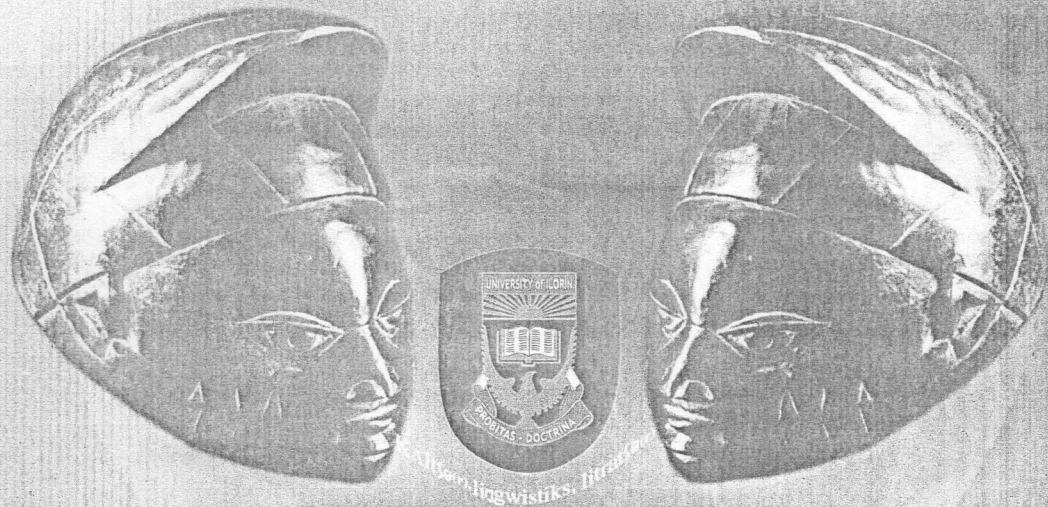


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Womanhood in the Bible and in Yorùbá Tradition: Toward the Elevation of Women in Nigerian Society.

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Abstract

This study examines the status of women in the Nigerian society with a view to determining the viability or otherwise of the clamour for a change in women's role within the society. In an attempt to justify the position of women, the study looks critically into what Christian religion and the Yoruba tradition say about the position of women as compared to their men counterparts, within the Nigerian society using the Bible, the Yoruba tradition as guide and the feminist approach as our theoretical framework. We examined both "the good", "the bad" and "the ugly" as presented by both traditions namely: the Jewish tradition as recorded in the Holy Bible and The Yoruba tradition as found in the Yoruba oral Literature respectively. The aim is to determine whether the present clamour that women should be given equal rights as their men counterpart is against the creator's established norm or not, that a man is the head of the woman and should be seen as so. After a careful examination, a conclusion is drawn and thereafter, suggestions are made as to what our women should do to effectively elevate their status within their various societies.

Introduction

Discussions on the status of womanhood in our society have been a topic often debated in recent times. Such discussions are not in anyway peculiar to a race or a nation, rather, it is worldwide. Most women are of the view that their men folks are cheating on them. They see their position as that of a 'slave' than that of a wife, mother and so on. They look forward to seeing a time when the dominant role of men over women would be a thing of the past. They therefore proclaim their 'freedom' from the hands of men politically, economically, religiously and socially. For instance, Ogbuani (2001:5) writes:

the society has closed their conscience and women are being blamed for virtually every wrong in the family while the men were excused. A lot of injustices and violence against women are frequently explained away as a man's legitimate defense of his honoured position.

What Ogbuani is saying here is that men unjustifiably dominate women hence the struggle to get their freedom. Olajubu (2004: 176) refers to biblical records when she writes that: "The central message of the Bible for both male and female is that "God created them equal" (Gen 1:27). For this simple reason, Olajubu sees no reason why man and woman should occupy different social positions and perform different roles. Her view is not different from Olalowo's (1998) who believes that basically, man and woman are alike as specie. They both have the same needs and the same faculties. The only differences are in areas of characteristics and sex. She opines that it is high time the low self-esteem that females have within themselves was erased. Although she warns that equality should not be sought in ways that are detrimental to hitherto, societal peace and stability. Scanzoni and Scanzoni (1976: 15) made the observation that:

the physical differences between the sexes do not in themselves determine the dissimilarities in thinking and behaviour.

They further assert that if women are to perform the same task as men they must be given the same training as men. This is to say that a woman could demonstrate her intellectual equality and her moral superiority if given the same training as a man. Nevertheless, the question is whether most people of the society hold this belief?

In like manner, Oso-Esin (2000:109) believes that women have always participated in the political, economic and social development of all societies. However, the problem according to him, has been that the contributions of women are neither valued, acknowledged nor remunerated like that of their men counterpart.

This work examines the persistent clamour for a change in the status of women with a view to determining whether such clamouring is religiously, politically, economically and socially justified or not. As earlier said, the Holy Bible and the Yorùbá tradition shall form the basis of our argument. At the end of the discussion, it is hoped that appropriate answers would have been given to most if not all the following pertinent questions:

- (a) are women actually what the Bible and the Yorùbá tradition call them?
- (b) does the persistent clamor for a change in the status of women not amount to disobeying nature, tradition and the human Creator (God)?
- (c) are men justified to see the struggle as a Case of rivalry rather than asking for the rights due to women as bonafide members of their respective communities?
- (d) does the so-called women struggle especially in a country like Nigeria not amount to allowing Western culture to further colonize our culture?
- (e) will the success of such struggle not turn out to be a 'curse' on our society? For instance, one may want to ask what kind of leadership to expect if a woman happens to be the president of a country like Nigeria?

This paper is divided into four major parts. The first part is a brief survey of people's opinion about women. This is followed by an

examination of what the scripture and the Yorùbá tradition say about women. The third part is an attempt at a comparative analysis while part four which is the final part of the paper centres on the issue of justification, conclusion and suggestions on the way forward.

Theoretical Framework

The theory to be adopted here is that of the Feminist approach. The advocates such as Wollstonecraft in his book titled "*A Vindication of the Rights of Women*" (1792) asserts that the ignorance level of the society accounts for why women are put at the rear. According to him, the only way women can free themselves from the 'slavery' of men is through education.

In like manner, another protagonist of the feminist theory, Sara M-Grimke, in his book titled "*Letter of Equality of Sexes and the condition of Women*" (1833) vehemently condemn the attitude of church leaders who use the biblical record to justify the dominant role of men on women. In his view, the action of the church leaders was a misinterpretation of the Bible. He believes that God created woman not only as a helper but also as co-decision taker to a man. The theorists believe that women are totally enslaved by their men counterparts. In religion, politics, economic and social matters, they are seen and treated as second-class fiddles.

While making reference to one Alma White, Je'adayide (2000:35) made the following remarks:

woman's place of co-equality with man in the rulership of the world has been unjustly denied her since the fall in the garden of Eden.

Not only this, the advocates believe that women had been discriminated against right from the inception of the world. They observe that the Holy Trinity was never defined as Mother, Daughter and Holy Spirit, but as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Olajubu, 2004:36).

Olajubu (2004:176) frowns at the statement in 1Corinthians, 14:34 that "the women should keep silent in the churches for they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the law also says". She believes the statement suggests that creating a woman was an after-

thought for God. A situation she describes as quite unfortunate. She bases her argument on the book of Genesis, 1:27 that God created man and woman as equals and that such pronouncement was as a result of the conduct of women in a particular society.

In the Yorùbá tradition, a woman is placed in a subordinate position to the man. In everything, the man leads while the woman follows. The Yorùbá believe that man has been ordained by Olódùmarè (the creator) to lead the woman while the woman was expected to be subjective and have mutual understanding with the man.⁸

The Feminist Theorists do not believe that nature bestowed the role of leadership solely on man but rather, the woman was placed at the rear of her male counterpart as a result of ignorance. According to them, the entire society is ignorant of the actual position a woman should occupy in the society.

Feminists, according to Cixons (1975) are persons who want power in a place or in a system and for women. The protagonists of this theory believe that the dominant role of men over women did not come by accident. According to Kora Koplan (2008), it started from creation and this they kick against. For instance, they view situations such as forcing a woman to obey some family taboos after childbirth such as taking soup without salt for a period of time, eating items such as agama lizard, keeping the new baby inside a basket and even the idea whereby a Muslim bride is secluded as a Case of unnecessary domination of women by men. They believe that man and woman have the same features except in appearance and outlook. To them therefore, whatever 'rights' are given to men either by nature or by tradition, women are also entitled to such rights. They would want to argue that if men are permitted to marry two or more wives, women too should be permitted to engage two or more husbands.

For this reason, they would frown at any literary work in which a woman is presented negatively such as Yemitàn's *Gbóbaníyí*, where Síkírá is presented as greedy and a girl one should not be proud of, Okedíjì's *Atótó Arére* where Bola is presented as a harlot, Akintán's *Ìtàn Èmi Sègilolá Eléyinjúégé Elégbèrún Oko Láyé* (the first ever Yorùbá Novel),

where Sègilolá (the main character), is presented as a professional adulterous woman.

It is from this perspective that we are going to approach this work. If actually women are being cheated, we would want to determine in what ways? What are the causes and what is the way out of such 'unpalatable' situation?

The Global World view about Womanhood

Efforts towards bringing about a change in the status of women in Nigeria have not been that of the government alone rather, it has been the concern of the entire Nigerian populace. Apart from the call for such change, many educated women have said it openly that they would want a very close relationship between them and their husbands, a change that will place them at the same level with their men. Changes that will give them recognition and elevate them from their present supportive role which the society or even nature place them.

Before now, the position of women in Nigeria and in fact in most countries across the globe was that of a second-class citizen. For instance, record has it that in the United States of America, the supportive role which society assigned to women was responsible for the formation of a movement group called Women Liberation Movement around 1800. (Ogbuani, 1996:11, Adeyemi, 2001:155). According to these scholars, the movement alleged that the punishments meted on women were numerous. Women had no say in the affairs of the society. American constitution did not allow women participation in politics and they were restricted to certain types of work. They were regarded as second-class citizens.

In like manner, the Hindus see women as very insignificant members of their society. To them, a woman is a "slave" and therefore, she is not allowed to divorce even in the face of unbearable treatments. Although these practices might have changed, the Arabs and the Fulani married their female children because they are females. And according to Al-Amin Abu Manga, (1981:10);

a wife is portrayed more as an antagonist to the husband than a partner. Her in-born malice and innate diabolical nature enhance her fighting role

and therefore neutralizes the institutionalized authority of the husband.

In Nigeria in general, and within the contemporary Yorùbá society in particular, women are seen as subordinate to the husband. For instance, a wife should have no say in discussions centered on the husband's family. A wife cannot inherit, as she is part of the husband's properties to be inherited after the husband's death. She has no right to have a 'male friend' after her marriage whereas the husband could marry as many wives as he pleases. However, most of these practices have been affected by civilization.

As time went on however, the situation changed. Individuals and groups of people, through education and religion saw the need to raise the status of women from that of insignificance to that of recognition. It was realized that men and women could cooperate to move the society forward.

Ogbuani (2001:38-39) writes that a woman is a solution carrier rather than a trouble giver. She argues that if women who constitute almost half of the population of country like Nigeria, are not being carried along, development in Nigeria cannot be fully realized because according to her,:

without women, men will labour under the sun
without suitable relief in the home. The presence
of women on earth add meaning to living. Women
are not the pains of life, they are the beauties of
life.

This belief led to the formation of several women organizations both locally and nationally with the sole aim of changing the status of women from unrecognized to that of recognized, from that of a slave to that of a daughter, from the unfaithful to that of the faithful and so on.

Today, a lot of awareness campaigns are being organized here and there by women in politics, wives of various state governors, 'the first lady' of the federation and women political groups stressing the need and demanding for seventy-five percent women participation in governance. We now find our women in high places in government be it at the local, state or national levels. Presently, there are states such as Lagos, Ògùn,

Òsun that have women as their Deputy Governors. Government parastatals such as the Federal Ministry of Education, Ministry of Information and Physical Planning are presently headed by women. Their effectiveness or otherwise however is not the concern of this paper. The paper is to discuss the justification or otherwise for the moves, but before we go into this, we would briefly discuss the position of women in the Jewish tradition as presented in the Holy Bible and the Yorùbá tradition before drawing a conclusion.

Womanhood in the Holy Bible (the Jewish Tradition)

From the discussions above, it is evident that all ethnic groups the world over, have status for women (the Jews and the Yorùbás inclusive). These in most Cases determine their attitudes toward women in all affairs within their respective communities.

Several records in the Holy Bible portray women as second-class citizens. They are described as traitors, backbiters, deceits, lover of money/wealth and so on. For instance, in the book of Judges 16:5, we are told how Delilah (Samson's wife) betrayed the trust her husband had in her by revealing the secret of her husband's strength to his enemies in exchange for money. According to the record, Delilah was approached and was told:

entice him and see wherein his great strength
therein lies and by what means we may prevail
against him to afflict him, and we will give
you, everyone of us, eleven hundred pieces of
silver. (Judges 16:5)

Even though Delilah knows that the enemies were out to punish her husband, yet she backslides for money.

A similar attitude of Co-Wives in the Yorùbá tradition was displayed between Hannah and Peninah (Elikanah's wives) in the Holy Bible. Hannah was barren while Peninah, her co-wife had children. Peninah was fond of making mockery of Hannah. This situation forced Hannah to go for private prayer session at the Lord's temple in Shiloh asking God to remove the shame from her. This story is not different from

that of Rachael and Leah (Jacob's wives). They are all Cases of heartlessness.

As earlier mentioned, in the book of 1st Corinthians 14:34, it is written that:

let your women keep silent in the churches
for it is not permitted unto them to speak but
they are commanded to be under obedience.

So says the law.

This is not different from what is found in the book of Jeremiah 51:10 where the mighty men of Babylon who became weak were described as 'women'. It reads:

behold, the mighty men of Babylon have
seized to fight. They have remained in
their field. They might have failed. They
remained as women.

In the above passage, 'failed men' were referred to as women meaning that women were rated low in terms of strength and so anybody who has no strength to fight was regarded as a woman.

In John 4:5ff we are given the impression that the woman Jesus met at Jacob's well in Samaria wanted to influence Jesus to commit adultery. Because Jesus knew her intention, she was asked to go and fetch her husband. Bearing in mind that the woman had had seven husbands before. This story could be likened to that of Oníkoromèbí's wife in Òbàrà Méjì of the Ifá Corpus of the Yorùbá tradition as we shall see later.

In Genesis 29:39, we read about Portiphar's wife who attempted to have sexual affairs with Joseph, her husband's slave. She approached Joseph and said: "lie with me". When Joseph refused to yield to the request, she lied against Joseph in order to implicate and send him to jail so as to cover her misdeed. These points to the fact that even the Jews see women as adulterers. They also attest to the belief that no matter how highly placed a woman is in the society, this does not prevent her from committing adultery if she so desires.

When King Ahab proposed to buy Naboth's Vineyard and the owner turned down the offer, Ahab became depressed, he refused to eat. Jezebel, his wife, planned the death of Naboth. She advised her husband to

instruct the war leader to place Naboth where the battle was hottest. The King yielded the advice and Naboth was killed. This is treachery and women are believed to be masters of such act.

Further still, reference can be made to 1King 15:2ff where Jeroboam's mother is said to be one of the people who encouraged him to serve idols. King Ahaziah's mother acting in her capacity as the king's counsellor advised her son to do evil. (2nd Chronicles 22:3). In like manner, Athaliah, King Ahaziah's mother, killed all descendants of the king referred to as "the king royals" as a result of her son's death in order to prevent them from ascending the throne. She later made herself king in Judah. (2nd King 11:1ff).

Similarly too, the fall of the first man Adam, was caused by the first woman, Eve (Genesis chapter 3). In the same vein, the rivalry between King Saul and David was further ignited by the women of Israel. After David succeeded in killing the dreadful Philistine (Goliath), they all gathered, singing war songs:

Saul killed his thousands

David killed his ten thousands.

Herod's daughter (Herodias), impressed her father with her beautiful way of dancing on her father's birthday celebrations. The father promised her anything her heart desired from him. Herodias asked her mother what she felt she could ask for. The mother told her to request for the head of John the Baptist as a way of avenging John's offence to her. The king, though baffled at her request, heeded her daughter's request and so John the Baptist was beheaded (St Mathew 14:1-2, St Mark 6: 14-29).

These references and many others best describe the biblical record of the nature and position of women. This, however, does not mean that the Jews see nothing good about women. Below are a few examples of instances when women played significant roles in the life of the Jewish people, nation and the early churches.

- (i). Esther could be described as a woman of good character. She was the one who saved her people from the terrorist hands of Aman. She could be likened to Moremi of Ilé Ifè who saved her people from the Igbo invasion (Esther, 1- end).

- (ii). Ruth loved her husband and her mother in-law so dearly. The Yorùbá will call her "abókokú" literally meaning "one who is ready to die with her husband" (Ruth Chapters 1-4).
- (iii). Sarah was an enduring woman. She was proclaimed mother of all nation (Genesis 16-21).
- (iv). Deborah was a prophetess. She was a judge in the land of Israel (Judges Chapters 4-5).
- (v). Phebe, who was a servant of the church and an helper of many, even Paul, a missionary (Romans 16:1-2).
- (vi). Asa's grandmother trained him to work in the way of the Lord (1st Kings 15:9ff).
- (vii). Moses' mother hid him for three months before she dropped him by the side of the river. Moses' sister (Marian) hid herself to watch what was likely to happen to the boy (Exodus 2:2ff).
- (viii). Pharaoh's daughter, with her maids are compassionate enough to spare the life of Moses (Exodus 2:6ff).
- (ix). Moses' mother was eventually asked to take care of Moses (Exodus 2:8ff).
- (x). The Midwives played a compassionate and motherly role by sparing the lives of all male children of Israel as against Pharaoh's order that they are all killed (Exodus 1:15ff).
- (xi). King Josiah saw the book of the law of God in the temple. He sent to Prophetess Huldah to inquire about what he saw. Huldah prophesied that because he humbled himself, the destruction of Judah will not be during his time. This shows that women are also prophets of God (2nd Kings 22:13ff).
- (xii). Jehoash, the youngest King in Israel, was trained to fear God and work in the way of the Lord by a woman named Zibich of Beer-Sheba. His reign was therefore, very peaceful (2nd Kings 12:1ff).

The few examples above establish the fact that the Holy Bible also presents the positive side of women. Despite this positive opinion about woman, the facts still remain that the Bible emphasizes more on the weaknesses of a woman and the established rule of man's creator (God) who makes a woman to be subordinate to man. One wonders if these

positive records about a woman are enough reasons why our women would want to place themselves at the same level with their men counterpart. The question is will this not amount to going against the rules of nature?

Womanhood in Yorùbá Tradition

There are several perspectives to the issue of women in the society. There has been a great deal of work on issues that have to do with women politics and women development. A deep knowledge of the Yorùbá views about woman can be found in their oral traditions which include folktales, Ifá literary Corpus, proverbs, myths, legends and so on. Al-Amin Abu Manga (1981:3) notes that folklore functions to mirror the society's way of life in terms of its social structure and its method of regulating social behaviours.

Ogunsina (1985:376) refers to this in his discussion on "Co-Wife tales among the Yorùbá". According to him, the main characters in co-wife tales are always women and that what usually happens in such tales may force them to have dealings with other creatures be it human beings, animals and so on. He also explains that the main theme of co-wife tales centres on covetousness as in 'èrò tí n ròjéje', deceit as in 'ìgbáko orogún', backsliding as in 'àgbò gbewé mi je', malice as in 'àsáró elépo rédérédé' and other social vices that one may think of, all portraying women negatively and in a way that one can derive one lesson or the other from the stories.

In the Ifá Corpus, there are different thoughts of the Yorùbá about womanhood. For instance, Abimbólá (1968:38) in Òyèkú Méjì, a woman is presented as deceitful and perfidious being. It reads:

Obìnrin lèké:	the woman is a deceit
Obìnrin lòdàlè:	the woman is perfidious
Kéèyàn má finú hàn fóbìnrin:	one should not reveal his mind to a woman

Because women are believed to be talkative, it is dangerous to discuss issues that are secret with them. Hence, the Yorùbá saying:
Èèyàn tí ò gbón níí bóbìrin mule: only the foolish confide in women
Ijó obìnrin bá mawo lawo bàjé: the day a woman know a secret, such secret is spoilt.

Another one says:
È má jé ká finú hàn fóbìnrin: Do not give your mind to a woman
Ibi ojú rè ò tó, enu rè débè: where her eyes do not see, her mouth gets there.

Ogunsina (1982) also observes that many Yorùbá aphorisms and proverbial expressions contain luminous ideas about the characteristics and peculiarities of women. He gives this example:

Bí a pewúré, kí a má f'óbìnrin lorí je
Bí a bá pàgùntàn bọlọjọ, kí a má f'óbìnrin láhọn je. Sùgbọn bí ẹ bá padìe òkòkó, kí a yọ ojú rè f'óbìnrin.
Nítorí obìnrin kíi jorí, wọn kíi jahọn, ojú ni wọn nje.

(if a goat is killed, do not give woman the head to eat. If a sheep is killed, let not its tongue be given to the woman. But when a fowl is killed, pluck its eyes for a woman to eat; for women never enjoy eating the head, nor the tongue but only the eyes).

These go in line with the belief that the position of headship is not in the nature of women. It is exclusively reserved for men. It is believed that in a compound or family where a woman is named Ikúmólú', meaning

the death has taken the head, it is certain that their males are either dead or insignificant.

Similarly, Abimbólá (1968:34), in *Òyèkú Méjì* of the Ifá Corpus, a woman is described as a trouble maker, selfish, in the sense that no woman would willingly tolerate having a co-wife. It reads:

Òkan soso póró lobìnrin dùn mọ: only one woman is good
lọwọ ọkọ: for a man
Bí wọn bá di méjì, when they are two in number,
wọn a di òjèwú: they become jealous.
Bí wọn bá di mẹta, when they are three in number
wọn a dẹta-n-túlẹ..... they become association of
three that destroys a home.....

There are short lyrics used in portraying the jealous nature of women. The song goes thus:

Òjèwú bìnrin abìpònrin létí: jealous woman, iron
sharpeners on the ears
Bó lóun sùn lọ, a sì máa wúkọ: when she claims to be in
deep sleep, she coughs.

In like manner, the Yorùbá will say:
Ọkọ tó bá rù: when the husband becomes lean
È bí ìyàwó rẹ léèrè: ask the wife why?
Or even this:
Bóbìnrin bá gbọn lágbọnjù: if a woman is too wise
Pénpé lasọ oko rẹ ẹ mọ: the husband's dress becomes
undersized.

Abimbólá (1969:112), refers to 'ikú's' wife in the ifa corpus, who revealed the secret behind her husband's strength to his enemies for money. This can be likened to the story of Delilah (Samson's wife), which we have earlier discussed in this paper

Furthermore, the Yorùbá perceived a woman as sexually perverse. In *Odù Ọbàrà Méjì*, we read about one Oníkoromèbí's wife who "in all her life, she knew nothing but to fornicate all around" (Abimbólá 1969:110-112).

Ìjálá, a form of Yorùbá oral literature classified under oral chants, tells us the story of one Oníkòyí, the head of a community in those days, who revealed the source of his strength to his wife, who later gave his magical forces that were forbidden for them to eat.

From the foregoing, one is made to believe that the position of women in the Yorùbá tradition is not better than that of a house-help who knows nothing and is not expected to know anything about the administration of the home. Their role in politics appears to be very minimal. They do not seem to have the opportunity of knowing the secrets surrounding many traditional sacrifices because they are predicated of inability to keep secrets. This notion is reflected not only in oral but also in written literary works, such as written prose, play and even in home videos. This raises the question as to whether there are no good things about women. Are there no bad things about their men counterparts? We like to state that just as noted in the Jewish tradition, evidence abound that the Yorùbá also have some positive notions about women.

Ogunsina (1982:2) observes that we can see the positive nature of women among the Yorùbá in proverbial songs and poems. He refers to one Ọgbóni song, which goes thus:

È wólẹ fóbìnrin: let's respect our women
Obìnrin ló bí wa: they are our mothers
Káa tó dọrìsà: before we become an idol

Abimbólá (1968:59) referring, to *Òdí Méjì* of the Ifá Corpus, writes:

Funfun niyì ẹyín: whiteness, the beauty of the teeth
Ègùngàgàrà niyì ọrùn: Longness, the beauty of the neck
Omú síkìsìkìsíkí, niyì obìnrin: Robust breast the beauty of a woman.
A díá fún ẹjì ọdí: Divine for ẹjì ọdí
Tí n sunkún aláílóbìnrin: Crying for being a bachelor
Tí n fojoojúmọ káwọ ọtọ: Putting his hands in his laps everyday
Èrò Ịpọ, èrò Ọfà: People of Ịpọ, people of Ọfà
Ìgbà ìdí di méjì: when we double the buttock
Náa la dọlọmọ: It is then we become parents.

The references above point to the roles of women as mothers and that without them, there won't be anything like child bearing. As a mother, the Yorùbá believe that whatever situation one finds himself/herself, the mother will not desert him/her. Hence the saying:

Etí were ni tèkúté ilé: the mouse is always at alert

Abiyamọ kǐ gb'ẹ̀kún ọmọ rẹ: a mother will not hear the cry of her child
Kí ó máà tati were: and fails to respond.

What these infer therefore is that the Yorùbá traditional oral literatures are not just an embodiment of unimpressive and powerless verbal expressions about women; they also contain impressive and powerful verbal expressions. These may account for why Ogbuani (2001:31) writes that:

Women are not evil. They are vessels of favour and stability... remember, she is your partner and your co-builder in the destiny plan.

She goes further to demand that:

Women should occupy their legitimate place in the affairs of the world and in the heart of men, not in their cars, not in their house, not in their kitchen, not even on their bed but in their heart.

She is therefore advocating that women should take practical steps to show honour and respect for their husbands, treasure his advice and opinion on every issue of life. However, she quickly adds that this should not be taken to mean insignificance; rather, it should be seen as developing genuine intimate relationship built on respect.

While commenting on the Yoruba philosophical belief about women, Sobande (1959:9-11) sees them both in good and bad perspectives. They are seen as unavoidable companion for men. He states thus:

Àwọn obìnrin ní iyò ayé. Àwọn kan nàà ní sọ iyò dòbu. Kò seé ní, kò seé fẹ̀kù ní wọn. Bí wọn bá hùwà apanímáyọdà lóníí, wọn a se gégé bí agbani lójó tó burú lóla. Obìnrin ní

sẹ̀kún dẹ̀rín, àwọn kan nàà ní sọ oyin di iwọ. Amókorérin-ín, amórogún wúgọ. Ibi tí wọn bá ní lọ ní wọn ní ko ìpàkọ sí. Wọn kò sòro ó kò, sùgbọ́n wọn sòro ó yà fún.

(women are the salt of the world, yet they are the ones that make salt loose its taste. They are not good to have, yet, not good to miss. If they put up their diabolical behaviour today, they appear to be one's saviour tomorrow. Women turn sadness to joy. They also turn honey to poison. She gladdens her husband but provokes her mate to jealousy. They turn their back to where they are going. Easy to come by, yet difficult to miss).

Oládémó (2009:41) is of the view that Yorùbá notion of interdependency ensures that there is no room for absolutism in any quarters. According to her, men mostly occupy public offices of governance. In traditional Yorùbá communities, women control the base of the community's power structure. This suggests that men have all the powers while women are powerless. She disagrees with this notion on the basis of the Yorùbá saying that 'Obìnrin làgbà, okùnrin làdà'. (woman is the greatest, man is the strongest). She talks of 'ìjúbà' (paying homage) at ceremonies to the 'ìyà mi' who are believed to wield tremendous powers in all sectors of Yorùbá living experiences.

In conclusion, Olademo says that the Yorùbá gender construction does not translate into oppression and domination of one gender by the other, rather, each gender has area of specialization and jurisdiction which may include occupation, ritual performance and biological functions. These classifications are however not rigid but fluid and negotiable, as dictated by contingencies of prevailing circumstances.

In the Yorùbá tradition, a responsible man is the married man. This is evident in the saying: 'àilóbìnrin kò seé dáké, orúko ní soni'. Literally means that you don't keep quiet when you have no wife because if you do, you are nicknamed. When the Yorùbá say "your house is "dismantled", it

means the person's wife is gone, and in the other way, when they say that your house is "settled", it means your wife is with you.

Contrary to the popular view that women are not leaders but supporters, there had been Cases where women were made to lead. For instance, among the Yorùbá, women were like stewards for the gods. They woke up very early to take care of the gods. They are like representatives of the gods. As strong as Sàngó was, it was a woman who took care of him.

In the Yorùbá community administration, there were and still are, both male and female chiefs. Among the female chief titles are:

- (a). Ìyálóde, Òtún Ìyálóde and Òsì Ìyálóde (among Òyó Yorùbá). They are the heads of all women in a community representing the interest of all women in the Oba's Council.
- (b). Ìyálójà looks after the community market. She liaise with the Oba on issues that boarder on the market in general.
- (c). Women also play prominent roles in the worship of Òsun divinity in Òsogbo Òsun state, Nigeria, an annual event.

In a community where the powers of the men dwindle, if the Ìyálóde is bold, brave and courageous, she can assume the position of leadership. Examples include: Efúnsetán Aníwùrà (a one-time Ìyálóde of Ìbàdàn) who was described as a powerful and successful business woman, a supervisor of a trading empire which was manned by her servants who were mostly her domestic slaves.

There was also a woman called Tinúbú (a one-time Ìyálóde of Ègbáland). Although Efúnsetán did not use her position well as a forefront leader, the Egbás, on the other hand, can never forget Tinúbú for her role in the Ègbá-Dahomey war. Tinúbú saved the Egbás from the constant harassment by the Dahomeyans.

Ìsòlá (1983:114-116) records that some Ègbá men wanted to buy over Tinúbú in order to sell Ègbá people to the Dahomeyans in war. Their belief was that Tinúbú, a buoyant business woman would love money but contrary to their expectation, Tinúbú flared up and said:

Adébógun, ọmọ àlè ni ọ. Ọmọ àlè pátá gbáà
ni ọ. Ìyá kan bàbá méèédógbòn. Yóó bá bàbá

re. o ò ní kúure. Kí èmi gbowó, kí n fí gbé
Ègbá tà? Kí n sílẹ̀kùn fún Ìdòòmì, kí wọn kó
ọmọ ìyáà mi lẹ́rú nítorí owó? Adébógun. Ọmọ
àlè ni ọ.

(Adébógun, you are a bastard, one mother twenty-five fathers. You will not die well. That I should take money and sell out the Ègbas? To open the door for the Dahomeyans and allow my kinsmen enslaved by them for the sake of money? Adébógun, you are a bastard).

Another example of valiant women in Yorùbá history is Morèmi who the people of Ilé-Ifè do honour yearly with a seven-day annual festival in remembrance of her role in the ancient Ilé-Ifè/Ìjèbú war. Morèmi was described as a valiant woman who had the love of her people at heart. Ogbuagu, (1987) writes:

Only handclapping is allowed. The festival is done in remembrance of Morèmi who single-handedly rescued the people from the menace of the Ìjèbús that were threatening their existence.

(the Guardian Newspapers of 11th January, 1987).

Apart from this, Ogunsina (1982) notes that women are prominent in Yorùbá oral prose. In most Cases, they are the main character in Yorùbá prose writings.

From the foregoing, we are given the impression that the society has failed to recognize the positive roles women can play in their respective societies. This leads us to our discussions on the justification for women liberation programmes.

Justification for Women Liberation Programmes

In this paper, we have tried to examine the good, the bad and the ugly of both the Biblical and the Yorùbá tradition records about the position and status of women within their respective societies. Records

have shown that right from creation, man was made the head of the family and the woman was expected to be submissive to him always.

One may be tempted to believe that the position of women among the human race is that of a second-class fiddle, no wonder why women are now crying loud saying that the era of playing dominant roles by their men counterparts in the running of the affairs of the society was over. They want to fully partake in the governance of the society rather than playing fiddle. Stendah (1982) states that: "women are to serve the needs of the moment".

In the same vein, Okolo (1985:121) states that:
the work of disseminating the basic tenets
of the Kingdom of God to all nations/races
as commanded by Jesus Himself to his
disciples entails all irrespective of sex or
gender.

In spite of all these claims and with the situation on ground, some pertinent questions need to be answered. First is the fact that if actually nature bestowed the role of headship/leadership on the man as we had earlier observed, why then the struggle for liberation? What or who are we liberating and why do they need to be liberated? What for? Will such struggle not amount to disobeying God's commandments? Will it not go against nature and culture?

Further still, could the struggle not be seen as an attempt to hijack the authority to lead bestowed on man from him? Are the women not trying to organize a "coup" to unseat men from their 'seat of leadership'? Are the women not trying to change God's perfect arrangement? Are the women competent to lead and if they do, what kind of leadership do we expect from them?

It is pertinent to note that in Christendom, especially as it was recorded in the New Testament, we read of women who played positive roles, not only in Christ's mission on earth but also in the early Christian history. For instance, women were part of the assembly of the kingdom called by Jesus in whom they were active participants and privileged beneficiaries of His love and works of power (Luke 10:38-42, Mark 1:20-31).

Jesus' treatment of women was without discrimination. He talked to them, healed them in public and called on them to witness to their faith in Him. (Matthew 15:21-28). Jesus saw women as children of God not as wives to husbands. Some of them became the first to witness the resurrection events with Mary Magdalene as their light bearer.

Furthermore, women also played significant roles in the formative years of the early church. Among such women was Phoebe, the servant of Cenchrean Church (Romans 16). Pricilla, a woman of Ephesus who risked her life to save Apostle Paul from death (Romans 16:1-2); Julia, a woman of Rome (Romans 16:15) and Lydia, a lady who shows sympathy (Acts 16:14-15). Examples are many and cannot be exhausted here. However, these and many other reasons can be said to be responsible for the present clamour for better recognition for women. We have also established the fact that among the Yorùbá, women have played prominent roles and have contributed immensely to the growth and development of the Yorùbá societies. The question however is whether the reasons are enough for the present clamoring? Hence, the formation and funding of different women groups all over the places.

Today, as a result of the struggle for women liberation, awareness has been created while the government in particular and the society in general are towing the path of the Feminists by allowing for better women participation in political, religious, social and economic emancipation of the entire society.

In our opinion, the present struggle cannot be said to be free from political intentions. It can be said that because of the population of Nigerian women which out-numbered that of men, politicians want to induce and lure them into politics in order to secure their vote. They are used by the politicians as tools for achieving their political ambitions.

Despite this opinion, the present struggle should not be seen as a move to unseat the men from their 'position of authority and leadership'. We would want to believe that the move is not meant to erode the powers bestowed on men by nature, but rather, it is a way of giving all citizens (males and females alike) the freedom to contribute their quota to the development of their respective societies.

It would be wrong to think that the creator's authorities are being questioned as a result of civilization or human exposure; rather, the present struggle should be seen as a step in the right direction. The only thing that is constant on earth is change. Women should not be left in the dark, more so when they possess what it takes to move the society forward. They should be encouraged to aspire to positions such as that of Esther, Mary and others in the Holy Bible, and Tinubú, Morèmi and others like them in Yorùba history.

We want to agree with Ogbuani (2001:44) who observes that:
at various levels and departments in life,
women are well positioned not only in
Africa but globally, and their efforts are
adding colour to human existence

This is to say that women should be given equal opportunity to improve their status and this should not be seen as going against religious, cultural and social injunctions as long as it does not jeopardize the leadership role of men as fathers of their respective homes. Since women are bonafide members of their respective communities, they should be given equal opportunities to develop themselves politically, educationally, religiously, economically and socially too.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the place of women in our societies with particular reference to the Holy Bible (the Jewish tradition) and the Yorùbá tradition. It has been established that just as men; women also have something meaningful to contribute to the growth of the nation as a whole and their various communities in particular.

We should take cognizance of the fact that there are always two sides of the coin, (the good and the bad) and that it is not proper for the society to emphasize or harmer on the 'bad' aspect of the woman creation, closing its eyes on the good aspects.

Kolawolé (1998:8) advocates for a dialogue approach to accommodate the varieties of modes of self-expression by women or about women. She states that the way myths impact women is of tremendous importance to gender theory that seeks to address the specificity of

African women reality. He believes however, that African women cannot be treated as a homogenous group (Olademo 2009:22).

We want to conclude by advocating that women should be seen as partners in progress rather than fomenters of trouble. Their duties should be seen beyond Christendom and the Yorùbá tradition. One thing that is sure is the fact that men are not saints and so if the women are accused of wrongdoings, their male counterparts are not vindicated either.

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The 'Culture' of Highlife Music

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Abstract

This paper focuses on Highlife music as a social and cultural phenomenon in Nigeria. It discusses the cultural foundation of Highlife music, as well as the socio-cultural processes in its creation and sustenance. Sampled texts of Highlife songs as they reflect cultural issues in Nigeria are also examined in the paper. This is with a view to understanding Highlife as a cultural phenomenon, as well as negating or upholding the view that the 'culture' of Highlife music is dead in Nigeria as Highlife legend, Osita Osadebe has opined. The paper observes among other things that Highlife music is no longer a class phenomenon as it was in its early days in Nigeria. In this sense, the paper concludes that the 'High Class' culture of Highlife music at its inception, has faded. It however, hastens to add also that in contemporary times, Highlife music means different things to different people, while its cultural foundation still remains essentially an intersection of local and global socio-musical and cultural perspectives.

Introduction

Contributing to the raging debate on the decline of Highlife music in Nigeria, Igbo Highlife music legend, Chief Osita Osadebe, commented that Highlife music is alive in Nigeria but that the 'culture' of Highlife is dead¹. In a British Broadcasting Corporation radio debate in 2004, some contributors also shared Osadebe's opinion². This brings to mind the issues of music in culture, cultural pluralism and whether indeed culture should be seen as a static or dynamic concept. This paper focuses on Highlife music as a social and cultural phenomenon in Nigeria and discusses the cultural foundation of Highlife music as well as the socio-

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