

Tackling the Natural and Cultural Barriers to Feminism & Gender Equality: A Study Among the *Etsako* of Nigeria

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Abstract

Recently, there has been an increase among gender sensitivists' agitation for women equality with men—despite their obvious or obscure physical dissimilarities or uniqueness, natural/social-condition. So what is the basis of quest for gender equality? Is this possible or necessary? Although several plausible claims are made by the equalitarians, this paper explains the formidable and seemingly insurmountable barriers to an 'impeccable' level of women equality with men existing in their respective natural-condition (disabling or enabling), or other social/cultural-condition. Accordingly, it reviews the conception of women among the *Etsako* of Nigeria so as to be enabled to sift such culture-base barriers. Thus, it points out that though developments in science and technology have tended to develop some schemes and mechanisms to enhance women's natural disablements to fit in social participation as man, custom, tradition and cultural accretions have tended to be formidable barriers. Affirming feminism, it concludes that the proper focus for women is simply to act their roles dictated by nature, and stipulated by culture, which men cannot.

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Background to the Study

Despite apparent sameness in rationality, women and men are still ostensibly unequal. Thus women and feminist's spurious agitation for status equation with men has though been rising, with stagnant but unimpressive or unenviable degree of success. A synoptic view of the grounds of the agitation reveals that some people feel men and women equal because "they are humans and rational"; or that "is culture that downplay the status of women"; or that woman is often perceived as negative or 'the other'; or that "one is not born but becomes a woman"; or that "the problem with the definition of woman is in relation to man"; and finally that "women and men play complementary roles: no one is superior".¹ Some of these claims are reasonable but unsound. Yes, men and women as humans are rational. But a major deficiency of the feminists' argument is that they seem to recognize a conundrum in the central concern or the province of the terms, gender and equality. And to whittle it down, we must account for what is gender or gender equality? What is feminism? What is equality? Is feminism or gender equality possible or is it necessary? What are the barriers to its sustainable attainment? These are the questions addressed that must be addressed. In other words, though several plausible claims are made by the feminists, this article holds that formidable and seemingly insurmountable barriers to a 'desirable' level of women equality with men. These range from natural condition such as the fact and inconvenience of menstruation/dysmenorrhea, breast-feeding, psycho-physical fragility or social condition such as requirements on dressing and roles.

Consequently, we shall review the conception of *women* among the Etsako of Nigeria so as to be enabled to sift such natural/culture-base barriers. We shall point out that though developments in science and technology tend to develop some schemes and mechanisms to cope with women's natural disablements, to fit in social participation as man; it has however engendered a rift between civilization/modernism and culture/tradition. Thus it is a clash between tradition and modernity, and the latter has not succeeded because of the formidability of the disablements in nature and fortified by culture. The adumbration of these themes is the focus of this essay.

What is Equality?

When we say men and women are equal, we do mean in respect of the essence of humanity, for the idea of equality is highly contested. This is because the idea connotes more of socio-politics than material considerations. It is even more contentious to say that women and men are equal, for "when two things are equal, they have the same features or they are identical in all respects or they are uniform and this uniformity will reside in certain features that these things share".² So in what respect are human beings (women and men) equal? Is it because they belong to the same *Homo sapiens*? Or because they both possess rationality, which is "the ability to reason based on the ability to pursue one's own intentions independently of others"³ or have the same needs as humans? Are senile persons and children (irrespective of sex) co-equal with mature/active ones? Are men and women possessive of the commensurate degree of physical, psychological/emotional, social, economic, political, and spiritual status? Even among

males alone this is not tenable much less between women. Again its likelihood gets diminished for facts of physique and women's natural role. But this essay believes that once born, irrespective of gender or sexual characteristics are equally human though with some intrinsic and extrinsic variation in the body quantitative mechanism.

What is Gender Discrimination/Feminism?

But here and there, persons are dealt with on the basis of masculinity or femininity: government policies, sports participation, clothing and design and other forms of social interaction. What therefore is gender discrimination? What are the grounds or perceived causes of it and how plausible are they? Let us make a terse review of some views on these questions.

Generally, discrimination means the ability to judge or recognize what is good, true or desired. But what is of importance here is the social implication of this definition. In this way, discrimination is also the act or "practice of treating somebody or a particular group in society less fairly than others... on the basis of sex, race/color or age".⁴ Most societies are found of one or several form of these kinds. Thus the grounds of such treatment range from biology, role, culture, and nature.⁵ And the causes of this practice are hinged on either some tradition or historical reality of the society where the practices abound. What is perplexing is the fact that although many societies discriminate for one reason or another, nearly all societies discriminate on the basis of sex. This is gender, sex discrimination.

Persuasively, this is why many believe that it is society that, like race and class, establishes the difference between men and women. This is gender, which means "origin or kind ...sex".⁶ the point however is that discrimination on the basis of sex is based on biological condition. This is what rules out society as the foundation of such practice, though it can exacerbate it. Gender cannot be totally successfully independent of biology. There are only two genders, masculine and feminine, for "...in the beginning God made them two: male and female".⁷ one does not need bother himself about the issues surrounding the Biblical account of the purpose and process of woman emerging from man. But gender is a basis of identity, and unlike race and class which are simply social coloration, has a foundation in the biological nature of one's being (for it's not the essence of humanity to be hermaphrodite). No matter how it is construed, woman is, will always be, woman and not man, man is, will always be, man and not woman. And this is the natural unchangeable reality. Gender therefore is natural. Hence "with gender, however, you cannot change your role or move on to another one".⁸ admittedly, the fact of biological difference does not imply inferiority or deficiency, though it is disabling and often is obstacle to some will. Curiously, this condition is internalized as a norm or fact of being.

Perhaps, this is why Shirley Chisholm worries: "Why is it acceptable for women to be secretaries, librarians and teachers, but totally unacceptable for them to be managers, administrators, doctors, lawyers and members of Congress? The unspoken assumption is that women are different. They do not have executive ability; orderly minds, stability,

leadership skills and they are too emotional... women do not have the opportunities that men do....”⁹ On the basis of this, many have called for further legislation and reform to acknowledge and redress the present status of women, especially in the eye of men and society in areas of politics, marriage, and roles.

There is a difference between working for women's emancipation and feminism. While the former refers to mere sensitization of the woman to be alive to her responsibility and take up her role in social engineering, the latter activity pursuant to the removal of discriminatory practices, “woman's right to education, professional training, her equal right to equal pay for work so equal value, her right to vote and be voted for at all elections, as well as a woman's right to practice prostitution and lesbianism”.¹⁰ So approaches to the concept differ from place to place, person to person. Some define it “as an object of concern, that is as women” which implies that any one fighting for women's rights is a feminist; or “as a set of ideas about women”.¹¹ It is broadly conceived as an organized political movement or as a variety of conceptions of the relations between men and women in society, the origins of these relations and how they can change for the better.

Importantly, the idea of feminism and struggle for gender equality is a modern one (having emerged in the West in the 60s and 70s), and very recent on the African continent.¹² This has followed series of developments around the world, including emphasis on human rights, need for population control, and the growing concern with inclusion of women in civil and political activity, amidst growing awareness, rise in women education (and therefore rationality), widespread statutory backings (the UN backed Conference on women in 1985 and the African Charter on human and people's rights) and the very tenets of liberalism and democracy, etc, have all ignited interests in the enforcement of man-woman equality. So struggle for gender equality has ever since been on the rise.

The major point of feminists' argument for gender equality could be summarized in the following terms: that

1. Men and women, irrespective of sex, are equally rational as humans.
2. The existing relations between the sexes, in which women are subordinated to men, are unsatisfactory and therefore ought to be changed.
3. The existing distinctions between the sexes are not only arbitrary but also socially/humanly and culturally contrived, and therefore should be displaced.
4. Everyone, anyone ought to have the opportunity to actualize or fulfill his or her potential.

But a central problem with all the points above and many similar ones is the they obviously fail to trace the root of social and cultural conceptualization of the sexes, that the fact of being a man is no peculiarity it is the fact of being a woman that needs to be explained; woman is not an autonomous being, since she is defined not in herself but in relation to man. This is where the thesis of this article is that the seemingly insurmountable barrier to gender equality is rooted in nature, and is strengthened by culture, at least, as is demonstrable in the Etsako example.

The Etsako of Nigeria

Etsako is a division, a clan in *Afemai*land – comprising of the entire geo-political landscape of the northern part of Edo state, Nigeria. Culturally, Etsako is under clearly defined traditional political structures which foster peace, and are custodians of customs and values. There are villages, each under a Village Head; and several villages under a Clan Head. *Uzairue, Avianwu, Ekperi, Aviele, Auchi, Okpella, Jagbe, and Weppa-Wanno Imiegba*, constitutes some of the member-clans of the 'Etsako division'. These clans have common descent/founding ancestors, history, custom, norms and values. As a border ethnic group in Edo State, Nigeria, *Etsako*-land is bound to the north by Kogi and Benue States; to the East by Anambra State. *Etsako* people are predominantly Christians or Muslims. Despite this, indigenous/traditional idol worship still thrives as elsewhere in Africa.¹³

Genealogically, the term *Etsako* has a symbolic origin. According to a legend¹, the word is coined from other two distinct terms: *etsa* and *eko*. The term, *etsa* is a compound of *otsa*. *Otsa* literally means “one who cuts or hews”. Thus, its plural *etsa* refers to “the people that or who cut...” But 'cutting' or 'hewing' implies an object being affected, hence the term *eko* which means tooth, and its plural *ako*, teeth. From this account, it follows that the compound, *otsa-ako* literally means “one who cuts teeth”, and its plural *ets-ako*, means “the people who cut teeth”. According to Onimhawo,¹⁴ this name is associated with the practice of *Etsako* people to cut a part of the upper incisor of a newly married young female, a kind of artificial gap-tooth, *ofeghene*. *Etsako* migrated from the *Bini* kingdom in the 18th century² historically under the leadership of Aidenomo;^{15,16} to the present resident, the *kukuruku*.¹⁷

In traditional *Etsako*, property and goods are socially defined, and this gives rise to an embryonic and rudimentary ethical code, with a population of about 264, 509 thousand people and 49, 768 households.¹⁸ Females are often given out in marriage. Among the *Etsako*, women are not a primary concern about work, defenses or inheritance. A female cannot be a King or community head. This may sound discriminatory to the feminist. But the truth is that the female does not have the same rights as compared with the son/daughter, even when the female is the eldest child. Females are seen as secondary heirs. This is because they are considered property of another man/family. In the *Etsako* traditional marriage belief/rites, once the bride-prize is paid, the female on whom the prize is paid automatically becomes the property of the family who pays the prize. Thenceforth, the female does not bear the name of the parent family but that of the husband, so that of the parent is temporary, since it is given up at marriage.³

Barriers to Feminism/Gender Equality

The natural and other supervening features that tend to distinguish man (or male) from woman (or female) are already those which irreversibly obliterate any possibility of their (men and women) becoming essentially equal; and this absolute condition is further

¹Personal Interview with Papa V. S. Asekhauno. 72years old Human Compendium of *Etsako* History, Nigeria. August 16, 2002.

²Personal Interview with Pa Bawa, Seriki, 91 years, Nigerian Sage, Ekperi. June 11, 2008

³Personal Interview with Pa Ahmedu, Sule, 81 years, Sage, Okpella. June 11, 2008.

affirmed and strengthened by cultures. They therefore are barriers to gender equality and feminism. Let us review some of these features by classifying them on two grounds: one, nature, which irrespective of place and time, make the essence of man, man, and woman, woman; and two, culture (which strengthens certain aspects of some natural condition).

a. ...built on nature

There are many physical, social, psychological, and even genetic conditions which place men and women in respective statuses. The more obvious are: sexuality and its consequent issues/roles, emotional susceptibility or stability, nutritive complexities, etc.

(i) *Sexuality* First and foremost, any human being is either a man or a woman, never both; man is *man* and not *woman*. This is a physical and biological fact. Thus men are physically different from women, especially in shape and flair. This implies that there exist some special roles along the lines of sex. And these confer ascribe several enablement amidst other disability, still along the lines of sex. So men and women function in different capacities, a condition which also is a foundation for status definition, although arguments¹⁹ may admit with hardly any validity no plausibility of such thought Sex-role differentiation is a basic natural definition of gender inequality for what is not is not, and what is, is.

(ii) *Physicality* The mere possession of unique physical attributes/features does not make men and women unequal. But some condition places, especially women, on a plane to which she must be subservient. One example is the development of mature mammalian glands (breasts). This renders a woman's thoracic region so fragile and delicate that she cannot compete equally favourably with men whose same region is a show of strength. Thus if men and women are equal, they should be able to play in the same game participate in some sport/competition with the same rules and under the same conditions. The case becomes worsened where a women has to breast-feed (looking at the time consumed in the process) a role ascribed by nature. There could be severe pains around the region in the circumstances, pains that neither affect men nor constitute any hindrance to efficiency.

A still worse case is the fact of conception/birth. The period of gestation is debilitating, distressing and disenabling or incapacitating: the womb becomes enlarged and heavy. This affects a woman's performance and attention to duty. If this is not the case, why should there be maternity leave---for pregnant women? Pregnancy renders a woman socially almost irrelevant, for she can neither perform certain functions efficiently nor compete equally with others. Though men cannot be in this condition, they are helpers in mitigating the pains and pangs of gestation discomfort.

Moreover, menstruation is a fact of womanhood and is therefore another disenabling condition. Dysmenorrheal has several inconveniencing and discomforting stress that are also pose some shackles to woman's freedom and social participation. One sad case is where woman has to excuse herself to either change menstrual pads or urgently attend to a flow that just started without warning!

Women can get to menopause at what time they cannot any longer expect to bear children; invariably, the fear of impending menopause can generate untold phobia, a lot psychological perplexities which again can be inhibiting. All these features combine to subjugate woman's physical ability but tailor her to weaker emotions and therefore several biases. Aspects of these physical attributes, biases, weaknesses are either suppressed or emphasized and strengthened by culture. However, they are encumbrances to gender equality and obstacle to feminism.

b. ...built on Etsako and comparative culture

Succinctly put, culture implies a people's way of lifemodes of dressing, feeding, building houses, communication/language, marriage, child rearing, worship, etc. And all these are taught, and transmitted as norms and values; preserved as custom and tradition. Culture, accordingly, defines role and ascendances. In Etsako for example, there are certain roles associated with specific sexes and age; so culture defines personality. These are therefore barriers to individual freedom and personal development, aspiration and expression.

A woman is believed to have been borne out of the *excess* of man, as a helper. So even from creation, a woman is believed to be inferior to man, hence the name woman. If this creationism is true, she then cannot be head of what she was extracted, for it is said that a tree cannot be greater than its planter (just as man can be greater than neither his creator, nor the earth from which he was made). Moreover, in the Quran (4:34)²⁰ it is written that "Men are superior to women on account of the qualities with which God hath gifted the one above the other".²¹ This approach is theological, meaning that man's superiority to woman is divine, metaphysical-base and deterministic. This is a major hindrance to gender equality.

Familiar roles, differentiated by sex and there is a very clear cut sex-base division of labor. As also found in the major religions/cultures of the world, such as Christianity, Islam, and the Oriental, Etsako ascribes mainly domestic roles to women for example, cooking. Seen as woman, (married or not) a female is expected to be the keeper of the home while a male strives to provide for the family. In this case, she is domesticated. This also implies that she would not be trained formally, thus she is unexposed, loss of touch with civilization and newer and changing methods. The woman in Etsako has limited/guided aspiration. Because she is domesticated and dependent, she is subservient. And since culture stamps this, she has little or no channel open for redress.⁴ This is a formidable interference to gender equality.

Even in appearance, as also stressed by Christian or Islamic cultures, the Etsako woman is expected to be dressed covering the "essential aspects" of the body (though Islam emphasizes the entire body, a worse requirement). This inhibits self expression, and the woman therefore cannot do sport such as swimming and athletics. This is compounded by the other artificial ornament/jewelries like the wearing of rings (eye, nose, and ears) and even (tight) in the selection and wearing of certain clothing that could reveal or

⁴Personal Interview with Asekhauno, *Op Cit*

conceal (depending on the individuals conviction) some of the areas of the body capable of igniting emotion; these sometimes impel a (especially African) woman to continually adjust and maintain a particular sitting pattern reminiscent of the historic Hindu *Yoga* posture – and in similar many cultures. The idea of putting women in *Pudah* (as is in Islam) forecloses any possibility of improvement on this condition. Again this is barricade to gender equality.

The identity of a female is transient and contingent. As a young female, she does participate in age-grade activities, a position she forfeits at Manhood celebrations (when such now hold meeting outside their male folks). At marriage, a woman in Etsako changes her surname from her father's to the husbands, for the man is regarded as the head of the household. One could ask why the husband does not change to the wife's (though some variations exist in cultures such as in Ghana). Why must women be honored, cuddled, and delicately treated often by men? Why in the time of trouble must women be the ones to be held by men? Why must men in Etsako pay Dowry on women and not other way (and women relatives received smaller share of the bride are wealth from a married daughter than the male relation)? This fact is aggravated by yet the practice among the Etsako of breaking a small part of an upper incisor of a newly married woman, as a sign of marriage comparable to the modern day wearing of wedding-ring; it indicates to other people that such female is or was once married. Thus a divorcee was/is easily known and stigmatized. Importantly and uniquely, this sign (of non-virginity) spans beyond the particular marriage, even life-long. This again is inhibitive to individuality, freedom and independence on the part of women in Etsako; it is a hurdle to gender equality.

One curious aspect of Etsako conception of the sexes is concerning the treatment of adulterers. In Etsako, women are penalized for adulterous acts, men never. At marriage, a woman is perceived to have surrendered all her rights to her husband, and the man some, for he still has some sexual leverage and liberty. If an aggrieved woman set to be promiscuous (and therefore adulterous) as her husband possibly is, she stands the inevitability of adverse consequences sickness and death of the siblings. More so, women are more frequently accused of witchcraft by men (who also preside at the trial councils at which such cases are heard). Regrettably, these treatments represent sure limitations to and aggravation of women's already needle-tight freedom in Etsako;⁵ they are therefore another set of encumbrances to gender equality.

Many a patriarchal, patrilineal or primogeniture society (such as among the Bini) place high value for male children. This is because a male child is believed to be the posterity of a descent, lineage or family name. He is therefore a heir and principal inheritor of a deceased father's property or estate. Among the Hausas, this type of discrimination is right from birth, for the birth of a boy is “greeted with seven ululations” but for a girl, just three; just on the third day, a boy is started with breast milk, but the girl on the fourth day; so it is when it comes to education and recognition.²² In many cultures, there is less compensation for the murder of a woman than for a man. This of course is a barrier to gender equality.

⁵Personal *Interview* with Salametu Oliegbe, (1985). Elele-sage. June 11, 1985.

In fact, why do we have gender indicators? What about masculine or feminine names and gender distinctions such as man/woman, boy/girl, James/Janet, Tony/Tonia? Why are these distinctions necessary? In short, why is there requirement for indication of sex (male/female) in the completion of data or entry forms? Is it necessary or not? It seems to me that agencies need to be guided with such information so as to be enabled to deal appropriately with psycho-physical emergencies. Consequently, the cost of care for a female could be much higher than that for males. This, again implies that males and females are not equal, an impediment to feminism.

In some cultures, as in Etsako, women are denied some responsibilities as a result of their peculiar nature. For example, women cannot be priest to shrine; they are not allowed entry to holy places during their menstruating period. If menstruation is a necessity to procreation, it ought then to be the holiest of times and therefore revered and cared for by all. Anyway, in either case, whether menstrual period is revered or detested, would be therefore a ground for discrimination, based on sex. This reality is antithetical to gender equality and a hindrance to feminism.

With respect to health, women in Etsako (as in Hausa-land and Islam) are denied several important social interaction (such as shaking hands with males) and several types of food and health-care (particularly during pregnancy); subjected to very health-threatening practices such as genital mutilation, circumcision, early marriage, etc.²³ Cultural validation of these practices is a formidable complication to feminism.

Further Analysis

Nature is commonly believed to be inferior to culture. But this belief is a flawed for culture thrives on the reality of a natural condition. Otherwise why can't man moralize on other animal behaviour? Nature and culture are intertwined but nature takes superiority. Marked differences between genders lie mostly on nature and partially on culture. Justice demands that these differences be respected. Let us imagine a paradigm, to illustrate that two things, A and B, are being allocated to two individuals, C and D in a way that A is given to C, and B to D. Whether justice is done depends on how A's being given to C compares with B's being given to D. In this sense, Aristotle was right in saying that justice involves a proportion in which A is to B as C is to D. It is a requirement both of reason and common thinking about justice that similar cases be treated similarly. That being so, justice is comparative, in which case it demands that if C and D are dissimilar, then A and B must be dissimilar. This explanation is particularly relevant to the contemporary Nigerian situation. If it is true that similar cases be treated similarly, it ought also to be that human beings be treated equally.

A *just* society must promote equality, taking note of certain differences and similarities between its members; it must avoid unwarranted injuries, interference or impoverishment in human dealings. Since the idea of equality is tied to that of justice, society must ensure social, legal, political equality as well as equality of opportunity for its members; protect the rights of one being trampled upon by another's (either by

omission or by commission). Society must so far possible provide equally the conditions under which its members can by their own efforts achieve the best lives of which they are capable. Allied to this principle of equality is the need for the society to evolve criteria of considering right from wrong which is where the question of gender equality lies. Let us illustrate this point.

Suppose that P promises to do Q, and the fact of this promise is usually regarded as ground which makes it right for P to do Q. Two things may therefore be said of P: that it keeps a promise, and that it is right. But the question is, if we are to say P is just, would it be like saying P fulfils a promise or like saying that P is right? An interpretation like this would seem to regard justice as a right-making property, like telling the truth. If this interpretation is correct, then we head for a collision of both the meaning and the criteria of justice, for to say P is just is simply to say that P assigns things in accordance with merit or whatever is taken as the criterion of justice. Thus, rather than saying Q was promised, we say Q was right.²⁴ Therefore in the case of gender equality, it can be said that the simple role of society is to ensure favorable atmosphere for fair expression of individual skill and ability.

On Sartrean ontology, woman's condition, contrary to De Beauvoir's view, is not "in-itself".²⁵ If we go by Beauvoir's conceptualization of woman as "for-itself", it follows that either that women are undefined and thus unlimited by any essential nature, or as passive object, waiting for some imposition of meaning by some subject .a worse condition where women are likable to snail, which may try but cannot cast off its shell; or to the offensive smell of a he-goat, which is in the blood (not skin: otherwise it could be washed off by any detergent. This is the futility of Beauvoir's call for woman's shedding of "bad faith", for she herself recognizes that responsibility for this situation lies, to some extent, beyond women, and that a "woman is determined by the manner in which her body (nature) is and relative to the world (culture) are modified... (and until a change is brought about, which obviously is impossible) no simple change in women's attitude can guarantee their liberty." The same applies to Irigaray's²⁶ attack on Freud's account of ego developmentshe holding that "the little girl is a little man", as well as Julia Kristeva's semiotics²⁷ both of which though are rather more pessimistic than Beauvoir's.

In more recent times, some moral philosophers have held that to say X is right is in some sense to imply that there are good reasons for doing X. Similarly, to say that X is just implies that there are good reasons for doing it. It also implies that these reasons belong to the set of criteria (usually set by a society) for measuring justice. Thus to say that X is just is not simply saying that X has certain properties which are in fact just, but rather that X is right in having these properties. So the word *just* has much of the force of right. At least, it has the force of *prima facie right*, and since the principles of justice are especially stringent, it may be said to have some of the force of *actually right* so much so that we hesitate to say that an act is unjust if it violates a principle of justice but is made right via other moral considerations. But what is meant by the term *right*? It refers to what is recommended or expected, a kind of conformity, backed by reasons generally considered valid.

Conclusion

It is all too common among world cultures (with some exemptions in Oriental mythologies) to conceive of God/gods in masculine tenor; and this tendency is rooted both in nature and culture. Whatever the reason, man is believed to be the source of being and authority. Many things happen to a woman: those outside (physical and cultural); and those inside (nature); and the most far reaching are those inside and outside, which stands her out among all humans. Thus women can do most that men can; but men cannot do the most significant things women can do conception, gestation, and birth. For in any woman is life, and "...blood, no matter how little, constitutes life" not in potency as in men's semen, but in actuality.²⁸ But incidentally or unfortunately, these things also inhibit women, for as DeLillo hyperbolically observes: "Don't you realize that as long as you have to sit down there and pee, you will never be a dominant force in the world? You will never be a convincing technocrat or middle manager...."²⁹ Although developments in science and technology have tended to galvanize some schemes and mechanisms to cope with women's natural disablements; to fit in social participation as man does, and this has increased the tension between old and new outlooks on the relating of the senses to each other, so it's now more than ever essential that women be esteemed not simply as women but as human persons. Thus brides/women are still honourable for perpetuation of family group, through child birth, efficient child care, family organization, and 'psychological stabilizer' to men being uniquely endowed with the only object of man's relentless happiness (and sorrow!), amidst other indispensable roles in human life. One *plausible* counter view to this is to encourage lesbianism with all its insensitive/inorganic mechanisms. Bearing in mind the psychological delusion, agony and bad-faith associated with, and convinced of the need to emerge from such impression women must accept that God created them women, and men, men.

Despite the foregoing and in the strove for women emancipation from purportedly "male contrived servitude", there has been a clash: civilization and modernism in confrontation with cultural accretion. Thus feminism is a fight between tradition and modernity. What is essentially wrong is the quest for special protection for women.

Hence Chisholm, surprisingly though, argues that

Regarding the special protection for women, I cannot understand why it should be needed. Women need no protection that men do not need. What we need are laws to protect working people, to guarantee them fair pay, safe working conditions, protection against sickness and layoffs, and provision for dignified, comfortable retirement. Men and women need these things equally. That one sex needs protection more than the other is male supremacist myth as ridiculous and unworthy of respect....³⁰

Appropriately, if feminists want to disregard their culture-base and natural disablements, they should first abandon and retract the present fruitless/futile fight for equality and simply act their roles for men cannot (compare) begin such struggle, as Gandhi does, saying: "We want men to be equal with women" when nature has made this

impossible.³¹ Otherwise women do not appreciate the unique status and role nature and custom bestow on them but rather seek an illusory task to the extent that some even believe that “women's education is almost more important than the education of boys and men.” Women have found useful engagement in spending time, dissipating energy and expending blood on debate and quest for gender equality. Yet gender inequality/discrimination is a natural phenomenon. Unless immediate, stoic rethink is begun, feminists' agitation would continue on this battle line which itself is rather distracting and more disabling condition or activity.

The increasing tendency for the elimination or suppression of differences between men and women its strongly related to the concept and experience of equality/inequality, (particularly in *Etsako*) as it is developing in most parts of the world. Though gender equality could mean that we are all God's children, that we share the same human-divine substance/heritage, that we are all one and equal before the law, it could mean also that the very differences between individuals, men/women, young/old, and which make them so must be respected; that while it is true that we all share the same humanity, it is also true that each one of us is a unique entity, and is a cosmos by itself. This is why our opening quotation from Queen Elizabeth 1 is worth restating: “*I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king....*”³² Thus the Queen may apply the heart but not the body of a man. And this conviction of the uniqueness of a person as man or woman is irrevocably rooted in human nature... and is fortified by culture; it is only expected and expedient that useful energies be expended on finding ways of coping with or redressing these, if they are truly encumbrances to human gender equality. One possible project in the direction is for us, the gender sensitivists to lobby government/Congress to fund a *National Institute of Dysmenorrheal* (NID), to help stamp out monthly discomforts. In fact, sanitary supplies should be federally funded; and yes, free! Towards this end, a *Department of Dysmenorrheal Services* (DDS) should be set up under the Ministry of Women Affairs/Health with two branch offices/stores each in every local council, (L.G.), Health Care Centers and physical/health/sport shop of every high school throughout the federation (SDDS). It might, in fact, be sattling that female national Ministers should mark days-off duty during menstruation!

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