

## THE EDUCATION OF THE AFRICAN GIRL

### 1. THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF THE AFRICAN WOMAN:

- what has been the heritage of the African woman since the beginning of the century?
- in the home what responsibilities did she have?
- what rights and duties had she in the domestic management?
- in the up-bringing of children, what degree of responsibility did she have vis à vis the husband?
- what initiative had she in the home? what was the scope of initiative?
- what treatment has she been made to suffer? was she treated as a slave, chattel, a mere housekeeper, adviser, etc.?
- had she the freedom of expression at home? on what subjects?
- had she had the respect due to her as a human being equal to the man?
- in what spheres had she been accorded equality with men?
- in ceremonies involving the tribe or the clan, had the woman any prominent part to play? e.g. in the choice and enstoolment of a chief?
- if she had, what were the reasons?
- have you had woman leaders in war or peace time activities?
- had the African women been accorded a place in the tribal councils?
- what part does the African woman play in marriage and funeral ceremonies? If they play a prominent part, are there any reasons?
- an African proverb says: "If a woman brings forth a boy, she has brought forth one more person into the tribe; if she brings forth a daughter, she has brought forth a nation".
- an African educator (Dr. Aggrey of Ghana) said: "educate a woman, and you have educated a nation."
- how far do you agree with these statements? why? and how far has it been true in the African society?
- has the African society any method of training to give to the girl to meet the needs of the family and the modern society?
- is education for women a western idea? will it go against the vital traditions of African society?

### 2. THE ROLE OF THE MODERN WOMAN:

#### i. General:

- the position of womanhood has been raised by the part played by the Blessed Virgin Mary in the salvation of mankind, and Christianity has raised woman's status and given her dignity. Most of the aspects of good womanhood are contained in the Litany to Our Lady.
- the African society is changing due to influence of western culture and Christianity
- the role of the African man is changing from a warrior to a state-builder: trying to improve upon their economic, social, and political conditions.
- in the light of the above statements what position should be accorded to the African woman?
- is she to remain in the status she held previously while men proceed to shoulder new responsibilities in their states?
- is she to remain still the wife with no opinions other than those given by the husband? with no opinions about the many problems beyond her home?
- if you agree that the present role of responsibility has been promoted mainly by education, do you think the man can achieve a new Africa without the necessary complement of the educated African woman?
- if in the old African society the woman was the custodian of culture, do you think the new culture, (African and Western civilisations), will be created, maintained, and preserved without the active contribution of the woman?





ii. In the Home:

- how far has the African man's advance in the modern world influenced his attitude towards the African woman?
- has she been given equality in the management of the home?
- is she treated as a minor or an adult in family discussions? Why, if a minor?
- is she permitted to differ from her husband's point of view in the planning, for instance, of their children's future?
- are her interests appreciated by the husband?
- is the educated woman accepted as being capable of being an intellectual help to the husband?
- is she allowed to know more about her husband's business, and to offer suggestions?
- does the husband ever discuss with her issues which occur in the state? do they sit down and discuss news? or is it assumed by the man that, in spite of her education, she has nothing valuable to contribute in such discussions?
- is her desire to learn about and converse with her husband taken to be curiosity and undue supervision?
- is her initiative thwarted, and is she made to feel that she is valueless except as a breeder of children and a housekeeper?
- is she taken as a necessary collaborator and important complement to the man, enriching his life, keeping him "au courant", and participating in his own culture—all this done through love?
- is she considered as an idol, a work of art, or a thing of pleasure, with no ideas of her own?
- is it generally realised by the man that the ideal African woman should be encouraged to keep what is good in both the African and Western Cultures?

## Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

3. EDUCATION:

i. Lack of Interest:

- is it true to say that very few African girls receive education in comparison with their number of boys?
- if this is true, what reasons can be assigned for the circumstance?
- is it due to the traditional role of the woman in the African society?
- is the above reason the cause of reluctance of parents to send their daughters to school?
- or are the girls themselves not interested? if so, why?
- is it due to the feeling that through education the girl will assume that she is equal to the man? is this a sound reason in the new Africa?
- is it due to the fact that there are not many schools geared to the education of girls?
- that through education the African girl will not remain a good housewife?
- that she will lose her feminine qualities and become too masculine?
- will be morally loose, having been freed from the traditional inhibitions and taboos by education?
- that she will become economically independent because she will not be satisfied to stay at home after gaining a good education to earn some money?
- is it because the African girl does not want strict supervision—which is found in schools, especially boarding schools?
- are all these reasons good enough to hinder the promotion of girls' education?



ii. The Actual Situation:

- is the standard of education in girls' schools lower than in the boys' schools? if yes, why? is it due to some of these reasons?
- that the African girl's mentality is lower than the boy's
- that co-education will foster confidence and initiative in the girls?
- that competition with boys will make them eager to learn?
- that the attitude of the African woman teacher does not inspire the girls to learn?
- that because she will be married by all means education has no purpose for her?
- that the African girl is not encouraged in her education because her male counterpart is not desirous to marry a girl with a good education? in fact, he is afraid?
- that education cannot free her from the traditional role and therefore is not worth the trouble?
- are there any more reasons you can offer?

4. THE PROMOTION OF GIRLS' EDUCATION:

i. In Primary and Middle Schools:

- would co-education or not, create a greater interest? why?
- would a common curriculum for boys and girls help to raise the standard of education in girls' schools?
- would the institution of clubs and societies with common activities for boys and girls together, create a greater desire among the girls for education?
- would a differential treatment for boys and girls in co-educational schools help?
- what sort of general approach at home and at school will help create the interest?
- would a more liberal system of education, e.g. free education of girls, help to create the interest?
- are there any other means you can think of to help the promotion of girls' education?

ii. In Secondary Schools:

- what do you think of co-educational schools as a means of creating an interest in and promoting education?
- do you think an increase in the number of scholarships would help?
- is the standard low because:
  - of lack of qualified teachers?
  - of frequent changes in the staff and heads?
  - of the fact that your government does not equip the schools properly for the study of all subjects as it does with the boys' schools?
- differences in syllabuses which demand less of the girls than of the boys?
- any other reasons?

iii. In the Universities:

- you agree that until something is done to the education of girls in the Primary, Middle, and Secondary schools there will be no hope of attracting girls to the Universities?

5. THE WOMEN'S PART:

This section concerns the few educated African girls, who can themselves contribute to the creation of greater interest in girls' education.

- for educated girls to insist upon their parents not to accept the "brideprice" upon marriage since it definitely puts them into an inferior position in the marriage state.





- to fight hard against polygamy since this does not help the dignity and respect one wife should have
- to uphold prudence and modesty in their life in order to destroy the idea that education is another word for "loose morals"
- to insist upon their rights in the home as a wife in the Christian sense and as mother with interest in the future of her children
- to interest themselves in the discussions of problems of life, and make their presence felt in the society
- to form societies which will cater for social betterment of their states—a field in which they are naturally better equipped
- to join male discussion, debating, etc. groups, and make their voices and opinions heard
- to know the limits to which the fight for equality with men can be carried
- to prove generally that they are not only objects for pleasure and that they are the companions of men with views and opinions of their own
- to be intellectual help to their husbands
- to develop a sense of initiative and to inspire confidence
- to demand that they are to be treated as adults
- to realise that they are the embodiment and repository of culture and therefore to imbibe only the good that the Western Culture can contribute to the African

6. THE MEN'S PART:

- to convince your own family or clan of the need for girls' education
- to promote it in whatever position you are; this is important especially for those in the field of education
- to have great respect for womanhood and treat her in the light of Christian teaching
- to respect the teachings of the Church on Marriage, and not encourage polygamy, which does not allow the respect and dignity to the modern woman
- to realise that marriage is a partnership with a woman and not deny her the rights she has in the home
- to encourage frequent meetings and discussions with women and allow them the opportunities to develop the capabilities, which will enable them to contribute to the achievement of a new Africa.  
etc. etc. etc.