

THE NOBILITY AND SACREDNESS OF MOTHERHOOD: AFRICAN-EXISTENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Motherhood is an exclusive state for women. It is a gift to the society and a vocation of women at the service of humanity. Mothers are forces to be reckoned with in the society for sustainable human development. They exhibit total disposition to service in unity and love and render humane attention as they exercise leadership in service. Unfortunately, many cultures tend to derogate mothers. This paper gears to discover the nobility and sacredness of motherhood. It x-rays the image of mothers in the society as well as the basic existential truth about them. From various authors as well as African-existential perspective, it discovers the dignity, blessedness and the splendour of the vocation of mothers through their distinctive roles and unique vocation of service in selfless love. It submits that mothers are naturally drawn by sympathy though with high sense of morality and justice. It also reveals that their major roles which are necessitated in their two basic existential forms of their beings as wife and mother dispose them to lovely services. Although cultural attitudes to mothers are not too satisfying at least to the women themselves but fortunately the Church has an esteemed and admirable image of them and upholds motherhood as a sacred and noble state.

Keywords: Motherhood, Nobility, Dignity, Sacredness, African-Existential Perspective

Introduction

Understandably, motherhood is a state of being a mother. But the existential question is, who is a mother? The complexity of human nature and human existence vis-à-vis the multifaceted lifestyles question the actual status of a mother; the state of motherhood. Some thinkers still distinguish motherhood from womanhood. With regard to motherhood, various opinions abound. Thus: any woman, any married woman, any woman who is either married or not but

who has adopted a child or more, any woman who is either married or not but has given birth at least to a child (in case of single parenting), any woman who though not married but serves as a guardian to a child or more, any religious woman who surely is not married but works in either school or likely places where children are steadily under her care is qualified to be called a mother.

Traditionally, mothers are those who are married and have children. In other words, to be a mother is to be married and have children. Thampy also noted that,

Becoming a mother is taking delight in one's life...A mother is distinctly different from just a woman. As she becomes a mother, many meaningful changes happen within her. I do not know how much of this can be understood by a man. When a woman gives birth to a child, she is giving life. As she looks into the eyes of the child, she sees her own self. There is something new in each of the smiles and cries.

This paper examines the nobility and sacredness of motherhood from African-Existential perspective based on the understanding that motherhood is a state of being a mother which mostly occur after giving birth to a child. To be a mother is one of the ultimate yearnings of every woman because motherhood is a noble, sacred and joyful expression of womanhood. Today, many women are not so much eager as in the past to become mothers. Presently, particularly in the Western world, many women are not so much bordered about being mothers. Some married ones are even not interested in giving birth; the exercise that raises them to the status of motherhood. In Africa too, though the percentage is much lower but the longingness to becoming mothers has equally depleted compared to past generations. These call for worry because mothers play very key roles in the family, in the lives of their children and in the society in general. Aristotle (2009) who obviously does not appreciate the significance of women in the society even recognizes this when he hinted that a society cannot be happy unless women are happy too.

Down the epoch, women have been unspeakably treated with contempt, abused, derogated and subjugated in favour of their male counterpart. The statistics are shocking! In substantial part of Africa, the age-long exercise of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) that is purported to keep the emotional life of women in check is still in practice and it is a very horrible experience for women which has very serious implications for marriage and child-bearing. Cindy (2003) disclosed that between 114 and 130 million women have experienced FGM world-wide. The

national victimization survey (2004) also reveals that one in six American women has experienced attempted or completed rape out of which two-thirds are done by people that the victims know. Meyer (2010, pp. 20-21) equally observed that,

The degradation of women is a world-wide problem...every two and a half minutes someone is sexually assaulted...This tragic situation violates God's standard of fairness...one disturbing trend that seems to have increased in strength over the last ten to twenty years is the sex trafficking industry- human beings kidnapped and sold into the sex trade, usually into prostitution rings or worse.

On this note, the American State Department (2005) divulged that nearly 80% of up to 800,000 people that traffic across international borders yearly are women out of which 50% are girls and minors. These experiences greatly affect self-respect and self-esteem of women. Hence, they are afraid of being hurt again or being hurt at all.

Studies on motherhood are limited. This points to the fact that mothers and activities surrounding them have not attracted enough scholars. Motivated by the challenging roles of mothers especially during this period of high independence, individualism and moral decadence, this paper intends to bring to lime light the nobility and sacredness of motherhood from the African-existential perspective. Though the ill-treatment against women have reduced but many of them still lack the necessary confidence and the skills it takes to live out their motherhood to the full. It is the noble and sacred duty of philosophy "to offer a critical outlook and analysis of what it means to be a mother and set strategies for actualization of potentials. True liberation of women is the discovery of feminine qualities that places mothers at the service of mankind. Women [mothers] have proven themselves great enablers of economy through their entrepreneurial skills as they care for their children. They have very subtle powers which are even more influential than the overt masculine authoritarian powers when applied appropriately.

The Image of Women in the Society

It is necessary to present a concise picture of how women are envisioned in the society for better discovery of the nobility and sacredness of motherhood. Right from the ancient time, women are generally conceived as passive citizens in contrast to men who are considered as active members of the society. This

perception about them most often breed ill-treatment against them. Already in classical time, both Aristotle and Plato maintained the view that women are weaker sex and therefore are inferior to men. However, each of them noted the inferiority of women from diverse perspectives. Plato (1997) opined that men and women share the same nature especially with regard to the soul (rationality) which he considered sexless but men are more strongly built in terms of strength and virtue, while women are emotionally weaker; overly emotional, coward, promiscuous, crude, etc. Thus (455d), "women share by nature in every way of life just as men do, but in all of them women are weaker than men." Plato also attributed female-like nature even to men who seem weak and lack emotional stability. So, he stated (Plato, 1997 pp. 42a-b):

Humans have a twofold nature; the superior kind should be such as would from then on be called "man". He added, once again, that men who led bad lives shall be reborn as women. And if a person lived a good life throughout the due course of his time, he would at the end return to his dwelling place in his companion star, to live a life of happiness that agreed with his character. But if he failed in this, he would be born a second time, now as a woman.

Despite these differences, he affirmed that by virtue of the composition of their mind vis-a-vis rationality, men and women have the same ability to education and occupation and therefore, they should be granted equal access to education arguing that they could be even stronger when given the proper training. In fact, it is very necessary that they are taught to do the same thing as men (Plato, 1997) if they are expected to perform the same work as their male counterpart. His reason being that (Plato, 1997 p. 456c), "because you neglect this sex, you gradually lost control of a great many things which would be in a far better state today if they had been regulated by law. A woman's natural potential for virtue is inferior to a man's, so she's proportionately a greater danger, perhaps even twice as great."

Like Plato, Aristotle (Smith, 1983 p. 467) also highlighted that women are of inferior specie. Invariably, he observed this inferiority of women in both their mental and anatomical dispositions. Regarding their mental abilities, he endorsed that higher mental capacity makes men superior over women (Dana, 2008). So, he further submitted that "the relation of male to female is by nature a relation of superior to inferior and ruler to ruled. "In his understanding, mental disposition shapes human behaviours. Against this background, he (1862, p. 608b1) established that:

Women are more mischievous, less simple, more impulsive ... more compassionate ... more easily moved to tears ... more jealous, more querulous, more apt to scold and to strike ... more prone to despondency and less hopeful ... more void of shame or self-respect, more false of speech, more deceptive, of more retentive memory [and] ... also more wakeful; more shrinking [and] more difficult to rouse to action.

Aristotle also found the inferiority of women in what he referred to as their lack of deliberative power. In this case, he compared women to slaves and children. He purported that the slaves entirely lack deliberative ability, while children's own are incomplete. Regarding women, they have it but it lacks the authority to command. To this end, he claimed that man's courage is his power to command and therefore, should rule the woman whose power lies in obeying. With this notion too, he relates that woman's duty is domesticated, while man serves at the public sphere. This is unlike Plato who argued that at least women at the upper class should be assigned public function.

Also referring to bodily temperature, Aristotle asserted that the female body is too cold as to produce viable semen. Therefore, he (Aristotle, 1984, parts II-III) postulated that a woman is:

A deformed male...lacks one constituent...the principle of the soul. For the first principle of the movement...whereby that which comes into being is male, is better and more divine than the material whereby it is female. The male, however, comes together and mingles with the female for the work of generation.

Deduced from Aristotelian description of women (Witt & Lisa (2016) state that, 'matter yearns for form, as the female for the male and the ugly for the beautiful'; that women have fewer teeth than men; that a female is an incomplete male or 'as it were, a deformity'." Along this line of thought, Carson (1995) revealed that Aristotle presented the female world as dark, secret, curved, lack of boundaries and not self-contained against that of male as light, straight, stable, self-contained and firm.

Analyzing this, Tress (1992, p. 307) elucidated that, "the theory proposed in GA, which in outline reads that in generation, the male parent contributes the form and the female parent contributes the matter is adduced by some of Aristotle's critics to show that he regards female as inferior in the process of reproduction."

This Aristotelian treatise on feminine nature earned him the father of Western misogyny, feminist critic and sexism in philosophical tradition. His theory on women influenced a lot of thoughts after him regarding subordination of women. As a matter of fact, his flagrant degradation of women paved way for misogyny and patriarchy, while that of Plato sew a subtle seed that served as a viable framework for feminism (Huber, 2015). With the above understanding, women are excluded from public functions and are relegated to the so-called private realm of affairs; the family. Adjudged to have their rightful place in the house, women are therefore regarded as only but submissive sexual partners meant for reproduction, wives, mothers and house holders such that while men perform public functions and acquire, they keep the house and manage the children.

In recent times, with the evolving trends in the history of human development, women are very sensitive to their being discriminated as weaker sex and they express their feelings of alienation in varied forms. Consequently, they are in constant struggle against patriarchalism as they seek for emancipation and advocate for an egalitarian society. They hunt for recognition by striving to carve unique places in their various societies and at diverse levels. I believe that the kick arose partly as a result of the tension between the many unrecognized and unappreciated tedious domestic works that they perform and the inability of many of their partners to play their roles adequately which brings about detrimental feelings, sufferings of various forms, conflicts and chaos in the family.

Fortunately, many cultures have begun to change such beliefs and demoralizing actions and norms towards women. Today, mothers are gradually gaining reverence and admiration in our society. A lot of them who have been given the opportunity to exercise their abilities at the public realm have succeeded in convincing the society that they are born with bundles of potentials. That some nations entrust powers to their women citizens and crown them presidents, governors, senators, etc. is not without the great confidence that they can firmly give them the best of services with their feminine hearts that are enveloped with compassionate love which fosters yet great sense of morality and justice. In fact, I believe strongly that our seemingly difficult world, nations and states need such spousal and maternal hearts to break away from everything that enslaves genuine love to serve freely and unconditionally in unity with the rest of the members for better changes and rescue of our society. This paper tends to discover the esteemed nature of women, the dignified and sanctified status of

motherhood such that our mothers find ultimate and fulfilled meaning in life and be respected in the culture that tenaciously stick to male dominance.

The Basic Existential Truth about Mothers

Mothers are women and only women are mothers who have the singular grace of being in the state of motherhood, just as in the case of fathers. Although naturally, both parents are in conjugal love and harmony unitedly and indispensably involved in the mystery of procreation, but the exclusive privilege of motherhood accorded to women by nature of their anatomical structure and biological dispositions involves a peculiar communion with the mystery of life; mothers have unique contact with the new life developing in them and are therefore more closely linked with the process of generation. For example, the mother's womb, blood and life forces receive, sustain and nourish the embryo. This biological difference does not make them in any way inferior to their spouses or reduce them to mere reproductive beings as Aristotle would think. Though the genetic constitutions that embodies them male and female surely create essential differences that are responsible for their gender specific behaviours, yet they possess inherent dignity and equality as both are created in the same image and likeness of God. In other words, both of them share equal dignity as human persons. Human dignity therefore commands that members of the society -man and woman alike- be allowed to take part in the decisions that affect them in the climate of genuine freedom. So understood, they complement each other to attain unity in their diversity as they respond to the social roles and automatic division of labour in the family generated by this enormous physiological differences. The grandeur of the sex differentiation demands that each of the gender be accorded the respect due to him or her. Against this background, I found the famous women slogan- "what a man can do, a woman can do it also and even better"- as an inspiration to compete with men and gives a ready-to-fight impression which their very nature abhors. At this point, it becomes necessary to delineate that equality does not mean sameness or exhibiting exact responsibilities. Men are gifted with masculine nature, while women on the other hand are also naturally equipped but with feminine body and soul that account for their extraordinary qualities for motherhood. As Gilligan (1988) observed, women are care-oriented and they achieve this through compassion and empathy.

Today, women have proved themselves very strong and, in most cases, even stronger than men especially with regard to keeping the family; care of children,

provision of their need and keeping the family peace. It is in clear recognition of this fact that the United Nations convened a fourth World Congress on Women (1995, September 4) “to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of humanity.” In furtherance of this the United Nations again (2000) out-listed eight Millennium Goals that must be achieved by all 189-member nations including Nigeria by 2015. Among all the goals were empowerment of women and gender equality which it deemed very vital for restoring the dignity of women for the good of all. Egbekpalu (2017, p. 17) rightly captured it,

The empowerment of women and the achievement of gender equality have both intrinsic and extrinsic values and at the same time they are situated at the heart of the attainment of all the other goals. Particularly, healthy, educated, empowered, employed women with integral formation approach of knowledge and good character can inflame stable constructive development that can efficiently break cycles of poverty; for self, family, nation and world at large as well as improve maternal health and consequently reduce child mortality, etc.

Already in 1993, UN which viewed suppression of mothers and violence against them as waste of resources called for the elimination of violence and any threatening act against women. It declared that violence against women is “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, psychological or sexual harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.” Following this, also the World Health Organization (2007) held an Expert Meeting on the primary prevention of the violence against the intimate partner.

Motherhood as a Noble State

Motherhood is an exalted status but quite unrecognized as a noble profession. Resultantly, many families crack these days because young couples especially ladies among them were not properly trained for the profession to become mothers. Previously, young girls stay often around their mothers, so do young boys around their fathers. Through such close contacts, they are formally and informally educated on marriage issues. The modern lifestyle has simply

depleted such valued practices. This has a very serious implication on the society. That is why many young women are not so much eager to embrace motherhood. Besides, some of our mothers have failed the society. They took a dive regarding family matters. The complexity of human life and economic constraints challenge many of our mothers as many of them who could not harmonize domestic works and career are overwhelmed. However, mothers are still well cherished in many cultures. Reflecting on the nobility of motherhood, Kimball (1978, p. 103) stated,

Each of you should be grateful to be a woman! ... To be a righteous woman is a glorious thing in any age. To be a righteous woman during the winding up scenes on this earth, before the second coming of our Savior, is an especially noble calling. The righteous woman's strength and influence today can be tenfold what it might be in more tranquil times.

The deep sense of satisfaction derived when a woman gets married and is blessed with children clearly points to the fact that motherhood is to a great extent cherished and revered in our society despite the fact that the political and economic conditions of our country tend to weaken this gracious state through so many tensed experiences that even lead to separation and divorce. However, the esteemed vocation of mothers can be traced back to the creation of the first woman Eve, the mother of all the living to the redemptive role of the Blessed Mother Mary and in the spousal and maternal role of our present mothers, of course naturally linked to their genetic endowments.

The distinctive roles of a mother are found in the two basic existential forms of her being, namely; as a wife and as a mother. As a wife she is a true life-companion in the spirit of loyalty, honesty, faithfulness, commitment, etc. As a mother, she is a watchful companion with motherly care and motherly love. She also has the sacred task of educating and nurturing her children. This is mostly achieved through her availability, patience, self-donation and oblation (matyrdom). Pondering on the education and nurturing of children, Bahá (1982 p. 139) expounded,

Today it is obligatory for the loved ones of God, and their imperative duty, to educate the children in reading, writing, the various branches of knowledge, and the expansion of consciousness, that on all levels they may go forward day by day. The mother is the first teacher of the child. For children, at the beginning of life, are fresh and tender as a young twig, and can be trained in any fashion

you desire. If you rear the child to be straight, he will grow straight, in perfect symmetry. It is clear that the mother is the first teacher and that it is she who establisheth the character and conduct of the child.

So, he exclaimed (p. 320), "O ye loving mothers, know ye that in God's sight, the best of all ways to worship Him is to educate the children and train them in all the perfections of humankind; and no nobler deed than this can be imagined."

Motherhood is a gift to the society and a vocation to the service of humanity. Mothers are forces to be reckoned with in the society for sustainable human development. They exhibit total disposition to service in unity and love and render humane attention as they exercise leadership in service. However, they expect that certain modicum of acceptance of their unalloyed sacrifices be expressed in simple incentives such as appreciations, health care benefits, financial, emotional and even psychological supports, love and attention especially from their husbands and children, true companionship, respect, faithfulness and no form of violence especially from their partners, etc.

Mothers are hereby cautioned that compromising of motherly tender love and care can result to loss of prestige of motherhood which can lead to loss of touch of feminine nature and endowments, loss of respect, nobility, dignity and sacredness of motherhood. It can also endanger one's life and that of others as well as jeopardizing physical, psychological, social, economic and spiritual wellbeing. Therefore, mothers should be guided by the following principles of 4C^s:

- C- Conviction- Be convinced that they are graceful and noble mothers
- C- Commitment- Be committed to their motherly roles
- C- Consistency- Be consistent in their duties despite all odds
- C- Certainty- Be certain of their great reward both here on earth and in heaven

Motherhood as a Sacred State

Motherhood is at God's eternal plan. Right from creation, God has significantly honoured women. For this very reason, mothers are at the heart of the Church. As a matter of fact, the Church is being referred to as a Mother- 'the Mother Church' especially in the catholic tradition. In the salvific life of Christ, women were very much recognized in the most important events of human salvation. The holy lines bear witness to the fact that creation was not complete without a mother (the creation of Eve). Adam became happy and fulfilled at the sight of a woman. Thrilled by the presence of Eve, Adam exclaimed (Gen. 2:23), "this one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called 'woman' for out of 'her man' this one has been taken." Adam seems to have said, at last, someone I can love "one of my bone..." my other self, etc. So delighted, he gave her a name *wo-man* because she was made out of him (man). Although the old testament did not exalt women as such but in the new testament, women were so much recognized and appreciated. Just a few significant events:

Motherhood is at the core of salvation as God chose to come into the world through a mother (Mary's maternal "FIAT"). Therefore, at the heart of salvation was the blessed Mother Mary (Lk. 2: 1-20) who gave birth to Christ, the Saviour, nurtured him and followed him even unto death. Here again, the care and resilience of a mother manifest themselves. Women of Jerusalem (Lk. 23: 28-31) also played significant roles during the passion and death of Christ. Mary Magdalene and other women (Jn. 20:1) out of care typical of mothers visited the tomb on the resurrection morning and they were privileged to be the first to experience the risen Lord and to announce his resurrection. Motherhood was the basis for the sacrament of holy matrimony especially in the catholic tradition. Exodus (20:12) advised, honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you."

The Supreme Pontiff John Paul II was one of the greatest minds that touched the sacred root of the vocation of women. With his Apostolic Letter to women *MULIERIS DIGNITATEM* on the Dignity and Vocation of Women given on the occasion of the Marian Year that he inaugurated on June 7, 1987 and concluded on August 15, 1988 he elevated mothers to a splendid status in the society. The Holy Father captured motherhood as a divine call to love with the "genius of feminine heart" and delineated that "motherhood implies from the beginning a special openness to a new life where the woman discovers herself through the sincere gift of self" (MD, 18).

Mothers are custodians of life and are gracefully full of feminine characteristics; the vocation that dispose them to love. They live by heart which is the seat of feeling, kindness and love. Though they are often drawn by sympathy, yet with great sense of morality and justice. They have the resilient ability to endure and stay on in patience in spite of great difficulties and tensions. they bear eloquent witness to love that can change our society (the world needs their loving services in nation building). The functions and interests of mothers must be protected because they are precious possessions of our nation. Smoot (1999, p. 94) declared,

Each of us has a vital role, even a sacred mission to perform as a daughter in Zion. ... It is our destiny to rejoice as we fill the earth with greater kindness and gentleness, greater love and compassion, greater sympathy and empathy than have ever been known before. It is time to give ourselves to the Master and allow Him to lead us into fruitful fields where we can enrich a world filled with darkness and misery...I suggest that you ... humbly ask the Lord what he would have you do and why you are uniquely suited to serve. Ask yourself questions like these: 'What can I contribute?' 'Why was I chosen to be the mother of these children?

Motherhood as viewed from African-Existential Perspective

Motherhood in African culture is an elevated position. In fact, every meaningful African young lady aspires to settle down in marriage after her basic education. In the past years, young girls are prone to good moral behaviours because all eyes are on them and they are being recommended for marriage as they grow and mature. Emecheta (2008, p. 29) hinted that "there is nothing that makes a man prouder than to hear that his daughter is virtuous...when a woman is virtuous, it is easy for her to conceive." Of course, marriage in African setting especially in Igbo-Nigeria is a sacred affair that enlarges family coasts, unites families, clans, villages and even towns. It is usually very well celebrated. It marks the ultimate maturation of a woman and characterizes her a full responsible adult with deserved respect. In view of this, almost every woman longs for a fulfilled life as a decent wife and an accomplished mother. Parents feel so fulfilled in life to see their children get married and have their own children. The presence of grand children and great grand children gives immeasurable joys and their visits are usually celebrated because also they visit

at significant occasions. On this note, Emecheta (2008, p. 254) educates that “the joy of being a mother is the joy of giving all to your children...for what else could a woman want but to have sons who would give her a decent burial?” Relating from her personal African experiences however, she (Emecheta 2008 p. vii) regrettably pointed out that,

Mothers work to empower the lives of others, she forfeits her own self-reliance. Her many strengths and capacity for endurance go into the reproduction of a social world in which her own role remains marginalized...we continue to live in societies where the rights as opposed to the duties of mothers and other child-rearers remain under-recognized and poorly theorized, including within feminism and other women rights movements.

Mothers burn themselves like candles in order to give light to their children, suffer with them and endure a lot for their sake. This sacrifice begins significantly with pregnancy, breast feeding and continuous nurturing of the child. It is a noble task, the most noble responsibility on earth. With motherhood, women enter into eternal partnership with God. Motherhood is a living reflection of Mary, Mother of all mothers. Therefore, it is a unique privilege, a dignified state of life, a career, total donation of self (a sacrificial love). Motherhood is an art because it teaches mothers how to do many things- they become nursing mothers naturally and automatically by virtue of their nursing their babies and learn so many nursing skills including prescribing and administering drugs for minor and sometimes major sickness. They serve as educators, moral instructors, character and conscience moulders and make their homes serve as chapel and sanctuary for their little children. It is actually the art of executing so many things that made them be admired. Thampy (2011, 65-67) admirably illustrated this art of motherhood. Thus:

As the child keeps growing, she too grows with him/her...what can make motherhood a burden is lack of this awareness. Motherhood can be compared with running on burning embers...That in reality is the thirst of motherhood. The maternal heart is the alchemist that transforms pain into bliss...A mother does not have a single night of uninterrupted sleep. It is one thing to give birth to a child, but it is quite another to become a mother. Any woman can deliver a child but becoming a mother is a great art that calls for wisdom...the woman continues the work of the creator, the greatest act and

creativity on earth...every child born is crude and unrefined. It has to be made into a cultured human being and taught the ways of the convention of human life. That is the demanding task...the responsibility that a mother must shoulder joyfully.

In a typical African society, mothers are expected to be well behaved, be good wives, do not speak when their elders (men) are talking. Their male counterparts, however, have enormous amount of freedom. A lot is expected of African mothers. If a child behaves well or not, it is attributed to the mother. Mothers are significantly responsible for their children in terms of behaviour more than fathers. This places a lot of responsibilities on women with regard to family chores and children upbringing. This domestic responsibilities accounts heavily for their low public career achievements and under-representation in politics and public services. However, mothers are well appreciated mostly by their children and grannies. Egbekpalu (2021, pp. 9) established that,

Often children's affinity goes more to their mothers for obvious reasons. As such, mothers are more celebrated than fathers in most cases. Mothers are like gods to their children. As wives, they bring in their own people more into the family than their husbands. Women organizations prove very much stronger than men's organizations in various settings and levels across the nation. The Umu-okpu/Umu-ada (traditional women wing) union especially in South-East Nigeria is a very strong and cohesive one. A girl is handled delicately because she is considered as an egg-cooked or raw. The pregnant women are usually very much respected. Many men succeed or fail in life, thanks to female siblings and or wives and even friends. We often hear that behind every successful or unsuccessful man, there is always a woman.

Highlighting the noble state of African mothers, she (p. 10) also divulged a few instances of matriarchal dominance that mothers enjoy:

In traditional African setting, those days with polygamy, children are usually identified with their mother's name. In Ohafia area (Abiriba) for example, the practice of matrilineal inheritance rules. In most African cultures, the *Ada-s* (first born females) have and exercise very serious powers in their parental families even after

they have been married out. In African-Igbo culture too, the *Ada-s* are so well respected and are involved in some important family decisions. In some cultures, men can't dismiss their wives without the approval of 'umu ada' (traditional women union of the kindred) and they can't even enter the kitchen unless with the support of your sisters. The current ugly experience of widowhood in Africa is out of greed and wickedness.

Africans live to the full the biblical injunctions of conjugal union to fill and multiply the earth. In many African cultures, a marriage that lacks conjugal fruit can lead to polygamy. Child-bearing is a significant part of marriage without which it is not complete or fulfilling. Often times male children are desired more than their female counterparts for the purpose of setting the family forth.

Conclusion

This paper concludes with the wise thought and reflection on the nobility and sacredness of motherhood (Mckay, 1954 pp. 453–454). Thus:

[The] ability and willingness properly to rear children, the gift to love, and eagerness ... to express it in soul development, make motherhood the noblest office or calling in the world. The noblest calling in the world is that of mother. True motherhood is the most beautiful of all arts, the greatest of all professions. She who can paint a masterpiece or who can write a book that will influence millions deserves the plaudits and admiration of mankind; but she who rears successfully a family of healthy, beautiful sons and daughters whose immortal souls will be exerting an influence throughout the ages long after paintings shall have faded, and books and statues shall have been destroyed, deserves the highest honour that man can give.

Mothers are tremendous and thrilling! The whole world is called to appreciate the gift of motherhood. Mothers, should be loved and cherished for their noble and sacred duties. Through philosophical enlightenment, education and other empowerment channels, mothers themselves should tap into their inner cores to discover their inner strengths as well as how noble and sacred they are. As

Smoot (1999) advised, every mother has a thread to weave in the tapestry of time. Each mother should therefore discover her thread and begin to weave.

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