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WOMANHOOD, MENSES AND LEGISLATING ON THE PANGS OF DYSMENORRHEA: AN ESSAY IN AFRICAN PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL POLICY

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Abstract

Menstrual condition is a fact of womanhood, a source of discomfort but also the posterity of humanity. It is uncommon to think that if men had been natured in the way typical of women, the existing social or interpersonal, legal, political and cultural perceptions of menses would have been unpalatable to them – though this sounds male chauvinism. However, one cannot but recognize the fact that feminine physiological and physical natures and roles so definitively make a woman a unique being; this uniqueness inevitably and inextricably put women in the shackles of nature – with little physical/personal and social freedom. It is this idea of un-freedom that makes the woman condition worse in most African cultures – where women are mostly regarded as nothing but wives and keepers of the home; some religious tenets tend to worsen this condition. With this natural and social background, women's quest for gender equality seems unnecessary. This article argued that justice demands that society recognizes the unique nature and role of woman to humanity and so should fashion out definite programme to mitigate the pangs dysmenorrheal. Hence it proposed that the burden of contemporary African states is the need for and an enhancement of increased government, funding and caring for the menstruating woman; indeed a new legislation (in the formula proposed in this work) on social management of the pangs of dysmenorrheal is an urgent desideratum.

Key words: *dysmenorrhea; hypothesis; humanity/gender-role; jurisprudence; legislation*

"Since nature 'burdens' women with menstrual condition and gestation, the society ought to be part of the efforts to mitigate its eventual pains and pangs."
An Afemai Sage, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

"Snake! Short snake! Help!" exclaimed Ikpemosi, as she scrambles out of her thronged hostel room in her Nigerian university. The suddenness of her outburst, the skill in placing the books she was handling, the swift but unusual change in her physiognomy and the briskness of her reactive activity impelled her two female roommates and other two male visitors to take her seriously, so they all scrambled to escape for safety. In an illusory display of brevity and with a stick in hand, Etse (her brother, on visit) hampered back to the door of the room, panting and murmuring: "Where, big or small? Show me; let's smash its head…!" As the other boy queued behind him while the girls did not look back, racing away, never to return

REVIEW

to the room in three days! On discovering that Ikpemosi's "snake" was simply a wall gecko, they simply told her to stay off the room as the "snake" was a "poisonous Python"! The foremost question in the mind of the boys was: Why should the females expect the males to battle the dangerous situation? By her very nature and power of menstrual blood, ought not a woman to be better able to confront physical obstacles/dangers to the expression of her individuality rather than invite even the weakest man around? They thought and wondered. Hence, having "killed the snake" and devoid her new stew and soup, Etse and his friend, Oshio, encouraged Ikpemosi and her mates back to the room after two nights off. In my mind, Etse and his friend's thoughts were more philosophical than unfounded – reflective of human nature and rationality.

Every woman is saddled with a nature and some natural roles that make her indispensible in the posterity of humanity; and one of such natural condition is menstrual cycle and ovulation. Sadly, the society has never appreciated the importance of woman's nature; otherwise, everyone, particularly the State, ought to be involved in the up-keep of woman's natural inconveniences. In the following paragraphs, we shall point out that one radical way the State can be involved in achieving this is to generate legislation recognizing its reality/relevance and arrogate the care of dysmenorrheal. After all, here and there, persons are dealt with on the basis of masculinity or femininity: in making government policies, involvement in sports, selection of clothing and designs, and many other forms of social reality; legislating to enhance the woman condition is in line with this tradition; and is not discriminatory. This is because, if men could menstruate (allow their balls wrapped up in some balloon sack at the base side of the elongated penis inserted with a pipe to allow waste-flow like one suffering from some prostrate condition), they would have easily be demobilized.

However, traditional African law and morality do consider women in some physical, moral and spiritual light. Hence a woman, in African consideration, is held only in relation with a man – her husband; a dealing one could say is biased – a situation which has become more necessary just as the role of women has become more and more necessary or agitated; this fact should be appreciated. To understand the issues surrounding the claims above, one needs to put to perspective the following terms.

Dysmenorrheal: This is a technical term and rarely used in place of menstruation (a woman's monthly discharge/flow of unfertilized ovum/blood through the vagina). It means pains during menstrual period (Calis 2014). It is here used as such but preferred because it lacks the emotion ignited by the term menstruation.

Law is taken to mean the written or unwritten body of rules largely derived from rational necessity, custom and formal enactment which are recognized as binding among those persons who constitute a community or state, so that they shall be imposed upon and enforced among those persons as appropriate sanctions. Law is a system of standardized norms regulating human (and governmental) conduct (Horgan 2006, p. 221).

Africa, as the well known continent of mixed races, is here referred to as the black world, south of the Sahara and stretching to the modern South Africa. These people share so much social and philosophical patterns and practices in common. These areas are here referred to under the canopy of their various states and Regional State unions with legislative powers/instruments.

Jurisprudence: The study of the general or fundamental elements of a particular legal system as opposed to its practical or concrete details. It means the study of the first principles of the law of nature (Garner 2009, p. 932–933).

African jurisprudence: This here refers to the conception and imputation of the fundamental values of the black race, south of the Sahara and stretching to the modern South Africa, here referred to under the canopy of their various states and Regional State unions with legislative powers, in the formation/ formulation of their laws and statutes.

Legislation: This shall be taken in two ways, to mean: 1. the process of making or enacting a positive law in written form, according to

some type of formal procedure, by one or group with legislative power; 2. the law so enacted (Garner 2009, p. 982).

Sexuality and gender sensitivity

Generally, discrimination implies the ability to judge or recognize what is good, true or desired. It is the social implication of this definition that is important to this discussion; for in defining it that 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" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 2005). Most societies are fund of one or several forms of this kind. Thus the grounds of such treatment range from biology, role, culture, and nature (Roberts 1997, p. 13–14). 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. Discrimination is essential to adequate social organization. This is because we make choices – in friendship, policy making, electing leaders and other dealings.

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 (Webster New World Dictionary... 1978); it also means the "social and psychological characteristics attributed to men and women" (Pierson and Thomas 2010, p. 239). The point however is that discrimination on the basis of sex is based on biological condition, and it is not actually discrimination. 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" (Gen. 1:27). 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 and will always be woman, not man; man is, and will always be man, 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" (Roberts 1997, p. 15). 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 (1969) 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..." 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. However, Chisholm's worry has been overtaken by recent developments as women now have risen to highest positions as even presidents of prominent States and unions and executive directors as against Chisholm's times. This is possible because the problem noted by Chisholm was social in nature; other worries rooted in nature persist.

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 – such as "woman's right to education, professional training, her equal right to equal pay for work as 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" (Tsikata 1997, p. 19). So approaches to the concept of feminism 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" (Tsikata 1997, p. 22). 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.

But a central problem with all the points raised above and many similar ones is that 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. The fact is that the seemingly insurmountable barrier to gender equality is rooted in nature, and is strengthened by culture; the trend has for too long been until recently the basis for most legislations and traditions. If we recognize the role of woman in humanity, we must also recognize the urgent need to make positive amends. And what can be done about it is to help woman with some coping capacity in form of enabling positive legislation.

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 the same; and this absolute condition is further affirmed and strengthened by cultures and constitutions. They therefore are barriers to gender care. Yet women are endeared by their unique natures and roles in humanity. Let us adumbrate some of these unique features.

Fragile physicality biologists and scientists have shown that the physicality of a woman is weaker than that of a man. This condition especially places women on a plane in which vis-à-vis man, she appears to be subservient. One ground of this brittle physicality is the development of mature mammalian glands (breasts). This renders a woman's thoracic region so frail and delicate that she cannot compete equally favorably with the sturdiness and robustness of men whose same region exemplifies strength. The case becomes worsened where a woman has to breast-feed (looking at the time consumed in the process) a role ascribed by nature. In the process there could be severe pains around the region in the circumstances; pains that neither affect men nor constitute any hindrance to their efficiency.

A still worse case is the fact of conception/birth. It is observable that the period of gestation is debilitating, distressing and disenabling or incapacitating for a woman: the womb becomes enlarged and heavy. This affects a woman's efficiency, performance and attention to duty. If this is not the case, how else do we account for 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 should be helpers in mitigating the pains and pangs of gestation discomfort.

Womanhood and menses

The most debilitating fact about woman is menstruation, and is a fact of motherhood. Menstruation is not only a fact; it is a biological and therefore scientific one. One of the most distinctive feature characteristics of humanity is the verity of menstruation, a unique feature of a female human being. Menstruation is a stage in the menstrual circle when an unfertilized ovum disintegrates, breaks, and it's discharged from the woman's uterus as waste through the vagina. It is a natural process. Menstruation is a mark of feminine maturity, and it is so significant for humanity. In an important way, it is a sign of puberty and female fertility, that one can be fruitful in respect of child-bearing. In this respect, menstruation is a blessing, and breeds a sort of psychological satisfaction to one, such that any female who is considered as having come of age but does not menstruate is considered as biologically and medically deficient. Among such grown female-folk therefore, one would pray and hope for menstruation. That is why in most traditional African communities/cultures, like Afemai in Nigeria, mothers often are inquisitive of their daughters' proclivity to menstruation, and it is a monthly pry until such daughters marry. In this way, menstruation is a blessing to the one who is thus fortunate. It, therefore, has a religious-spiritual connotation. Would it mean that if men could menstruate, then it would be they who could give birth? Or do we simply say it would be menstruation for its own sake, in which case it will lack the reproductive essence which it presently has as in the case

of women? Just imagine one simultaneously on menses, having to urinate while easing her bowels! However, since menstruation is a fact of womanhood, it is therefore another of her disenabling condition. Dysmenorrheal has several inconveniencing and discomforting stress that also pose some shackles to woman's freedom and social participation. One very pitiful experience is where woman has to excuse herself to either change menstrual pads or urgently attend to a flow that just started without prior warning! You can only imagine the stains and fumes arising from an unpadded flow; or the offensive smell of tainted but enduring flow – which could pose serious health risk to all around her, and therefore can lead to the evolution of some disease outbreak!

Again, in religious and spiritual circles, menstrual period is often considered as a time of impurity, since it involves the shedding of human blood. Despite the naturalness and the necessity of menstruation, menstruating women are, on the ground of impurity, often restrained from entering perceived holy grounds. This is why in some African cultures (again, as among the Afemai of Nigeria), women are not allowed to be priests at shrines, and this is manifested in the contention in some religious denominations about the degree of involvement of the woman in spiritual affairs (Asekhauno 2002, personal communication). Again, husbands often avoid coital union with their spouses during menses still on this ground of impurity. But since menstruation is a sign of fertility, and fertility is a sign of maturity, menstruation is a sign maturity. Fertility is God's; and God is holy. How then can menstruation period be considered impure and unholy? In fact, it ought to be the holiest period of the month.

Certainly menstruation is a period which marks the end of one menstrual circle and the onset of another, a significant period which serves as a guide as to when is the most likely period that fertilization and conception can take place. Depending on the woman, fertile periods can be calculated before, during, or after menstruation. Since every woman has her fertile/safe period every month, the beginning and the end of menses offers the basis for such calculation, a calculation that is useful for natural family planning/child spacing; such calculation is also useful for men (especially the non-strong) to guide against wastage of semen all through the month, the year!

However, women at some age cease to menstruate, 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, the society can help standardize ways of placating or mitigating the attendant pains and pangs of these discomforts.

A new proposal for an African legislation on menses and the pangs of dysmenorrheal

From the preceding facts, it could be safely claimed that menstruation is an invaluable gift not only to women, but to the entirety of humanity. If there is no menses, fertility calculation would be impossible; unfertilized ova would be retained in the female-human anatomy and this would constitute an impregnable threat to the victim and entire humanity. Thus without menstruation, humanity would go extinct. Yet the posterity of humanity is a desideratum; menstruation implies the posterity of humanity; therefore menstruation is a desideratum. It is the apparent validity and soundness of the above argument that inclines me to feel that since woman bears the frame for the preservation of humanity, she therefore should be cared for, honored and esteemed.

Consequently, in the grope towards an African legal system, this article canvasses Gloria Steinem's (1995) hypothesis and stipulates that since women menstruate:

Menstruation should be regarded and declared as an enviable, boast-worthy, feminine event: Women should brag about it, talking about how long it takes and how much allowance accruable.

Girls should mark the onset of menses, that longed-for proof of womanhood, with religious ritual and stag parties.

Congress should fund a National Institute of Dysmenorrheal, 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 or Health should be created with two branch offices/stores each in every local council, (L.G.) health centre and physical/health/sport shop of every high school throughout the federation, (SDDS).

In fact, female national Ministers should mark days-off duty during menstruation.

Female radicals, left-wing politicians, and mystics, however, may insist that men are equal, just physically different; and that any man can enter their ranks if only he will be willing to self-inflict a major wound every month – you must give blood for revolution – and recognize the prominence of menstrual issues, or subordinate his selfness to all women in the Cycle of Enlightenment.

TV shows should be mandated to treat the subject at length, about daily issues arising from menses, for example: 'Happy Days': Etse and Otse try to convince Ikpemi that she is still 'The Ikpemosi', though she has missed two periods in a row. And so should newspapers be mandated to dedicate at least a page to herald menses news, e.g.: SHARK SCARE THREATENS MENSTRUATING WOMEN...). So also should be movies: "Ikpemosi and Oshio in 'blood sisters'"!

Government Ministries, Congresses and Agencies should be mandated to stipulate that menstruation is the sole qualification for the following: employment into State Civil Service; allotment of residential space in Government Quarters and school Hostels; allocation of land or C.E.O.; award of Driver's License; granting of National and International passport; permission for inter-state travels; participation at national festivals and sport; admission into museums, national centers, and even public schools! I know even radicals would advocate menstruation as a sine qua non for participation in the political process! (Steinem, 393–394). In fact, our nations' football Administrators should go ahead and get female coaches and trainers whose sole qualification is the evidence of high frequency of or unceasing menstruation!

Menstruating women should be at leverage to marry at once many as possible husbands, reversing the Sharia and other traditional law on marriage! Let her be the hewer of wood, the driver and the gardener!

And since a woman knows her weakness, strength, when and how to adjust accordingly rhythmically, let her stay-up there in the (master's) mistress' bedroom while the men, rather, should be objects... waiting to be worked upon by women, qeefing and grunting at will! Let the man lie down there, on a bed carved and arranged by a woman, helplessly, strong, though, like the dry wood on my late father's farm-land told that it would be cut the next day! Let every woman rise up bravely and kill the 'snake' in Ikpemosi's room and encourage her male friends. Every woman should protect and physically defend her family. The base is menstrual power.

Apparently, our proposal involves that young females from the age of 13–20 be under school administration of the DDS, and those from 21 years under the LG DDS until they achieve menopause (at maximum, 45 years) – which should be celebrated. Again, this suggestion indicates that seriously, every woman matures at the age, 45 years, and, therefore, achieves freedom and final responsibility; then, she is most available for maximum social participation.

A legislation of the sort canvassed above could be very helpful. But curiously and despite the apparent desirability of this line of thought, many (Chisholm 1969) surprisingly, had claimed 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... (163).

Regrettably, this and similar arguments do not value the fruitiness of women to humanity. Nevertheless, the preceding formulations could be justified. First justice demands that gender differences be acknowledged. 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' being given to 'C' compares with 'B' 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. If it is true that similar cases be treated similarly, it ought also to be that human beings be treated equally regarding their basic natures.

Although a just society must promote equality and welfare of its members, 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.

On Sartrean ontology, woman's condition, contrary to de Beauvoir's (1953) view, is not "in-its-elf". And 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 external 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 futility applies to Irigaray's (1974) attack on Freud's account of ego development – holding that "the little girl is a little man"; as well as Julia Kristeva's (1984) semiotics – both of which though are rather more pessimistic than Beauvoir's.

Further analysis and justification

Many things happen to a woman: those outside (physical and cultural); those inside (natural); and those most far reaching ones which are both inside and outside – which stand her out among all humans. Thus, women can do what men can do, but men cannot do the most significant things women can do – menstruation, natural conception, gestation, and birth. For in any woman is life, and "...blood, no matter how little, constitutes life" (Imoru 2008, p. 82) not in the state of potency unlike men's semen, but in actuality. But incidentally or unfortunately, these things also inhibit women, for as DeLillo (1982) 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..." 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 never essential that women be esteemed not simply as women but as human persons. Thus, brides/women are still honorable for perpetuation of lineage through child birth, efficient child care, family organization, and 'psychological stabilizer' to men – being uniquely endowed with the only object of man's source and relentless happiness (and sorrow!), amidst other indispensable roles in human life.

Obviously, the huge appeal and desirability of our proposal could even prompt prospective menstruating females to contrive an extended menstrual period and even lie about its status or reality; but the authenticity of every claim could easily be determined by most available technology; so further legislature should regard deceit and false claims. It is near obvious that implementing a programme such

as this might be too expensive, could attract male protests/dissention, and hence the proposal won't work. But the State is not one individual. It has enormous resources; if it can afford luxurious jets, mansions, automobiles, and wealth for its officials, presumably ostensibly, why can't it afford to care for her "indispensable" citizens? Again, one might feel that this proposal makes unrealistic demands of the state and human nature; and that if the state must care for the upkeep of dysmenorrheal, it ought also to extend the same hand to the disabled in the society. But I think that the all important and universal nature of menstrual condition stands it out among other issues of social concern, and this thus ranks it higher.

On the other hand no doubt, the proposal would seem unacceptable to defenders (such as Nozick 1974 and Rothbard 1977) of libertarian justice – who would argue that the ultimate social ideal is liberty, and this ideal is said to support a right to private property and not a right to welfare; that any state involvement in the upkeep of menstrual inconveniences seems to be an affront to and a pry into individual private life and liberty. Nevertheless, if one recalls the usefulness and relevance of menstruation to the individual vis-à-vis the preservation of humanity, which is the ultimate reason for which man subordinates himself to social authority, norms, values and laws, then we can reconsider reject the liberalist position and consider that social involvement in the easing of menstrual agonies is state obligation. Although my arguments here are clear expressive subjectivist ones, we must try to rationalize them. However, the trueness of menses and its personal impact and social relevance absolves me of subjectivism.

Therefore, there is so much merit in my line of argument. First, this position is perfectly in approval of welfarist tendencies and thus would easily appeal to tenets of welfare/liberal, socialist, and even of perfectionist justice and their defenders. For example, defenders of socialist justice, such as C. B. Macpherson (1973); and Kai Nielsen (1985) would approve of any principle that upholds equality as the ultimate political ideal, an ideal which is said to support a right to self-development but not a right to private property (Sterba 1986, p. 10). Therefore since it is the government that provides the enabling atmosphere for the promotion of this ideal, the state's support for the care of dysmenorrheal is in line with this ideal. The welfare of citizens is the goal of the state. So uplifting the welfare of citizens by providing for the easing of menstrual pangs is fair and just. Also, the position of this essay is compatible with the tenets (and defenders such as John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin) of welfare liberal justice: that fairness is the ultimate political ideal, an ideal which is said to support a right to basic welfare and a right to equal opportunity (Sterba 1986, p. 5). This is because, judging from the fact of the personal and social relevance of menstruation, caring for the affected is a basic need. So it is to the defenders of perfectionist justice, such as Alasdair MacIntyre and John Finnis, who believe that the common good is the ultimate socio-political ideal – an ideal which is said to support a virtue base conception of human flourishing (Sterba 1986, p. 15).

The ideal of this discussion could be strengthened by referring to Beverley Strassmann's ground-breaking paper on menstruation featured in the context of personality and identity over the life cycle entitled "A woman's curse?" (2008). As have been noted earlier, Small (2008, p. 55) argues that, following the work of Beverly Strassman on the study of west African Dogon, menstruating women converge for a rite of passage or cycle rebuilding in Dogon huts built outside village walls. As they crowd each night into a small cramped menstrual hut as they believe as do Dogon men, they held that their condition is a danger to the male folk and to the gods. Disaster may befall their village if they fail to conform. Another explanation adduced by the study and observation showed that the custom serves as an overt sign of menstruation for women in Dogon and related societies. The study also point out why Dogon women menstruate less when compared to western women. For example, Dogon women menstruate about 110 times during their fertile lives; but western women do so approximately 350–400 times on the average in a life time (Small 2008, p. 61).

The issue is that a female biology in a natural – fertility population such as Dagon of Mali in West Africa is best in a natural bio-cultural situation. Making babies is cultural and a grand part of the biological adult life

in Dogon. In so doing, Strassman has helped us to understand the connection between the physiology of women and the strategies men and women use to exploit the physiology for their reproductive ends. In Dogon as elsewhere, mensuration is endorsed as a taboo and a means to track down in a life time of a woman her prepubescent, pregnancy, lactating or menopause cycles. But women in industrialized cultures have more than three times as many cycles – reaching early menarche time (12 years), having fewer babies and lactate hardly at all. According to Strassmann findings, some strangely held beliefs about female biology are altered when natural populations or traditional societies are contrasted with industrialized ones immersed with scientific hormonal control measures such as contraceptives. For instance, the female body, Strassmann noted, is biologically designed to spend more time in lactation amenorrhea than in menstrual cycling. When more menstruation is induced through contraceptives (birth control) altering hormone levels and ovulation therefore women's genital bleeding, reproductive cancers will be common as it is in the west today which the body is ill prepared from evolution.

If there is an adaptive value to menstruation, it is a strategy to conserve the body's resources, claims Strassmann (2008, p. 62). It is because, women in industrialized cultures are at odds with women's naturally evolved biology, and the differences lead to greater risks of reproductive cancers (The Science, 1999). As given, and across cultures, men and women recognize that lack of menstruation in a woman implies that she is prepubescent, pregnant, lactating, or menopausal – an endowed feature of womanhood. Presence of menstruation points towards a capacity to be sterile, and readiness for conceiving soon after the period. In all, menstruation helps in the ordering of a female and male sex relationship. It provides a way of timing the frame of gazes in reproductive functions. Within maternity and paternity – timing of menstruation and intercourse become a culturally meditated issue. By setting taboos to force women to signal their menstrual periods, or finished with the periods, the cultural mechanism in place helps men avoid cuckoldry (Strassmann, 2008, p. 59).

This article takes up the task to critique, analyses and weighs the issue of menstruation as a prism men and women contest ascribe conformity and conflict. Yet we understand that the passage of girlhood to womanhood is marked by a flow of ritual or cycling or rebuilding blood from the uterus. Our task in today's world is not merely to overcome the biology of menstruation, even though archaeologically anthropology has done much in the recent time to reconstruct and emphasize the cultural history and representation of menstruation, as a indispensible female identity we must not ignore or play with as a taboo. Indeed, what we can clearly do is to build empowerment around it following the archaeological evidence and theory of menstruation from the past to the present. Like any other cultural or biological phenomenon in the Dogon society, menstruation, for example, is a bodily and social value accessed and assessed through taboos and hut – spaces in the construction of identities, beliefs and behaviors that affect both men and women in that society – local and global.

CONCLUSION

The commitment of this article tried to show that Steinem's article, If Men Could Menstruate... is a true hypothesis which nevertheless turns out to be neither realistic nor false. This is because it has antecedent clause, which remains a condition yet to be fulfilled (so yet undetermined), as against the categorical facts about womanhood (Asekhauno 2005). I have tried to demonstrate that menstruation is a fact of womanhood, is an indication of fertility, a sign of feminine maturity, and is a condition necessary for the preservation of humanity, and therefore should be revered, dignified and held as summum bonum. Although this position seems to be an overstatement of the role of society in individual affairs, it's no more exaggeration to propose that all power justification, state policies, development programmes and plans ought to be arranged to reflect the relevance of menses and care for the menstruating women since menstruation is the posterity, haughtiness, smugness, and pride of humanity.

In summing up, however, this article affirmed and demonstrated that menstruation is a natural fact of womanhood, very inconveniencing indication of fertility, a sign of feminine maturity, a condition necessary for the propagation or preservation of humanity, and therefore should be revered, dignified and held as summum bonum. Society desperately needs a new legislation on the management of the pangs of dysmenorrheal. The United Nations Organization (UN) recognizes this basic claim hence it has established an agency to sensitize on the need to improve on women's increased participation in socio-political activity. This measure is not too tidy. What could be done is for the UN to develop a special organ and fund (and oblige other nation-states to follow suit by allocating a portion of national budgets) for the up-keep of woman. Although this position seems to be an overstatement of the role of society in individual affairs, and given the essential nature and essence of women vis-à-vis their role in humanity, man's dealings and regard for her is far reasonable appreciation. Hence it's no more exaggeration to propose that all power justifications, state policies, development programmes, new government policies, plans and legislation ought to be arranged to reflect the relevance of menses and care for the menstruating woman since menstruation is the posterity, haughtiness, smugness, and pride of humanity. In this way, every woman would be contented and obliged (under state employment within her home) to assist the government in the management of the pangs of dysmenorrheal. But alas! This legislation would be ideal but up against human essence and is contra natura – and it also is a travesty! Perhaps, this proposal may never see the light of day! Could it be savaged?

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author has no conflict of interest to disclose.

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