism' claiming that women have oppressed men and denied them equal rights and opportunities to the 'honourable' job of cooking, childcare and homeware, and condemning them to risky tasks outside the home while remaining home in comfort. In fact, we may not judge life in a paradigm by the terms of another paradigm; that would be anachronistic and unhermeneutical.⁴ *Third* (Nevertheless), the use of propaganda by Feminism to blackmail men into a guilty conscience was inevitable. To topple a centuries-old paradigm, the change agents must prove it to be *terribly inadequate*; and since gender is part of the core of most cultures (unlike peripherals such as clothing fashions), tools like strong propaganda are needed. *Fourth*, the new order is not yet fully established, so we do not yet know what its definite shape would be like. *Fifth*, in the future – near or distant – there will be another shift. It might be a return to what we are currently abandoning; it may be men fighting to take over cooking, childcare and homeware, or whatever else. Only God knows!

¹ LeMoyné, Roger, "Promoting Gender Equality: An Equity-based Approach to Programming". *Operational Guidance Overview in Brief*. UNICEF, 2011.

² Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962. P.viii.

³ Karl Popper would call this *Verisimilitude*.

⁴ Pope Francis: "A historic event is interpreted with the hermeneutic of the time period in which it took place, not with a hermeneutic of today." From interview with Journalists aboard papal flight to Bogota, Colombia, 6 September 2017.

CAREER WOMAN and the Development of her CHILD

Cornelius C. Uchegbu, A Philosophy Student
of Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu



Introduction

In Nigeria today, more women with young children engage in entrepreneur or farming or professional businesses than we had earlier. Working mothers are now the rule rather than the exception. More women have received standard formal education and other training, and apparently, most of these women work because they do not want to abandon the career they spent time developing. However, women have been moving into the workforce not only for career satisfaction but also because they need to support the family. That is to say, it is all being done with good intention. I am not against women working either to provide for the family or to exercise their career prowess – this is indeed to be encouraged – but we are interested in the possible effects of their career life on the development of their children, especially when proper balancing is not made. This then, and some proposed remedy, will be the focus of this write up.

Child's Development

We are not unaware that children are very delicate people. They are malleable, docile and impressionable, ready to learn new

things – both good and bad. That is why they are referred to as “great imitators”. To that effect, we have to give them something great to imitate.

As Lev Vygotsky tells us, learning is a cooperative or collaborative dialogue between the child and another who is more knowledgeable than he/she (Vygotsky calls this *More Knowledgeable Other*, MKO).¹ The MKO may be the parents of the child, siblings, teachers, nurses, peers. While all of these groups of persons have a great deal to contribute to the cognitive and moral development of the child, there is evidence that the mother occupies a very peculiar place. This is primarily because the mother is physically and emotionally closest to the child from the earliest stage. From birth, the mother breastfeeds, bathes, carries, cuddles, and above all loves the child in a way only she best can. We must note, however, that maternal care is not merely desirable; it also bears within it the weight of necessity: “Researchers have identified that there are particular stages of a child's brain development that are hypersensitive to a mother's nurturing love and support, or lack thereof.”² Very important are the first few months of the child in which thorough nutritional care and bonding between the child and her mother are achieved. These

form the basis for any future development.

The Working Mother

With the rise of feminist movements, women rightly set the ideology that they have the propensity and potentials to be incorporated into various facets of life endeavours: business, occupational, religious, and so on. The famous Nigerian artists and duo musicians *P Square* captured this in one of their tracks with the words: “*What a man can do, a woman can do [also]*”. These efforts have paid off; as has been noted, women here in Nigeria are increasingly getting into the workforce. Today we find female doctors, lawyers, bankers, politicians, CEOs, managers of companies, et cetera. This indeed is a welcome development for, as John Paul II noted in his Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*,³ there is truly dignity in human labour. It affords the human person the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to his/her society and family, and also to support himself or herself without being overly dependent on another. However, work conditions if not properly managed could affect the maternal roles which the working mother owes her child. For instance, the possibilities are there of little personal and family time, of work stress, and of various other psychological and physical hazards associated with various careers. These are factors that the

working mother must deal with, and which she must try to balance with her maternal roles to her developing child.

Career Woman and Her Child: Balancing Career and Motherhood

A story was told of a child who requested an amount of money from her mother. The mother out of her love for her child gave her the money. Probably expecting that the money would be used to buy some snacks, she was greatly taken aback when the little girl gave her back the money saying: "Mummy can I buy a little part of your time?" Spending quality time with children summarizes everything a woman, and parents generally, need to give her/their child. It is in spending time with them that they learn new things – the right things. It is also in spending time with them that they are not only loved, but are as well informed. In the absence of parental and especially maternal care, children turn to other persons or things which, while they may supply the immediate needs of the child, may go with negative long term cognitive and moral results. We need to understand that the best inheritance a parent can give his or her child is his or her time.

However, to be a "good mother" does not mean giving up one's work in order to stay at home with the kids; no scientific or empirical evidence says children are harmed when their mothers work. On the other hand, it is not bad that where the husband alone can supply the financial needs of the family the woman stays home with the children; however, this may not always be the best, bearing in mind the need for every adult to work and earn something, however little. The crux of the matter therefore lies in the ability to manage both maternal roles and career.

A few suggestions come to mind:

1. Sufficient Maternity Leave: Maternity leave can give the

mother opportunity to be with her child in the first few months of his/her life. Maternity leave granted by the Federal Government of Nigeria to its female employees was recently increased from 12 weeks (3 months) to 16 weeks (4 months). While this increase is laudable, it pales in comparison, for instance, to the WHO (World Health Organisation) recommended six months of exclusive breastfeeding of the child,⁴ or to the 52 weeks (one year) granted as maternity leave in the United Kingdom. Away from these comparisons, most private companies in Nigeria do not as yet give even as long as four months of maternity leave to their employees. This calls for attention.

2. When possible, online management of one's career is encouraged. This obviously, depends on the type of work one is doing. For instance, a Japanese woman Mariko Taguchi, working at *Accenture* – a global professional company – was recognized as "an inspirational working mother" because of her ability to manage her career and her family. She was able to do that using the Skype Business tool in her laptop to attend to meetings and other demanding task in her office.

3. Also, in this technological age, one may find it helpful to check on things happening at home from workplace. One may decide to make home calls during work breaks. Or install camera furtively around her home to monitor what is happening between the nanny (if they have one) and her children. Songs and stories told by the mother can also be recorded on baby's tablet so that they can listen to their mother's voice when she is

away. This will go a long way to make impacts in the development of the child.

4. When this is possible, the mother should also enrol her children in crèches/schools close to her working place. This, however, is for as long as the children are still too tender.

5. As far as is possible too, the father should also provide care to the child.

Conclusion

The future of a child depends on the time well spent with his or her parents especially the mother. It is normally taken for granted that men work hard to provide for the family. That is to say, mothers are expected to take care of the children. The presence and love of the father is also needed but the role of the mother is greater. The mother's career is very important but the child's development must not be sacrificed on the altar of career. There should be careful balancing between both. As we have seen, the effort to balance calls for both the employer's involvement and the career couple's initiative. I say couple because the husband must not feel unconcerned, he should be devoted to finding a workable way of allowing the woman perform her roles. In all, the aim is to build a strong, cognitively and morally developed future generation. This duty falls immediately and primarily to the parents of the child, and in a special way to the mother.

¹ McLeod, S. A. (2014). Lev Vygotsky. Retrieved from www.simplypsychology.org/vygotsky.html
² Christopher Bergland, *Early Maternal Love and Support Boosts Child's Brain Growth*, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-athletes-way/201605/earlymaternalloveandsupportboosts-child-brain-growth%3famp>
³ No. 9
⁴ WHO, *Exclusive Breastfeeding for Six Months Best For Babies Everywhere*, 15 January 2011.



SITUATING FEMINISM IN A CULTURALLY DIVERSE NIGERIA

Uchenna Obasi, a student of Blessed Iwene Tansi Major Seminary, Onitsha

Introduction

Nigeria is a multicultural nation, with the number of ethnic groups usually estimated at 250. Expectedly, the experience of women across the nation should be as diverse as the ethnicities are many. Hence, while acknowledging that there are noted cultural denominations that allow for a common effort against the perceived subjugation of women in these cultures, there is also need to attend to the problems particular to each. This may appear to be a hindrance to the cause of feminism in Nigeria. But it need not be. In fact, it could be a strength; in that the various cultures could share their experiences, adopting the positives and fighting the negatives. As part of this attempt, this work focuses on the three major ethnic groups (major in terms of number) in Nigeria.

Patriarchy And Subjugation of Women in Nigerian Cultures

Patriarchy is seen as a social system wherein power and possession are passed from a man on to his sons. Understood in this sense, patriarchy is the general practice across Nigerian cultures. One of the functions bestowed on the men by the system of patriarchy was the headship of the family. And since the family remained the smallest building

block of the society, though not exclusive, men became the leaders of the society by extension. This practically meant that women were kept out of central positions of the social structure. And because power corrupts its wielders, intoxicating them and causing them to desire no challenge, patriarchy also meant a systematic attempt to crush the public face of the woman and subject her to humiliating experiences. This is true of various Nigerian cultures, to various degrees. A cursory look at the three major ethnic groups will buttress this fact.

Igbo

In Igbo culture, the woman has no independent personhood. This fact underscores her whole life, from birth till death. As such, a woman is also seen as belonging to, and represented by, some man, first her father, then her husband. This understanding of womanhood is translated into particular aspects of her life. Hence, in traditional Igbo culture, a woman's opinion does not count, and in fact she is not expected to speak in a public gathering involving men and women; she has no place when it comes to inheritance since she (merely) shares in the property of her father or her husband. Again, the death of a spouse is considered more a tragedy to the female than

to the male since her 'better' part is gone, and her own existence considered ruptured to a great extent. This ruptured existence is practicalized in the many difficulties the widow is subjected to. Her only recourse in such situations, when it is possible, is to remarry. If she is older or does not want to remarry, her hope would depend on male children, if she has any, who then become her voice. Because also a woman is not expected to live in her father's compound beyond a certain age, she looks forward to being married, and when married, does everything to keep her marriage intact, sometimes at a great cost to her health and dignity. This is because her very dignity is found only in her attachment to a man. Besides these, a man is considered to be person enough to marry as many wives as he wants, with the inverse unthinkable. Following the above, the woman is also seen to be the responsibility of a man. Whatever she has belongs to the man, and not to her: her children, her body, et cetera. And were any harm to be done to the woman, it is not considered a harm to her, but to her man. In such situations it is said: *okwa ada/nwanne/nwunye m ma du* (she is the daughter/sister/wife of somebody). This acts as a sufficient caution against a would-be offender, or a

reminder that he has harmed the man/men affiliated to the woman. Finally, the place of the Igbo woman is seen in the obviously partial sexual ethics, which places more emphasis on female faithfulness, than on the male.

Hausa

The Hausa people of Nigeria are known to occupy a great part of Northern Nigeria. Because the Hausas have had a deep and long experience with Islam, the two traditions have well mixed and have formed a distinct culture. Hausa culture places a lot of restrictions on their women; for instance, women are restricted from performing unnecessary roaming beyond premises nearby. They have little say in marriage and are trained to depend on their husbands for everything they need; hence, they are not allowed to do anything their husband does not approve of. What some Hausa female consider the height of their oppression is the fact that they are compelled not to let out a scream of pain during childbirth. They are forced to marry any man that declares interest in them and most times at a very young age, as early as ten.

Yoruba

Yoruba people are variedly considered the most educated in the country. They are seen majorly in the western part of the country. Just like the Hausas they force their girls into early marriage even to old men. They place too many restrictions on women that they do not even allow their women to appear in public places like Church especially when the men are around. They are not permitted to ask questions especially to the *Affa* (Rabbi), (any question they have must be directed through their husband). What the Yoruba women consider most humiliating is the fact that they are forced to do all the house chores, as it is a taboo for a married man to be seen doing any house chore, not even the smallest of it. Their women are

however treated with dignity in some respect, for instance, they can serve in the 'Oba's' cabinet as *Iyaolode* (this is only allowed in the Yoruba culture).

Possibility of Situating Feminism in Our Cultures

Igbo culture is known for its dynamism and openness to trying new prospects, thus, the seeming readiness to consider feminist demands. For this reason, certain success have been achieved in the way women are treated. For instance, some fathers now deem it good to give some share of their property to their daughters, widowhood practices in many places are being reviewed, and so on. Nevertheless, many aspects of the patriarchal customs still remain. A change in gender roles for instance remain unimaginable:

“Although cultural differences exist among Nigerian women, common model and tool for this fight is found in the Nigerian law which already recognises the equality of all her citizens, women and men.”

It is yet unthinkable that a man should cook or sweep the house when his wife is there, whatever the reasons may be.

The Hausa culture is sometimes seen as the strictest of the three major cultures; and so, it appears that feminism can never have a stand there. Nevertheless, change can still be effected with education and exposure. We must recognise however, that Islam, though often seen as subjugating woman, grants women some rights not seen in other cultures. This could be taken as a starting point in the fight against subjugation of women in that area.

Yoruba women, even though they appear to be too restricted, can be said to be the most culturally recognized and respected women, compared to the situation of women in other ethnic cultures of

Nigeria. This is seen in the fact that there have been parallel positions of power for the male and the female in Yoruba culture, and many proverbs prove that women have always fought against subjugation. However, for feminism to thrive in Yoruba culture, women have to become conscious of the power they control and always remember that they are people with dignity.

Conclusion

A woman as a dignified human person possesses *inherently* all the rights mentioned in the UN declaration of human rights just like a man. Because it is inherent, it is not something to be begged for but to be fought for. Any treatment or act against the right of anybody; male or female, is an abuse of human right, and should be fought as such. And feminism can only succeed in Nigeria if it is considered a fight against the abuse of the right of women. Although cultural differences exist among Nigerian women, common model and tool for this fight is found in the Nigerian law which already recognises the equality of all her citizens, women and men. Again, faith groups which often cut across cultures, must also help in the fight. To do this, the *m i s c o n c e p t i o n s* and misinterpretations which are read into our religious codes must be corrected, as God does not will that any human being be marginalized or subjugated. Finally, there is need for education, and for mutual interaction between women of various cultures of the country, as this can help them fight together, and to learn from each other what better alternatives there are to inadequacies in one's own culture.

¹ See F.A Olasupo et al. *Proverbs and Gender Equalities and Equities in African Cultures: Yoruba Culture as A case Study.*

² Abubakar GB (2017), *Condition of Women in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges*

³ F.A. Olasupo et al. *ibid.*

Opinion Poll



Traditionally, women take up the last name of their husbands upon getting married. These days however, an increasing number of people question this practice. What do you think of it in the light of the equality of man and woman?

When women are made to take their husbands' last name, I think it's to show that she belongs to him. The problem is the fact that most men see this name taking as a kind of proof of ownership thereby objectifying the woman. This idea behind the act makes it unequal and unfair. If the woman takes a man's last name, thereby losing some of her personal identity what does the man have to do to show that he belongs to her too as regards name? Nothing! Despite this, most men insist that their wives must take their names forgetting that women are persons in their own right and the title "wife" is simply a minuscule part of their personhood.

Deborah Chiemerie Asogwa, A Graduate of English and Literary Studies at Alex Ekwueme Federal University Abakiliki.



Equality resting on the fundamental principles of persons assuming equal right and privileges has nothing to do with women taking up their husbands' last names. As persons we are on a unified journey to attain a respectful civil society with cultural dignity. Going on, traditionally women over the years and now, still find it needful to take their husbands' last name upon marriage which is absolutely optional but right. Critical contemplations have evolved to underpin the core competencies of actual movement of equality, which agitates for respect of one another, equal opportunity and a level society. Presuming or making women taken their husbands last name a case, will not in any way aid the quest for equality. Therefore, it is important to understand that women traditionally take their husbands' last name after marriage but are not mandated to do so. This single act of married women taking husbands' last names is a cherished flexible act of generosity to the society and it helps bring love and unity to her home. When women take their husbands' last name upon marriage we should understand it's not an act of inequality rather it is an act of respect to the civil society and respect to the newly ordained family.

Imo Kingsley Chibuikwe
Department of Business Administration, Enterprise Systems
St. Francis Xavier University Antigonish, Scotia, Canada.

The traditional practice of married women taking their husbands' name instead of their father tends to concord with some religious beliefs and practices, more specifically Christianity, which holds that once a man and a woman are married they automatically become one and the husband is the head. In the African context and tradition, and in conjunction with the normalcy, there cannot be gender equality between man and woman, only that women will be given the opportunity to pursue their academics and be preferentially included in political offices and other sectors. There are so many reasons why women change their surname to their husbands' last name.

1. They are married out to their husband by their father and they are accountable to their husbands.
2. African tradition believes that women don't have a permanent address until they are married (i.e their husband name)
3. Christianity believes that women are subordinate to their husband and their husband is their crown who take responsibility of his wife's action.

Though there are so many gender advocacies but in reality, gender cannot be equal which is the major reason why women's name is less pronounced.

Onyele Chiamaka Vivian
A Graduate of the Department of Economic Education,
Godfery Okoye University, Enugu.





A lot of things are happening these days. Every day, we see different episodes of drama and all sort of thing. Many of them are good while others are not worthwhile. The issue of a women taking up their husbands' last upon getting into marriage is something that we were handed over. I wonder why anybody would want to do otherwise. Why should husband and wife be answering to different last/surnames. It does not seem any reasonable. When a woman gets into marriage, she should take up the husband's last name, which is a sign that something has happened to her life. This shows that she is no longer the person she used to be. She has left her parents family and is now in her own family. This unified last name is a sign of identification and recognition of the new family. So when a woman refuses to harken to this, *it simply abnormal*. The question of equality doesn't even come in at all. Someone can retain her own last name and add her husband's because of some certain things she may have done with the name in the past. Bug for someone to simply reject her husband last name in the name of "equality", then it is abnormal.

Ekenobi Uchechi Divine, International Christian University, Ihitte Uboma.



I am not a feminist so as a virtuous African lady, I won't support the modern adopted ideology of women leaving their husband's name surname to answer their father's surname. My reasons are stated here:

1. According the Christian belief, when a woman leaves her father's house to her husband's house, they both become one. If actually they are one, why will they answer different surnames?
2. The husband is the head of the family. When a wife takes husband's name, she displays submission to him.
- 3 It makes them a strong team. It's a way she can show the world that the man is her husband and continues to celebrate their team of two.
4. It is African. A real African woman will be proud to answer her husband's surname.

It's very pertinent for a married woman to take up her husband's surname because it will help people to identify which family the woman is married to.

Uchechukwu Juliet Adaeze, Department of English Language, Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe, An Affiliate of University of Nigeria, Nsukka.



Before colonization which brought in Christianity in Igbo culture, surnames weren't mainly emphasized within Igbos. Children are only given single names. Wives and children answer their first names but are majorly refereed to their

husbands and fathers if need be. E.g.

Nwoye, the first son of Okonkwo or Anasi the first wife of Nwakibie (cf 'Things fall Apart' by Chinua Achebe and 'My dear Ijeawele' by Adichie).

However, the fact that women take the names of their husbands is and weren't meant degrade the humanness or the dignity of women. Based on this issue and in line with comparative analysis between the initial Igbo culture and the western culture, it becomes clear that women taking the names of their husbands give room for easy identification of both the wife and the children. It also makes it easy for a child to be traced back to his family if need be and also to avoid siblings from different parts of the world from getting into marriage. All this can be possible if the wife and the children take the father's name as their surname.

Ozoemena Joachim, Philosophy Department, Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu.

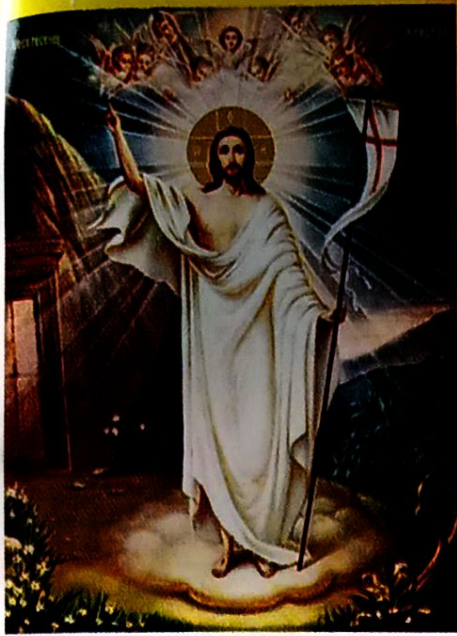
These days, people are clamoring for equality through different means. A lot people use any thing that is within their reach, to make sure that they dethrone any structure that marginalizes women, which the woman's change of name is one of them. For me, I see nothing wrong in a woman, refusing to take the last name of her husband. Marriage is just like a contract and they can separate any moment. But before this contract takes place, both of must be able to understand each other. A woman cannot go and marry a man who will not allow her to do such a thing and begin to complain tomorrow. My point is: if for any reason, a woman decides not to take up her husband's last upon getting married, she should be allowed to do that without any acrimony or discrimination. This is where the problem comes in, when people are discriminated for doing what they like. But as regards equality, which is the feminists aim, I don't think that not changing your name upon getting married in any way makes a woman equal with her husband. They can be equal or unequal with or without the changing of names. Through equality comes when one does what one likes.



Enukoha Christopher Chibuike, Department of Political Science, Ebonyi State University.

ALLELUIA! HE HAS RISEN INDEED (LK. 24:34)

EZEONU CHARLES CHINEDU
Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu



When the two disciples who were on their way to Emmaus dejected and disappointed encountered the risen Christ, they hastened back that same evening hour to Jerusalem to share their experience with the other disciples. On reaching, they found the disciples already filled with the same joy for they were saying: "The Lord has risen indeed". In this expression is couched the summary of the loftiness of the disciples' joy; they had not believed nor hoped in vain (Lk 24:21, 1Cor 15:1-2, 14). St. Paul says "our faith would have been in vain if Christ did not rise from the dead" (1Cor 15:14).

The Easter event is a historical revolution. It is unprecedented, a dead person resurrecting. In some passages of the Scripture is reflected the belief of people that the dead is gone forever (cf. Is 26:14, 38:18, Ps 30:9, 115:17, Mt 22:23, Mk 12: 18, Lk. 20:27), though, people had experienced occasions of a dead person getting back to life. For instance, the rising to life of the dead man thrown into the grave of Elisha (2Kgs 13:21) the raising of the only son of the widow of Nain (Lk. 7:11-17) the raising of Lazarus (Jn. 11:1-44) but these miraculous events are not resurrection of the dead. The individuals later died again. The resurrected body is a glorified body (1Cor 15:43). It is immune to death (1Cor 15:21-22, 54b-55). It

is physical and spiritual (1Cor 15:46, Jn 20:24-29). It dazzles (Lk 24:4, Mt. 28:2). It is imperishable and immortal (1Cor 15:54). It is not subject to gravity (Mk 16:19, Lk 24:51, Acts 1:9). These are all found in the risen Christ.

The mystery of Christ's resurrection is a real event. Ours is not a belief in a phantom. It is a belief not just in a person but an experience of the person. His resurrection was an event with manifestations that were historically verified. St. Paul in AD 56 wrote to the Corinthians: "For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to *Cephas* then to *the twelve*. Then he appeared to *more than five hundred brothers and sisters* at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to *James*, then to *all the apostles*. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared to *me*." (1Cor.15:3-8). Paul, the great

**“
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persecutor of Christ (Acts 9:5) turned an apostle (Rom 1:1, 1Cor 1:1, 15:9, 2Cor 1:1, Gal 1:1, Eph 1:1) had to present this historical fact to establish his message of the reality of the resurrection of

Christ. The account of the appearances of the risen Christ to very many known persons, and the fact of the empty tomb (Jn 20:5-8, Lk 24:12) lay credence to the reality of the resurrection. The Lord has risen indeed!

So, Easter is a celebration of joy and hope. We, believers have not believed in vain. We believe in the right person. He is really the Messiah of the prophecies of Old and he has faithfully fulfilled his promises (Mt 28:6, Mk 16:7, Lk. 24:6-7, 26-27, 44-48). He is not forever dead, he has risen. It is a celebration of two great realities: by his death Christ liberates us from the captivity of sin; and by his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life. We are children of the resurrection. Our happiness is to know no bounds. We do not live a life that is meaningless but one that is filled with hope for the great joy we carry in our hearts and that will abound more in time to come.

Easter joy is not to be shared alone. It is to spread across the ends of the earth. When the Emmaus disciples encountered this joy in their meeting with Christ, they set out immediately to share that with the disciples in Jerusalem. The women had to return to share with the rest of the disciples what they had encountered at the empty tomb. Even Jesus had to tell Mary to carry this Easter message to his brothers. And Mary hastened to announce joyfully the message of the resurrection to the disciples (Jn 20:17-18). The Christians are not to share the joy of the Easter season among themselves alone. The mission is urgent. They are to carry the joyful tidings of the risen Lord to the ends of the earth both in words and in witnessing. And since he has risen there is hope in the faith in him. And all who come to believe in him will at the end not be disappointed; for since he lives you also will live (Jn 14:19).

Happy Easter!

APPRECIATION



We, The Editorial Crew of Thinker Magazine wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to you, Mr Chrysogonus Okonkwo and Mr Daniel Enedo, our outgoing editors, for your immense contributions to the Thinker. We also congratulate you as you come to the end of your theological and philosophical studies respectively. May God reward your efforts and bless your paths! Bravo.



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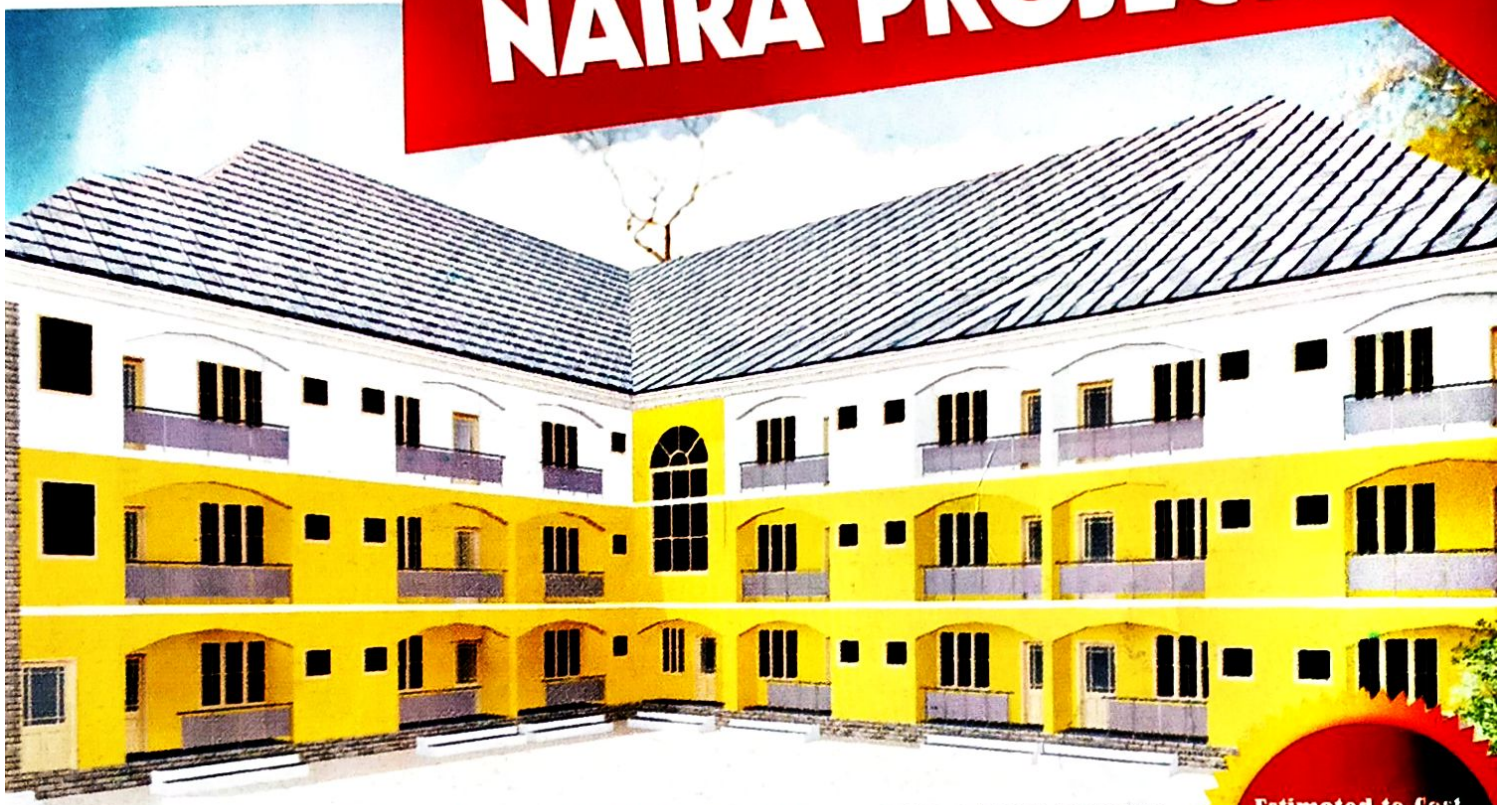
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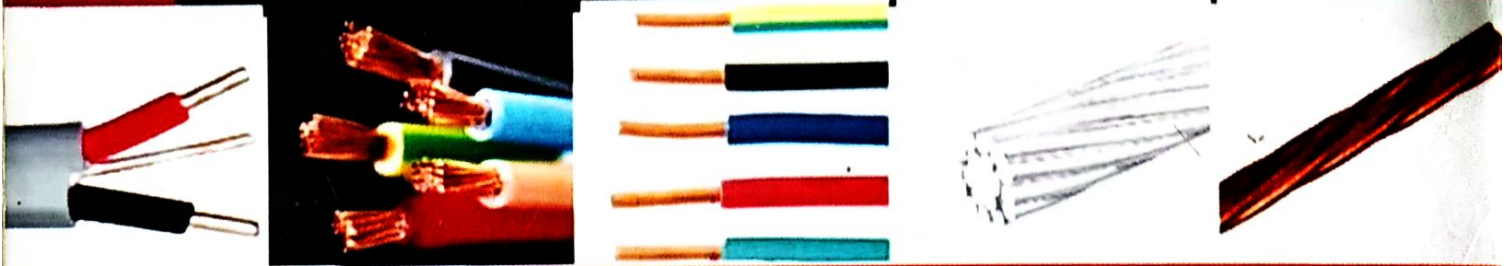
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Lagos Office 1: 17, Olutosin Ajayi Street,
Ajao Estate, Oshodi, Lagos.
Tel: 01-791-8827, 0803-757-7674
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